

## Medicines Optimisation in Care Homes Team for Greater Preston, Chorley, South Ribble & West Lancashire.

### Good Practice Guidance: Disposal of medicines in care homes

September 2024

All care settings should have a written policy for the safe disposal of surplus, unwanted or expired medicines. Disposal of waste is subject to legislation and regulated by the Environment Agency.

You might need to dispose of medicines when:

- **A person's treatment changes or stops**  
Safely dispose of remaining supplies (with the person's consent).
- **A person transfers to another care service**  
The person should take all their medicines with them, unless they agree to dispose of any they no longer need.
- **A person dies**  
You should keep the person's medicines until any investigations are completed.
- **The medicine reaches its expiry date**  
Make sure you read about expiry dates in the product information leaflet. Some medicines expire before their 'use by' dates because you've opened the packaging. Other expiry dates are shortened if they're removed from controlled temperature storage.

#### Risk

Care homes must dispose of unwanted medicines appropriately, to avoid placing people who use services at risk. For example:

- A person who is no longer a resident and was previously supplied medicine. If you do not dispose of that medicine, it could be administered in error to another person. You must not administer medicine to a person if it was prescribed to another person.
- A prescriber has stopped prescribing a medicine. If you continue to administer the medicine, you could place people at risk.
- If you administer medicine beyond the expiry date, the product could have chemically changed. This may make it clinically ineffective or could cause actual harm.

#### Process

You should record the process for disposing of medicines in your medicines policy. Store medicines for disposal securely and separately to in use medicines in a tamper-proof container within a cupboard until they are collected or taken to the pharmacy. Do not dispose of medicines on site through the sewage system.

#### Care homes without nursing

- Return medicines for disposal to the supplier (usually a community pharmacy or dispensing doctor)

#### Care homes with nursing

- Return medicines for disposal to a licensed waste disposal company; this might include community pharmacies

#### Record Keeping

You **must** keep records to ensure that medicines are handled properly during disposal. Records could include:

- date of disposal or return to pharmacy
- name and strength of medicine
- quantity removed
- person for whom medicines were prescribed or purchased
- signature of the member of staff who arranges disposal of the medicines
- signature of the person collecting the medicines for disposal

Nursing homes should also keep records of transactions with registered waste disposal companies.

- You should treat disposal records as part of a person's care records. Care records must be retained according to the required retention period.

#### Controlled drugs

You should separate unwanted or out-of-date controlled drugs from current stock and store in line with your policy.

- Care homes without nursing

Store unwanted or out-of-date controlled drugs in the controlled drugs cupboard until they are returned to the community pharmacy for destruction. Make a record in the controlled drugs register. This should be signed by the person making the entry and another suitably trained person as a witness.

Good practice involves one member of staff to make the record of controlled drug destruction in the controlled drugs register and a second member of staff to check and sign the record. This helps to verify that the register is accurate. Make sure to record the new stock balance.

- Care homes with nursing – people's own controlled drugs

People's own individually labelled controlled drugs (Schedules 2, 3 and 4 (Part I)) must be denatured before handing to the waste disposal company. The Environment Agency classes this as processing waste. Care homes with nursing will need to apply for a [T28 waste exemption](#). This is free of charge.

Good practice involves one member of staff to make the record of controlled drug destruction in the controlled drugs register and a second member of staff to act as a witness and check and sign the record. Make sure to record the new stock balance.

- Care homes with nursing - stock controlled drugs

You must denature out-of-date stocks of controlled drugs in Schedules 2, 3 and 4 (Part I). You must destroy Schedule 2 stock in the presence of an authorised witness. This includes a police constable or inspectors of the General Pharmaceutical Council. The lead NHS England controlled drugs accountable officer may also appoint authorised witnesses.

You also need to record details of the destruction in your controlled drugs register. It is good practice for another member of staff to witness the denaturing of stock in Schedules 3 and 4 (Part I).

## References

CQC Guidance for providers: Disposing of Medicines [Disposing of medicines - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](#) Accessed 25/6/24

CQC Guidance for providers: Controlled Drugs in Care Homes [Controlled drugs in care homes - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](#) Accessed 25/6/24

NICE social care guideline SC1 [Overview | Managing medicines in care homes | Guidance | NICE](#) Accessed 25/6/24

NICE guideline 67: [Overview | Managing medicines for adults receiving social care in the community | Guidance | NICE](#) Accessed 25/6/24