Shared Care, Specialist Prescribing and Monitoring Policy

Purpose

Chevin Medical Practice supports patients accessing specialist assessment and treatment through NHS services, Right to Choose providers and appropriately regulated private providers.

This policy explains how the practice considers requests for shared care prescribing, transfer of prescribing responsibility from a specialist to the practice, specialist monitoring requests, and monitoring-only arrangements where a specialist retains prescribing responsibility but requests NHS primary care involvement.

Shared care prescribing is not a core General Medical Services contractual requirement and remains a voluntary arrangement. Any shared care arrangement requires the agreement of the specialist clinician, the patient, and the practice clinician accepting responsibility.

The clinician signing a prescription remains professionally accountable for that prescribing decision. The practice must therefore be satisfied that any proposed arrangement can be delivered safely, competently, and within available NHS resources.

Meeting the criteria within this policy does not create an entitlement to shared care.

Principles

When considering any shared care or monitoring request, the practice will seek to ensure that patient safety remains paramount; responsibilities are clearly defined; appropriate specialist support remains available; governance arrangements are robust; prescribing remains within the competence of the responsible clinician; NHS resources are used appropriately and sustainably; and the arrangement does not adversely affect the practice's ability to provide core NHS services to the wider practice population. Requests will be considered on an individual basis.

Criteria that must be met

The practice will normally only consider accepting a shared care arrangement where all four criteria below are met.

1. Appropriate Regulation

The specialist provider should be established within the UK, appropriately regulated, including CQC registration where required, staffed by suitably qualified and regulated clinicians, supported by clear governance arrangements, and able to provide ongoing specialist advice and review.

2. Suitable Treatment

The medicine should be licensed for use in the UK, used within its licensed indication and dose, consistent with recognized UK clinical practice and appropriate for primary care prescribing. Requests involving unlicensed, experimental or otherwise unsuitable treatments will usually be declined.

3. Clinical Competence

The clinician responsible must be satisfied that they understand the condition, treatment risks and benefits, monitoring requirements, potential adverse effects and have access to adequate specialist support. Shared care will not be accepted where it falls outside the clinician's professional competence or cannot be undertaken safely at a practice level.

4. Capacity and Resources

General practice operates within finite NHS-funded clinical, nursing, administrative and investigation resources. Before accepting shared care, the practice must be satisfied that appropriate capacity exists, monitoring can be delivered safely, the arrangement is sustainable, and acceptance would not adversely affect delivery of commissioned NHS services. Requests may be declined where additional responsibilities would require resources to be diverted from services provided to the wider NHS practice population.

Specialist Monitoring and Monitoring-Only Requests

The principles within this policy apply equally to monitoring requests, regardless of whether the practice is being asked to prescribe medication. Examples include blood tests, ECGs, blood pressure monitoring, pulse monitoring, height and weight checks, BMI monitoring, physical health reviews, completion of monitoring templates and the administration or communication of results.

The practice recognizes that some providers may retain prescribing responsibility while requesting that NHS primary care undertake monitoring on their behalf. Such requests will be considered individually. However, the practice is unable to routinely provide specialist monitoring services where the monitoring relates primarily to treatment initiated or directed by another provider; the activity falls outside commissioned NHS primary care services; the provider expects NHS primary care to undertake monitoring without assuming wider clinical responsibility; the work cannot be safely accommodated within available capacity; or responsibility for interpreting and acting upon results is unclear.

Where specialist monitoring is required as part of a privately arranged treatment pathway, responsibility for arranging, reviewing and acting upon that monitoring will normally remain with the specialist provider directing treatment. Any decision to assist with monitoring is made on a case-by-case basis and does not create an ongoing obligation to provide future monitoring.

Responsibilities of the Specialist Provider

The specialist provider is expected to undertake assessments and diagnosis, initiate and stabilize treatment, provide a clear treatment plan, specify monitoring requirements, interpret specialist investigations, manage dose adjustments, provide ongoing specialist review where clinically required and remain available for advice and support.

Reasons Requests May Be Declined

The practice may decline shared care or monitoring requests where one or more acceptance criteria are not met, governance arrangements are inadequate, monitoring requirements are unclear, specialist support arrangements are insufficient, treatment falls outside the competence of the responsible clinician, the practice lacks capacity or resources, the activity falls outside NHS commissioned services, or the partners conclude that acceptance would not represent a safe or sustainable use of NHS resources.

Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically by the GP Partners and may be updated to reflect changes in national guidance, commissioning arrangements, professional regulation and local NHS policy.

- British Medical Association: Principles for Shared Care Prescribing
- General Medical Council: Shared Care Guidance
- NHS Resolution: Clinical Negligence Scheme for General Practice
- NHS England prescribing guidance