



Derbyshire Recovery Partnership Over the counter, Opiate based medication and Benzodiazepine position statement

This is the Derbyshire Recovery Partnership position statement in relation to the service provision for use/misuse of 'over the counter' (OTC) medication, opiate based medication and benzodiazepines.

Background

The Public Health service specification for the Adult Integrated Substance Misuse Treatment Service (Drugs and Alcohol) states that those '*experiencing dependence on prescribed or over the counter medication (including painkillers, hypnotics or anxiolytics)*' falls within the exclusion criteria for drug treatment in Derbyshire.

In advance of the new contract a letter was sent to Primary Care GPs from the Derbyshire Recovery Partnership in 2016 (in consultation with Public Health) where they were advised that '*Those purchasing and misusing opiates OTC or misusing prescribed opiates will no longer fall under the remit of the specialist prescribing service within Derbyshire*'.

The rationale for the service is to provide treatment for those misusing illicit drugs across Derbyshire. Therefore by definition those misusing OTC or medication prescribed to them do not fall into the category of illicit use as they are doing this within the bounds of UK legislation and are not breaking the Misuse of Drugs Act.

It is the view of both the Derbyshire Recovery Partnership and Public Health that OTC drug misuse and prescribed medication misuse falls under the remit of Primary Care.

OTC, prescribed opiate based medication and benzodiazepine Specialist Consultant Advice Pathway

Listed below are the three identified types of drugs that are commonly misused:

1. Over the counter (OTC) Medications
2. Opiate-based Pain Medications
3. Benzodiazepines

Each of these areas includes guidance depending on the circumstances under which the individual is using/misusing the medications:

- **Prescribed** - when an individual has a prescription for the related medication which has them as the named patient and their individual medication is reviewed by a medical professional.
- **Illicit drug use** - when the possession of that drug would be deemed illegal under the Misuse of Drugs Act. This would include the possession of any controlled drugs (inc. benzodiazepines and non-OTC opiate based pain medication) without a named prescription. Medication can be bought illegally over the internet, borrowed from friend or family member, fraudulently obtained or stolen and all would be classed as illicit drug use within the Misuse of Drugs Act.
- **Both Illicit and Prescribed** - when both factors above are true. In most cases this is when an individual is prescribed a type of medication (benzodiazepine or opiate based pain relief) but is sourcing additional medication through illicit means.



The following is the position of Derbyshire Recovery Partnership in relation to the identified types of drugs misused and the manner in which they are acquired:

1. Over The Counter (OTC) medications

Prescribed

Some lower strength opiates can be prescribed through Primary Care. For individuals whose main drug is low strength opiate medication G.P.'s should follow the Specialist Consultant Advice Pathway (appendix 1).

Illicit use

Due to the nature of OTC no use is 'illicit' in the legal definition. Criminally acquiring OTC medication does not count as illicit use.

Both Illicit and Prescribed

For individuals prescribed low strength opiate medication and are obtaining additional supplies from another source G.P.'s should follow the Specialist Consultant Advice Pathway (appendix 1).

2. Opiate based pain medications

Prescribed

The service does not offer direct treatment for those prescribed opiate-based pain medications as this is part of the exclusion criteria. For individuals whose main drug is prescribed opiates G.P.'s should follow the Specialist Consultant Advice Pathway (appendix 1).

Illicit use

Those who are obtaining and using opiate based medication illicitly (not prescribed) should be assessed via The Hub and referred into treatment. Derbyshire Recovery Partnership will assess in line with current client led process and will offer brief intervention or structured 1-to-1 psychosocial support.

At present the position is that substitute prescribing will not be offered for illicit opiate based medication misuse.

3. Benzodiazepines

Prescribed

The service does not offer direct treatment for those prescribed benzodiazepines as this is part of the exclusion criteria. For individuals whose main drug is benzodiazepines G.P.'s should follow the Specialist Consultant Advice Pathway (appendix 1).

Illicit use

Those who are obtaining benzodiazepines illicitly (not prescribed) should be assessed via The Hub and referred into treatment. Derbyshire Recovery Partnership will assess in line with current client led process and will offer brief intervention or structured 1-to-1 psychosocial support.

At present the position is that substitute prescribing will not be offered for illicit benzodiazepines misuse.

Both Illicit and Prescribed

For individuals prescribed benzodiazepines and obtaining additional supplies from another source G.P.'s should follow the Specialist Consultant Advice Pathway (appendix 1).

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GP requests for advice will go to the Derbyshire Recovery Partnership medical secretary for Dr Sirur and Dr Sarkar. Initial G.P request for advice can either be made via phone or via email (NHS number only) to a group NHS.net account dhcft.BHHAdmin@nhs.net and details taken outlining the concern and advice required.

The specialist substance misuse consultant will offer formal advice on how to support primary care patients with benzodiazepine or opiate based pain medication dependence issues. This can either be via a telephone call with the GP or via letter.

Individuals who self-refer will be asked by The Hub to speak to their G.P who can then submit a request for advice via the Specialist Consultant Advice Pathway. If consent is given by the patient a template letter can be sent to the G.P outlining the pathway and informing them that their patient has made contact.



Appendix 1 - Specialist Consultant Advice Pathway for OTC and Opiate Based Medication and Benzodiazepine

