Care Home News

NHS Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board

HWEICB Social Care Integration team **Issue 10** **September 2025**

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MAR Prompt Poster

We're excited to share a helpful new resource designed by one of our brilliant student technicians, Chloe-Louise Harvey a trainee pharmacy technician from the Princess Alexandra Hospital, who recently completed a placement with us. She's created a **MAR Prompt Poster** as a quick visual reminder to help ensure best practices when handling Medication Administration Records. It is available to download so you can display it in your medication areas: MAR Prompt Poster



Homemade supplement drinks – Watch & Share!

Malnutrition is still a big concern in care homes, especially among older residents with small appetites, swallowing difficulties, or increased nutritional needs due to illness or frailty. One easy and cost-effective way to help is by using **homemade supplement drinks** as part of a **food-based approach**.

Prescribed ONS vs Homemade supplement drinks

Prescribed oral nutritional supplements (ONS) are **not routinely used** in care homes unless:

- The resident is **tube-fed**, and having the ONS via the tube or
- Has **diagnosed dysphagia** requiring thickened drinks **plus** identified malnutrition.

In most cases, we follow the **HWE ICS Care Home Malnutrition Management Pathway**, which recommends **homemade supplement drinks** instead. These are often just as effective and tend to be more enjoyable for residents.

Easy-to-Follow Recipe Videos

Dietitians have created a series of short YouTube videos showing how simple it is to make fortified drinks using approved recipes. It's important to follow the recipes **exactly**—using the specified products and quantities—to ensure the correct nutritional content. Substitutes like other milkshake flavourings, hot drink powders, or fruit juices may lack essential vitamins and minerals.

Watch and share this link on Homemade Supplement Drinks for the following recipes:

Fortified Milkshake
Fortified Hot Chocolate
Fortified Ovaltine or Horlicks
Fortified Vegan Milkshake – A plant-based alternative
Fortified Fruit Juice – For those who dislike milk (lower in nutrients)

Why These Recipes Matter in Care Homes

- Residents often prefer the taste compared to prescribed supplements.
- They help improve nutritional intake in a way that feels more natural and homely.
- They support a **person-centred, food-based approach** in line with NICE, CQC and local guidance.

These videos are a great resource for **care home teams, families, and carers**. Feel free to share them widely to help improve nutritional care in your setting!

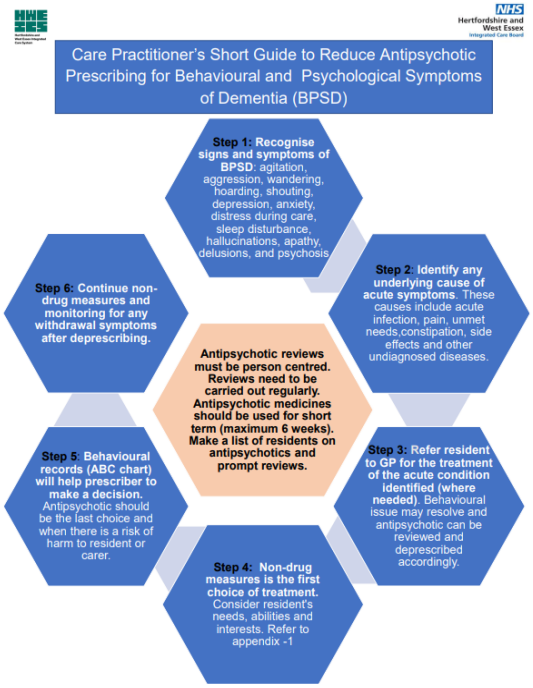
Supporting residents with dementia and BPSD

We have a new practical guide designed to help care home staff manage **behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD)** in residents. This easy-to-follow resource supports safer care and aims to reduce the use of antipsychotic medications. It includes:

- A clear overview of common BPSD symptoms and what might be causing them
- Six simple steps to help reduce or stop antipsychotic medicines safely
- Helpful tips for recording behaviours and using non-medication approaches, with a strong focus on person-centred care
- Links to trusted guidance and best practice resources

This guide is a great tool to support your daily work and improve outcomes for residents living with dementia.

BPSD short guide for Care Practitioners



Medication in focus - Risperidone

Risperidone is an **antipsychotic** medication commonly used in care settings to **manage challenging behavioural and psychological symptoms, particularly in residents with dementia.** It works by balancing dopamine and serotonin levels in the brain, helping to reduce symptoms such as aggression, agitation, hallucinations (seeing and hearing things that are not there), and delusions (false beliefs).

Risperidone is licensed in the UK for **short-term (up to 6 weeks)** treatment of behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) when symptoms are severe and pose a risk to the individual or others. It may also be prescribed for schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and irritability in autism spectrum disorders.

Key Considerations in Care Homes

• **Last Resort**: Risperidone should only be used when non-drug interventions (e.g., music therapy, reminiscence therapy, pain management) have been tried and failed.

• **Short-Term Use**: NICE guidelines recommend reassessing the need for risperidone every 6 weeks. Long-term use increases risks and should only continue with clear clinical justification.

• **Consent & Documentation**: Off-label use (beyond 6 weeks) requires informed consent and clear documentation from the prescriber.

• **Regular Reviews**: A 6-weekly review must be carried out and ideally discussed in an MDT (multi-disciplinary team) meeting. Care home teams should be aware of when the next review is due, and this should be clearly documented to ensure safe and appropriate use.

Common Side Effects Care home staff should monitor for:

• Sedation and drowsiness

• Dizziness and falls (due to postural hypotension)

• Weight gain and increased appetite

• Movement problems (e.g., tremors, stiffness, restlessness, involuntary movements)

• Increased stroke risk in elderly patients with dementia

Staff Checklist

✓ Always follow person-centred care plans.

✓ Have non - medication strategies been tried?

✓ Record behaviors that trigger medication use.

✓ Ensure PRN (as-needed) use is clearly justified and documented.

✓ Encourage regular medication reviews and physical health checks.

✓ Are side effects being monitored and reported?

Care home staff play a key role by using ABC charts to record behaviours—tracking what happened before (Antecedent), during (Behaviour), and after (Consequence). These charts help prescribers understand patterns and make safer, more informed decisions about medication use. ABC Template

Please send details of any queries /requests for support to the team e-mail address hweicbenh.pharmacycarehomes@nhs.net Emails are monitored Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm (exc Bank Holidays) and you will receive a response within three working days. Patient identifiable details should ONLY be sent from and to secure email addresses (NHS.net to NHS.net). More information, guidance documents & newsletters can be found at our new website Prescribing, Policies and Pathways (hweclinicalguidance)