



## **Medicines Optimisation Campaign Are the Medicines Working**

### **Communications Toolkit**

**September 2023**

#### **Introduction**

The ICB's Medicines Optimisation Team are working to launch four behaviour change campaigns across North East and North Cumbria ICB. These public-facing campaigns complement major ongoing areas of clinical work, where prescribing has an impact on health and outcomes. This toolkit has been designed to help you share the messages with patients and colleagues.

#### **Inappropriate polypharmacy (Are the Medicines Working)**

"Are your medicines working for you?" is an initiative designed to support more open conversations between patients and healthcare professionals about whether or not long-term medicines should continue to be prescribed. The campaign is aimed at clinicians and the public and provides healthcare professionals with resources that support them to have successful conversations with their patients about deprescribing and alternative treatments.

#### **About the toolkit**

This toolkit provides a brief overview of the four medicines optimisation campaign Are the medicines working that have been running successfully for a number of years and are now being implemented across North East and North Cumbria NHS.

It includes key messages, newsletter items, a one-page staff explainer, links to patient-facing materials and social media posts for you to customise and use in your comms and engagement work.

#### **Promotional Material**

A range of promotional materials, such as patient leaflets, posters, digital display screens, and social media graphics, are available to download from the Campaign Hub website ([nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk](https://nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk)).

**For further information please contact [victoriacasey@nhs.net](mailto:victoriacasey@nhs.net)**

## Key messages

### Are the Medicines Working - reducing inappropriate polypharmacy and opening conversations on long-term medication

Website - [arethemedicinesworking.co.uk](http://arethemedicinesworking.co.uk)

- Patients taking multiple medicines (polypharmacy) is an ongoing challenge across the whole NHS. When patients are prescribed medicines which are no longer appropriate, this contributes to poorer health outcomes. However, it can be difficult to identify which medicines are (or are not) appropriate. The campaign is designed to support more open conversations between patients and healthcare professionals about whether or not long-term medicines should continue to be prescribed.
- This campaign starts by asking healthcare professionals and patients: Are the medicines working? For healthcare professionals the campaign provides a behavioural science-led toolkit including a clinician checklist.
- The initiative was developed following a project funded by the AHSN NENC to explore the barriers to deprescribing in primary care. Read more about this [here](#).
- Problematic polypharmacy adds a cost to the healthcare system and diminishes quality care for the patient – and most of this is entirely preventable.
- The initiative has developed a range of materials and at the core of this is two checklists, one for patients and one for healthcare professionals. The questions are generic to be used in different contexts such as long-term condition clinics or before more holistic medication review appointments.
- As part of the toolkit we've also developed symptom trackers. These can be used in a number of different ways; for example, sending out in advance for medication review to get the patient to track their symptoms, or side effects from medication.
- More information and the campaign resources can be downloaded from <https://ahsn-nenc.org.uk/what-we-do/improving-population-health/medicines-optimisation/polypharmacy/are-your-medicines-working-for-you/>

## General public

### What can I do about it?

As a patient, you can ask yourself the following to see if you would need to book a review with your healthcare professional:

1. Do you think your medicines are improving your health, or stopping your health from getting worse? If so, in what way are they working?

2. When was the last time you didn't take at least one of your medicines? Why was this?
3. Have you experienced any unwanted side effects from your medication? If so, what have you noticed?

You can book a medicines review with your healthcare professional at any time.

## **Suggested bulletin/newsletter copy**

### **Are the Medicines Working**

Patients taking multiple medicines (polypharmacy) is an ongoing challenge across the whole NHS. The National Prescribing review found that **10% of medicines prescribed in primary care are 'pointless'** – i.e. unnecessary, lack appropriate clinical indication or are simply wasted.

### **About the campaign**

When patients are prescribed medicines which are no longer appropriate, this contributes to poorer health outcomes. However, it can be difficult to identify which medicines are (or are not) appropriate. This campaign aims to change that by asking ourselves and our patients: **Are the Medicines Working?**

### **How can you support the campaign?**

It is difficult to determine if medicines are working or not without an open conversation with the patient. This campaign aims to support those conversations and help identify medicines which do not seem to be working for the patient.

There's a whole host of further campaign information available at:

[www.arethemedicinesworking.co.uk](http://www.arethemedicinesworking.co.uk)

- **Hints and tips for getting started with deprescribing**
- **General Practice support including General Practitioners, Clinical Pharmacists, Practice Managers and Nurses**
- **Case studies**
- **Deprescribing digital toolkit**

## One-page explainer for staff

**The North East and North Cumbria ICB Medicines Optimisation Team will be rolling out four impactful behaviour-change campaigns across the region. One of which is Are the medicines working.**

These campaigns align with ongoing clinical work, emphasising the critical role of prescribing in healthcare outcomes:

### **Inappropriate polypharmacy - Are the Medicines Working**

- Promotes open conversations between patients and healthcare professionals about long-term medication.
- Equips healthcare professionals with resources for successful deprescribing discussions.

### **Why are they being launched?**

These public-facing campaigns have been developed to complement major ongoing areas of clinical work, where prescribing has an impact on health and outcomes.

### **How can we help?**

There are four main areas where you can help with the roll out of the campaigns and key messages:

**Conversations:** Engage in meaningful discussions with patients about the campaign topics.

**Resources:** Utilise campaign materials to support your conversations and educate patients.

**Promotion:** Encourage patients to visit campaign websites for additional information.

**Awareness:** Raise awareness of these campaigns within your practice and among colleagues.

Resources can be found - **Are the Medicines Working:**  
<https://arethemedicinesworking.co.uk/>

## Social media posts

Below we have written some sample posts for social media channels, including Facebook and X (formally known as Twitter). Please note that these are to be accompanied by the relevant campaign social graphics which can be downloaded from the Campaign Hub website ([nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk](https://nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk)).

### Staff facing:

#### Are the Medicines Working

Continuing to prescribe medicines which are no longer needed, wanted, or appropriate, increases risk to patients and creates waste. Reducing medication burden will improve health outcomes for patients and save time across the health system.

Visit [arethemedicinesworking.co.uk](https://arethemedicinesworking.co.uk) to find out how you can help

### Patient facing:

#### Are the Medicines Working

Do you think your medicines are improving your health, or stopping your health from getting worse?

When was the last time you didn't take at least one of your medicines?

Have you experienced any unwanted side effects from your medication?

You can book a medicine review with your healthcare professional at any time to ensure you are on the right medication for you.

## Patient Text Messages

#### Are the Medicines Working

Do you think your medicines are improving your health, or stopping your health from getting worse? Have you experienced any unwanted side effects from your medication? You can book a medicine review with your healthcare professional at any time to ensure you are on the right medication for you.

For further information on any of the campaigns please contact [victoriacasey@nhs.net](mailto:victoriacasey@nhs.net)