

## ‘Only order what you need’

### Communications toolkit

June 2025

#### Introduction

The West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board’s (ICBs) medicines optimisation team are launching a behaviour change campaign across West Yorkshire. This public-facing campaign focuses on medicine waste (over ordering and stockpiling of medicines).



The **‘Only order what you need’** campaign is aimed at the public and is centred around educating patients or those ordering prescriptions on their behalf such as carers on the impact of over-ordering and stockpiling prescription medicines and encouraging self-reflection of their ordering behaviour.

It will launch on Monday 7 July 2025 and a new [campaign website](http://www.wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed) ([www.wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed](http://www.wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed)) has key tips for patients on ordering processes.

#### About the toolkit

This toolkit provides a brief overview of the campaign. 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.

Page numbers for the individual sections can be found below:

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## **Promotional Material**

A range of promotional materials, such as posters, digital display screens, and social media graphics, are available to download from the [campaign resources web page](#).

For further information please contact [vicky.caunt@nhs.net](mailto:vicky.caunt@nhs.net)

## **\*\*Disposal of unwanted medicines – for community pharmacies\*\***

Please make use of Anenta for changes to waste bin requirements and collections.

During the 'Only order what you need' campaign you might see an increase in medicines waste returned.

Contact details and more information can be found on the Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire website: [Disposal of Unwanted Medicines - Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire](#)

## Key messages

Only order what you need – raising awareness of the impact of over-ordering and stockpiling prescription medicines and reducing medicines waste.

Website – [www.wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed](http://www.wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed)

- Around £18 million is wasted locally every year on unused medicines. This includes inhalers, pain medication and creams, across West Yorkshire. By only ordering what we need we can make sure NHS resources go where they are most needed.
- Ordering and receiving medicines when they aren't needed can mean you end up with more than you need in your cupboard. 'Stockpiling' is holding on to medicines that you don't use.
- The implications of stockpiling can mean wasted resources (medicines that aren't used go out of date and have to be thrown away); Supply issues (stockpiling can create shortages); There's also safety risks. Keeping too much medicine can cause confusion (especially if your prescription changes) and harm to children and pets if they come into their reach.
- Many patients will have prescribed medicines currently issued that are not actually needed. Patients are encouraged to speak to their GP or pharmacy team if there are medicines that you don't want or need to take anymore. A more appropriate plan will then be discussed if necessary.
- This campaign aims to raise awareness of the financial impact of medicines waste across the NHS and how the patient can positively impact on this by only ordering what prescription medicines they need.
- Medicines waste and improper disposal not only cost money but also harm the environment. Throwing medicines away incorrectly can pollute water and hurt wildlife, while unnecessary waste increases the NHS's carbon footprint.
- Only ordering what you need and returning unwanted or out of date medicines to your community pharmacy can help reduce these pollution risks. The pharmacy team might need your assistance to ensure the safe disposal of some items.
- The call to action is to visit the campaign website for more information including actions patients can make to immediately reduce over-ordering.

*Every small change collectively makes a big difference in reducing waste medicines.*

## General public

### What can I do about it?

As patients we can all take simple steps to make sure medicines are not wasted, so the NHS can focus resources where they are needed most. Here's how:

1. **Only order what you need:** Check what medicines you have at home before you place an order, and only order what you need
2. **Hand back:** When you collect your medicines from your local pharmacy, make sure that you only have what you need. If you return an item before you leave the pharmacy, it can be reused.

If you receive something you don't need or didn't order please let the pharmacy or GP practice team know so they can adjust your prescription. You will still be able to order the medication again if needed in the future.

3. **Stick to your routine:** Order your medicines when you are running low, and no earlier. You can set up reminders in your calendar to help you check to see if you need to order more

## Suggested bulletin/newsletter copy

### Only order what you need

Around £18 million is wasted locally every year on unused medicines. This includes inhalers, pain medication and creams, across West Yorkshire. By patients only ordering what they need we can make sure NHS resources go where they are most needed.

### About the campaign

When patients order or receive medicines they don't need, this can mean they end up with more than they need in their cupboards which leads to stockpiling or medicines that are thrown away/wasted when they become out of date.

This campaign is raising awareness of the financial and environmental impacts of medicines waste across the NHS and how the patient can positively impact on this by only ordering what prescription medicines they need, when they need it.

We must ensure resources are used wisely and are used where they are most needed this also includes a substantial amount of staffing time particularly for the prescription clerk and pharmacy teams.

For more information and simple steps patients can take to help reduce medicines waste please visit the website: [www.wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed](http://www.wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed)

### How can you support the campaign?

As a healthcare provider please support the campaign by displaying the campaign materials in your setting. Encourage conversations with patients around how to manage their prescription medicine usage and supply.

### Campaign resources

A range of campaign resources are available including:

- Digital screen adverts
- A4 poster
- Social media graphics
- Website banners
- Campaign graphic
- Teams background

All are available to download [on the campaign resources web page](#)

## One-page explainer for staff

The West Yorkshire ICB Medicines Optimisation team will be rolling out an impactful behaviour-change campaign across the region.

### Medicines waste - Only order what you need

- Raises awareness of the financial and environmental impacts of medicine waste
- Encourages patients to self-reflect on their own ordering behaviour and educates on small steps patients can make to help reduce the overordering of prescription medicines
- Promotes more self-management behaviour in patients when tracking and ordering medicines

### Why is it being launched?

Medicines waste is a vital issue to the NHS, which the general public seems to have limited awareness of.

When repeat prescribing medicines are requested inaccurately (by people or their representatives, including community pharmacies) and left unchallenged, waste accumulates that inconveniences people, poses a safety risk and contributes to medicines shortages.

Alongside the financial impact there is also the environmental cost from medicines that are prescribed but not taken, through both waste of the medicine itself and the wasted resource to produce and supply the medicine.

25% of the NHS carbon footprint is related to medicines. The NHS is committed to working with the public and its providers to reduce the growing threat to human health posed by climate change and our impacts on the environment. Read more at [Greener NHS](#)

### How can we help?

There are four main areas where you can help with the roll out of the campaign.

#### Key messages:

- **Conversations:** engage in meaningful discussions with patients about the campaign
- **Resources:** utilise campaign materials to support your conversations and educate patients
- **Promotion:** encourage patients to visit the campaign website for additional information

- **Awareness:** raise awareness of the campaign within your setting and amongst colleagues. Consider process issues such as where the staff and/or patients might 'tick all' on prescription requests.

**Campaign resources** are available to [download on the campaign resources web page](#).

**Public facing website:** [wypartnership.co.uk/ordewhatyouneed](http://wypartnership.co.uk/ordewhatyouneed)

## 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 on the campaign resources web page](#)

You can also share campaign resources that will be posted on the Partnership's social media accounts including:

 [West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership](#)

 [WYpartnership](#)

 [west-yorkshire-health-and-care-partnership-an-integrated-care-system](#)

## Patient facing

£18m wasted on medicines

Medicines waste costs the NHS millions. That could fund life-saving care. Help by ordering only what's needed. For more information visit [wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed](http://wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed)

Fund care, not medicines waste

£18m is wasted on unused medicines across West Yorkshire every year. Order only what you need and help make sure NHS resources go where they are most needed. For more information visit [wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed](http://wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed)

Medicines waste causes environmental harm

Medicine waste and throwing medicines away incorrectly not only costs money but also harms the environment. Order only what you need.

Leftover and excess medicines should be returned to the pharmacy.

For more information visit [wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed](http://wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed)

Medicines stacking up?

Every year, £18m is lost locally to unused medicines. Help stop waste. Check before you reorder and only order the medicines you actually need.

For more information visit [wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed](http://wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed)

## Patient text message

Medicines stacking up? Every year, £18m is lost locally to unused medicines. Help stop waste. Check before you reorder and only order the medicines you actually need.

For more information visit: [www.wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed](http://www.wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed)

## Content for patient websites and newsletters

### Are your medicines stacking up? Only order what you need.

Every year, about £18 million worth of medicine goes to waste in West Yorkshire. This includes things like inhalers, pain medicine, and creams.

The NHS needs your help! Following these easy steps when ordering your medicines:

### How you can help

1. **Only order what you need** - before getting more, check what medicines you already have.
2. **Return extras** – when picking up your medicines at the pharmacy, only take what you need. If you return something before leaving, it can be used again.
3. **Stick to your routine** – order your medicines when you're running low, but not too soon.

### By doing this, you will:

- Get the right medicines and care
- Help reduce waste
- Save NHS resources
- Help reduce environmental harm

It's also safer! Keeping too much medicine can cause confusion especially if your prescription changes and harm to children and pets in the home if they come into their reach.

You are encouraged to speak with your GP or pharmacy team if there are repeat medicines you no longer need or want to take anymore. A more appropriate plan will then be discussed with you if necessary.

If you have any questions, your GP, practice team or pharmacy team can help. Reach out to them for advice.

Find out more by visiting the website: [www.wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed](http://www.wypartnership.co.uk/orderwhatyouneed)

