

Polypharmacy



What we do

Preventing harm from inappropriate polypharmacy by promoting education, access to data and evidence-based shared decision making supporting both prescribers and patients / carers



Why are we doing it?

As more people live longer with multiple long-term conditions, the number of medicines they take increases. This can place a significant burden on the person managing multiple medicines regimes and can also be harmful

We have created studies have shown that over 50% of people aged 65+ are prescribed a medicine which can cause more harm than benefit, leading to avoidable morbidity, hospitalisation, and mortality. The AHSN Polypharmacy Programme supports local systems and primary care to identify patients at risk of harm and support better conversations with patients about their medication issues and expectations. It promotes shared decision making in line with NICE guidance.

► Visit [nice.org.uk/guidance/ng197](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng197) to find out more

We will create a Polypharmacy Community of Practice (CoP) to help local systems to share their experience of how to identify local priorities, improve the utilisation of the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) Polypharmacy Comparators and identify patients in high-risk groups. We are providing education using the polypharmacy Action Learning Sets to increase confident shared-decision making during structured medication reviews.

The NHSBSA Polypharmacy Comparator tool (developed by Wessex AHSN in collaboration with the NHSBSA) provide valuable insight into patient populations at greater risk from inappropriate polypharmacy. They are available to all GP practices, Primary Care Networks, Integrated Care Systems across England, all AHSNs and NHS England regions.

Polypharmacy



Across Wessex, **5,563 patients** aged 85 or older were prescribed 10 or more medicines



For patients aged over 85, each additional medicine taken increases the risk of death by **3%**



Over **100 clinicians** trained through Action Learning Sets



More than **800 requests** have been made for the NHSBSA Polypharmacy Comparators



Launch of the Wessex Polypharmacy Community of Practice (CoP) in March 2022



What we delivered in 2021-22:

- Supported five new cohorts to complete the Action Learning Sets (ALS) programme during 2021-22, taking the total number trained to **over 200**
- Secured funding from Health Education England to continue to deliver the Polypharmacy ALS in 2022-23
- Early evaluation shows that clinicians felt more confident in stopping inappropriate medicines. Later evaluation shows **100% positive feedback** from clinicians attending the training.



Plans for 2022-23:

- A national commission to tackle inappropriate polypharmacy has been adopted by the AHSN Network and will form part of the programme of work over the next two years
- A deeper understanding of how this work can reduce health inequalities is being considered; for example, using the NHSBSA Polypharmacy Comparators to identify geographical 'pockets' of over prescribing of pain-relieving medicines.