

Repatriation of specials briefing

A special is an unlicensed medicine that does not have a UK Marketing Authorisation. It is manufactured, imported or supplied to meet the special clinical needs of an individual patient. A special may only be supplied when there is no available licensed medicine which fully meets the patient's clinical needs.¹ In England, £49 million is spent annually on prescribing specials [NHSBSA June – August 2022].

Key recommendations

- Before prescribing a special, consider if a medicine is needed at all.
- If a medicine is required, a stepped approach is suggested to choose an appropriate preparation, especially where an adult has difficulties swallowing:
 - » Licensed medicines administered as intended.
 - » Licensed medicines administered in an unlicensed manner.
 - » Imported products licensed in a different country.
 - » Special-order products.
- A special should only be prescribed when there is no available licensed medicine which fully meets the patient's clinical needs.
- Decisions about the prescribing of specials should be based on professional judgment and an understanding of individual patient need as accountability for prescribing a special rests with the prescriber.
- Review patient's prescribed specials to ensure that a special is (and remains) the most appropriate option and the medicine is still required.
- Consider a local service which may include developing a system whereby all specials are dispensed from secondary care.
- Consider if there is a possibility to repatriate all specials back into secondary care, being mindful that the prescriber will be taking on the legal responsibility and also around the practicalities involved in transfer of care of medicines.
- Each Integrated Care Board (ICB) in England, Health Board (HB) in Scotland and Wales should work on a shared policy and an agreed formulary for specials, used across their health system.
- Ensure that there are good working relationships between all parties involved, as good communication is essential to make this work.
- Adapt the resources provided and localise them to support your own scheme.

What are the options around supply of specials to individual patients?

Local system governance arrangements should be in place to support the safe and effective procurement and supply of specials in order to provide consistently safe and effective specials to treat their patients.¹ Each ICB/HB in England, Scotland and Wales should work on a shared policy and an agreed formulary for Specials. The policy should include:

- The most appropriate clinical setting for initiation of the special.
- Which specials are included in the policy, i.e. Part VIIIB and Part VIID Drug Tariff specials and /or non-Drug Tariff specials.
- Continued prescribing of the special, for example by whom and in which clinical setting.
- Transfer of care of patients prescribed specials, how this is done and what information needs to be provided to prescribers and patients. [PrescQIPP bulletin 278: Transfer of care around medicines](#) covers good practice for safe and effective transfer of care between different care settings.
- The procurement and supply of a special to the dispensing pharmacy and to the patient. The policy should describe how the procurement of specials will contribute to the [NHS Net Zero and Social Value goals](#).
- The monitoring required and who is responsible for this.
- The process to follow when a special is discontinued to ensure that information is shared with GP practice and the patient record updated.

Options appraisal

When appraising different options around the choice and supply of specials it is beneficial to have an open communication network with support mechanisms in place to ensure that good quality and cost-effective specials are acquired which safely meet the patient's needs. It is important that any service model chosen has an equality and diversity impact analysis undertaken so not to disadvantage anyone in the proposed pathway. Where there is a decision to go out to procurement, a conversation with your procurement team within the ICB or HB may be beneficial to ensure all current procurement rules are considered.

References

1. Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. Professional Guidance for the Procurement and Supply of Specials. December 2015. <https://www.rpharms.com/Portals/0/RPS%20document%20library/Open%20access/Support/toolkit/specials-professional-guidance.pdf>

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| Additional resources available | Bulletin | https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/bulletins/bulletin-317-repatriation-of-specials/ |
| | Tools | |

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