

# Implementing the malnutrition Pathway in the Community



## Service model led by GP practice based pharmacists

Malnutrition Task Force & Soar Beyond



### Description of the initiative

This project aims to implement the national Malnutrition Pathway 'Managing Adult Malnutrition in the Community' within one locality covering a population of 15,000 patients. The initiative will primarily be focussed on the detection and management of malnutrition in GP practices but will include engagement with other stakeholder's e.g. local dietetics teams, nursing teams, community pharmacists, voluntary sector locally and local Healthwatch. We will engage primary care commissioning and provider organisations to deliver the programme at locality level, involving multiple GP practices simultaneously. The project will include:

- Education on the clinical and practical aspects of managing malnutrition including NICE guidance, the evidence base and how to implement the national pathway: which patient groups, how to detect and options for management including Oral Nutrition Supplements (ONS) and access to supporting information and resources for patients
- GP practice level implementation – we will develop and implement a standardised methodology for each practice to identify and manage patients within day to day clinical practice
- Data collection and analysis to demonstrate outcomes
- Sharing of best practice to support spread– writing up the project and raising awareness of the practical methods and outcomes achieved

### Rationale/Background of the initiative

Awareness of the benefits of proactive management of malnutrition in the community amongst primary care professionals remains very low. A key driver of NHS policy is to drive service efficiencies and improved outcomes for patients and the healthcare system and appropriate management of malnutrition provides an ideal vehicle to support this objective. There is a great deal of focus in CCGs in reviewing the use of ONS, driven largely by the need to reduce prescribing costs. NICE estimates that £72,000 per 100,000 population could be saved by the NHS with more appropriate management of malnutrition. However, there are few examples of a balanced approach to management. This project aims to address inappropriate prescribing but more importantly, also to identify unmet need in high risk groups e.g. care home patients, COPD, wound management and stroke, which is the where the bulk of real cost and poor outcomes and efficiencies lie.

## **Scope of project, activities, implementation**

The project will include education of primary care health professionals within a locality (GP practices and associated staff, including community nurses and dietetics teams) followed by identification and clinical review to assess malnutrition risk and to implement the pathway in specific patient groups. Patient will be followed up at 3, 6 and 12 months to assess outcomes:

- People already receiving ONS (does the treatment follow the pathway recommendations, is the treatment optimised, is the patient complying with treatment?)
- People with COPD
- Wound management
- Stroke patients
- Care Home residents – have they had appropriate screening and management (for those at high risk requiring treatment)?
- People with dysphagia

## **Education**

We will run an education event at a locality level for GP practice staff, nurses and community pharmacists to raise awareness and understanding of the pathway and to explain how the implementation arm will run. The programme will also include the future vision for the locality to continue to implement the principles in day-to-day practice beyond the initial project, to ensure sustainability of the benefits to patients and the healthcare system. We will look to partner with the local dietetics team to support the content and also as a way of developing and strengthening local relationships.

## **Practice Level Implementation**

Clinical practice pharmacists will deliver the programme. This role is currently being expanded by NHS England as a move to increase skill mix and reduce workload pressures in general practice.

We will develop a standardised protocol based on the Managing Adult Malnutrition in the Community pathway ([www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk](http://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk)), which will include:

- How to run searches to identify patients within the GP clinical system
- The notes review process
- The process for face to face clinical reviews with patients
- Data to be collected and documented
- Referral criteria
- Which treatments to be used (in line with national and local NHS guidance, where it exists)

## **Results/Outcomes, Conclusions**

The data will be collected and analysed in a format that can be shared with other NHS and associated organisations. We anticipate capturing data to support the following outcomes:

An assessment of current ONS prescribing - are patients taking it as directed, is the treatment appropriate, Is there a review and exit strategy in place?

How many patients in the 'at risk' groups were previously screened for and treated for malnutrition?

Levels of understanding of the management of malnutrition amongst healthcare professionals pre and post education

Surveys of patient experience – pre and post clinical review

Improvement of clinical parameters – 'MUST' score, COPD symptoms, wound healing

Cost and volume of patients on ONS pre and post project