



London Choosing Wisely:

Improving health outcomes for all Londoners – FAQs

July 2018

1) What is London Choosing Wisely?

London Choosing Wisely is a clinically-led programme involving London's five NHS Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs) and 32 Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) with the aim of developing agreement for a consistent set of policies for certain treatments across London.

2) What treatments is the programme reviewing?

The London Choosing Wisely programme will be specifically looking at:

- Surgical removal of benign skin lesions (abnormal growth or abnormal appearance of skin)
- Hip arthroplasty (replacement)
- Knee arthroplasty (replacement)
- Knee arthroscopy (keyhole surgery)
- Interventional treatments for back pain
- Varicose vein procedures
- Shoulder decompression (removing bone spurs and soft tissue through keyhole surgery)
- Cataract surgery (replacing a clouded eye lens with an artificial lens)

3) Why do we need the programme?

The programme will ensure equal treatment access in London to these procedures by developing consistent London-wide treatment policies that are clinically appropriate and based on the latest, robust evidence that they improve patient outcomes. People with an equal need will have equal access to treatments.

The development of a London-wide policy for each treatment area will harmonise and build upon existing local CCG policies and encourage better shared decision making between patients and clinicians about the most clinically effective treatment available.

4) Why have these treatments been specifically selected?

Utilising existing data from across the healthcare system, detailed analysis has taken place to determine which treatment policies should be included. In part, this included examining the number of procedures taking place and the variation in current policy for these procedures across London.

The results from the analyses supported a shortlist of eight procedures (detailed in question 2) for the first phase of this programme.

5) Are clinical guidelines not already in place for these treatments for doctors to follow?

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published guidance on the appropriate treatment for the areas of care being reviewed by the programme. The development of a pan London policy for each treatment will reduce variation of care for all Londoners by ensuring a consistent approach to implementing NICE guidance.

6) How will the programme be of benefit to patients?

The aim of the programme is to reduce variation of care for patients across London by providing doctors with the latest evidence on what treatments should be offered to patients to achieve the best health outcome whilst also seeking to ensure that patients do not receive unnecessary treatment or intervention that will have little impact on their condition. The draft policies developed will be clear, easy to follow and use, and encourage conversations between patients and clinicians about the most clinically effective treatment available.

The programme will ensure a more standardised implementation of best practice and equal access to treatment that is consistent, clinically appropriate and based on robust evidence – all with a sharp focus on improved patient outcomes. The draft policies will also set out what treatment options doctors should discuss and explore with patients before any surgical intervention is considered.

7) How will the programme be of benefit to doctors?

By providing doctors with the latest evidence on what treatments should be offered to patients, the programme will reduce variation of poor practice and reduce the number of patients undergoing unnecessary or inappropriate treatment options. Furthermore, the draft London Choosing Wisely policies, if implemented, would be managed within current local systems and therefore will not add any significant workload for general practitioners in London.

8) Who is leading the programme?

The programme is led by a London Choosing Wisely Steering Group which includes clinical leaders representing each STP, the clinical leads appointed to the review of each area of care, patient representatives, public health experts and equality and diversity experts. The Steering Group is chaired by Dr Vin Diwakar, NHS England (London) Regional Medical Director. You can view the membership of the Steering Group via the dedicated London Choosing Wisely webpage.

9) How will pan London policies be developed for each treatment?

Six Task and Finish Groups have been established to steer the review process for each treatment (with hip and knee policies being considered together). Each Task and Finish Group is chaired by a primary care lead and that individual will also sit on the London Choosing Wisely Steering Group. Membership of the Task and Finish Groups will consist of primary care clinicians from STP patches across London, a secondary care clinical lead for the speciality, and patient representatives. Task and Finish Groups will consult with experts throughout the review process as necessary. You can view the membership of each group via the dedicated London Choosing Wisely web page.

To support the Task and Finish Groups in their work to review each treatment, public health experts will examine all existing CCG treatment policies in London, conduct a clinical evidence review and present a breakdown of these to each Task and Finish Group.

As part of the development of each draft policy, a 'sense checking' phase has been introduced to ensure that the draft policy is easy to follow and use, and ensure patients receive the most effective clinically appropriate treatment available to them. This feedback phase is not a consultation but a phase within the programme to specifically 'sense check' and ensure that the draft policy is easy to follow and use.

Once agreed at Task and Finish Group level, each pan London policy will be presented to the London Choosing Wisely Steering Group. The Steering Group will ensure that a robust and rigorous review process has been carried out and make recommendations on procedure policies to the CCGs.

London Choosing Wisely is advisory and the statutory duty for approval of London-wide policies rests with each CCG governing body. It will be for CCGs to further engage and/or consult locally, prior to implementation.

10) What is the 'sense checking' phase of the programme?

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11) What additional analysis is being conducted?

The Task and Finish Groups will be working to an agreed [ethical framework](#) to guide their discussion when reviewing policies. In line with the legal and ethical duties to CCG populations, the following key principles will be applied to all decisions:

- Rational - ensuring that the decision is based on evidence of clinical effectiveness;
- Socially inclusive - reinforcing the concept of equal opportunity of access to health care;
- Clear and open to scrutiny - decisions and the way they are determined, will be clearly specified, consistent, and easy to understand;
- Taking economic factors into account - in general, low-cost treatments with high effectiveness will be preferred, whereas high cost treatments with low effectiveness are to be discouraged;
- Promoting health for both individuals and the community – the consideration of policies that promote health and avoid people becoming ill alongside curative treatments and other interventions.

12) There has been lots of research carried out about all these procedures – how is the programme sure that it is using the latest research and not basing proposals on old data?

The programme will work with public health experts who will conduct extensive evidence reviews against agreed search terms, key questions and inclusion/exclusion criteria. This evidence pack will be presented to each Task and Finish Group which will include secondary care clinicians from the specialist area. The entire process will involve a rigorous and detailed review of each treatment and will include assessment using the latest and most robust research available.

13) How is this programme of work different to the national Evidence Based Interventions review?

The national [Evidence-Based Interventions \(EBI\)](#) programme is reviewing several conditions / interventions that are in common with the London Choosing Wisely programme: benign skin lesions; back pain (only injections without sciatica); subacromial shoulder decompression; varicose veins; and knee arthroscopy.

The London Choosing Wisely programme will work with the national to support an aligned approach, given that both programmes are using the latest available clinical evidence to draft policy criteria in these conditions.

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14) What are the timescales for the programme?

Task and Finish Groups were established during February 2018 with their first meetings taking place by the end of April 2018. Given the different levels of complexity, the policies will be looked at in three stages and presented to the London Choosing Wisely Steering Group over the course of summer and autumn 2018, before being presented to individual London CCG's Governing Bodies for final decision.

15) Has this work been undertaken already at a local level?

There is variation in local policy for all eight procedures. Where local review has already taken place, the London Choosing Wisely Steering Group will ensure that that a 'once-for-London' approach will not impede any current STP or CCG work programmes in this area. Where appropriate, the programme will build on any local work and extend these policies across London.

16) Will this mean that some treatments will no longer be available?

Public and patients should be reassured that the Task and Finish Groups will undertake a rigorous review process that is clinically-led. The programme will build on any local work and extend these policies across London. The pan London policies developed for each treatment will be informed by the latest, robust evidence to ensure patients receive the most effective clinically appropriate treatment available to them.

17) Is the programme's aim about cost savings in the NHS?

The programme's ambition is to ensure more consistent implementation of best practice and equal access to treatment for all Londoners that is consistent, clinically appropriate and based on robust evidence – all with a sharp focus on improved patient outcomes.

18) Will this mean that access to care for these treatments in London will consequently be different to areas outside of London?

This is an ambitious programme that, if implemented at a pan London level, will position the region at the forefront in delivering appropriate, consistent and robust policies for providing equal access to certain treatments where there has previously been variation in care. It may be that other CCGs or regions outside of London look to the programme's work to shape their own review of policies.

19) What will happen if one CCG decides not to implement a recommendation for a treatment?

The London Choosing Wisely programme itself is advisory and the statutory duty for approval of London-wide policies rests with each CCG governing body who will have the opportunity to consult and debate the draft policies further, before making a decision. As such, it will be for CCGs to further engage and/or consult locally, prior to implementation.

20) How is the programme being communicated?

A comprehensive Communications and Engagement Plan for the programme has been developed. This will guide the extensive liaison with stakeholders at the appropriate stages of the programme – including but not limited to those in the NHS, with patients and patients groups, for example London's Healthwatch organisations, and with many other interested parties.

More regular communications will be sent to STP clinical groups and CCG Governing Bodies as the programme develops. The programme will continue to work closely with CCG and STP leads across the treatment areas under review by the Task and Finish Groups.

It is important to note that London Choosing Wisely is advisory and the statutory duty for approval of London-wide policies rests with each CCG governing body. It will be for CCGs to further engage and/or consult locally, prior to implementation.

21) What is Healthy London Partnership's role in the programme?

Healthy London Partnership, through its commitment to continually improving health outcomes for all Londoners, is facilitating the programme management and communications work of the programme.

For further information please contact the London Choosing Wisely programme team on: hlp.londonchoosingwisely@nhs.net.