

10 February 2025

Dear

## **ATISN 23299 – Spend on Pharmaceutical Products**

Thank you for your request to the Welsh Government for information under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) received on 23 January. You requested the following:

- 1 - Of the full pharmaceutical product budget expenditure for 2023 to 2024 how much of that cost was down to branded products?*
- 2 - How much would have been saved if generic products had been prescribed by GPs and prescribing physicians?*
- 3 - What area i.e health board and towns are the worst for prescribing branded products at additional cost?*
- 4 - What action other than the recommendations posted in November 2024 have been undertaken to seriously reduce the anticipated overspend? This has occurred for a number of years seemingly unabated!*
- 5 - CWP reported these concerns a number of years ago what interim measures were put in place following the concerns raised by these professionals who could see the additional costs and shortages of branded products which led to problems in providing scripts?*
- 6 - Why hasn't this been a factor that Wales NHS senior management and government should have prioritised to reduce the huge burden on the tax payer when other services are being severely restricted in their budgets?*
- 7 - Has there been any action or words of advice to GPs who have continued to issue branded products when other options are available other than when medical needs dictate?*

### **Our Response**

- 1 - Of the full pharmaceutical product budget expenditure for 2023 to 2024 how much of that cost was down to branded products?*
- 2 - How much would have been saved if generic products had been prescribed by GPs and prescribing physicians?*
- 3 - What area i.e health board and towns are the worst for prescribing branded products at additional cost?*

The Welsh Government does not hold the information requested to answer these requests.

You may wish to contact the NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership Primary Care Services for this information. [Contact Primary Care Services - NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership](#)

- 4 - What action other than the recommendations posted in November 2024 have been undertaken to seriously reduce the anticipated overspend? This has occurred for a number of years seemingly unabated!*

[Prescribing of branded generics in NHS Wales: Position statement](#) was published following endorsement by the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group (AWMSG).

Whilst generic prescribing rates are generally very high, the Welsh Government wrote to all health boards in October 2023 requiring them to take further action to stop branded prescribing in primary care where significantly lower cost generics are available.

*5 - CWP reported these concerns a number of years ago what interim measures were put in place following the concerns raised by these professionals who could see the additional costs and shortages of branded products which led to problems in providing scripts?*

*7 - Has there been any action or words of advice to GPs who have continued to issue branded products when other options are available other than when medical needs dictate?*

Requests 5 and 7 relate to individual prescribing decisions or prescribing policies implemented by health boards. You may wish to make contact with the relevant health boards for this information: [Contact us - NHS Wales](#)

*6 - Why hasn't this been a factor that Wales NHS senior management and government should have prioritised to reduce the huge burden on the tax payer when other services are being severely restricted in their budgets?*

Branded prescriptions represent a very small proportion of all prescriptions in Wales when measured both by number of prescriptions and by cost. The overall cost of inappropriate branded prescribing does not represent a significant cost to NHS Wales.

The Welsh Government fully supports the position statement endorsed by AWMSG and has written to health boards to encourage uptake of this guidance amongst their prescribers.

## **Next Steps**

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit  
Welsh Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ  
or Email: [Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales](mailto:Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales)

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely,