

## **(NMOP) Dietitian-led Direct Ordering of Oral Nutritional Supplements Pilot Service**

### **Overview**

The Dietitian-led Direct Ordering of Oral Nutritional Supplements (ONS) Pilot was delivered in Northern Ireland as part of the **Non-Medical Optimisation Programme (NMOP)**.

The pilot enabled **dietitians to directly order ONS for care home residents**, removing the requirement for **GP-generated prescriptions**.

The pilot aimed to:

- Improve **timely access to ONS**
- Reduce waste
- Improve clinical appropriateness through **enhanced dietetic oversight**
- Reduce the need for **GP involvement and follow-up**

### **Project Overview**

The pilot operated between **April and June 2021** across:

- **Belfast Health and Social Care Trust**
- **Northern Health and Social Care Trust**
- **Western Health and Social Care Trust**

It involved **six care homes** and tested two supply routes:

- **Community pharmacy supply**
- **BSO Pharmaceutical and Logistics Services (PaLS)**

Dietitians directly ordered ONS using a **stock-based ordering model**, replacing individual GP prescriptions.

### **Key Outcomes**

#### **Access and Timeliness of Supply**

- Access to ONS improved significantly, with:
  - **Community pharmacy supply typically within 24–72 hours**
- Prior to the pilot, access often took **over one week or longer**
- Process mapping showed:
  - **Reduction from ~10 steps to 6 steps** (community pharmacy route)
- In contrast, the **BSO PaLS route remained slower (~2 weeks)** due to process constraints

## Reduction in Waste and Improved Clinical Appropriateness

The pilot demonstrated major improvements:

- **83% of stakeholders agreed ONS waste reduced**
- Waste reduced through:
  - Stock-based ordering
  - No resident-specific labelling (enabling reuse)

Clinical appropriateness improved significantly:

- ONS initiated by dietitians increased from **82% to 98%**
- Residents reviewed within pathway timelines increased from **63% to 100%**
- Proportion of residents receiving ONS reduced from **48% to 30%**

## Patient/Resident Outcomes and Care Quality

- Faster access enabled **earlier clinical intervention**
- Improved oversight reduced:
  - Inappropriate long-term prescribing
  - Risk of harm (e.g. incorrect products, over-supplementation)
- **ONS compliance improved significantly**, with:
  - Full consumption increasing from **63% to 93%**
- Residents benefited from:
  - Better product choice
  - More tailored nutritional care

## Cost Impact

- **Average net saving of £3,621 per month** across the six care homes
- Equivalent to **~£43,000 annual saving (extrapolated)**

## Clinical Practice and Governance

The evaluation identified:

- Strong governance arrangements supporting dietitian-led ordering
- Improved clinical oversight and monitoring
- Effective multidisciplinary working
- **No safety concerns** identified

## **Achievement of Pilot Objectives**

The pilot demonstrated that dietitian-led ordering can:

- Improve **timeliness of access to ONS**
- Reduce waste and unnecessary prescribing
- Improve clinical appropriateness of nutritional support
- Reduce reliance on GP prescribing processes
- Streamline care pathways and improve efficiency

While system-wide GP workload impact was not formally quantified, the evaluation confirmed **clear benefits within pilot pathways**.

## **Partners Involved**

The pilot was delivered in partnership with:

- **Medicines Optimisation Innovation Centre (MOIC)** – evaluation
- **Belfast Health and Social Care Trust**
- **Northern Health and Social Care Trust**
- **Western Health and Social Care Trust**
- **Community pharmacies**

## **Pilot Duration**

**April 2021 – June 2021**