

# HC-UK Controlled Drugs Conference CQC Annual Update

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## The safer management of controlled drugs: Annual update 2020

**Categories:** Public

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We are responsible for making sure that health and adult social care providers, and other regulators, maintain a safe environment for the management and use of controlled drugs in England.

We do this under the Controlled Drugs (Supervision of Management and Use) Regulations 2013.

As part of our responsibilities under the regulations, we report annually on what we find through our oversight. Based on this information, we also make **recommendations** to help ensure the continuing effectiveness of the arrangements for managing controlled drugs safely in England.

Our findings are important for:

- all controlled drugs accountable officers (CDAOs) in England and their support teams
- organisations that manage controlled drugs
- health and care professionals with an interest or remit in controlled drugs
- commissioners of healthcare services
- professional healthcare and regulatory bodies

The data in this annual update relates to the calendar year 2020, but we also include relevant information for the first half of 2021 and cover the period during the COVID-19 pandemic.



# Key points for 2020



- Controlled drugs governance and audits
- Prescribing through remote patient consultations
- Use of Electronic Prescription Service
- Medicines for people at the end of their life
- Signatures, storage and distribution
- Personal protective equipment
- Unused medicines in care homes and hospices

# Schedule 4 and 5 controlled drugs



- National oversight of prescribing Schedule 4 and 5 controlled drugs in the independent health sector.
- Inappropriate prescribing of these medicines that have contributed to individual deaths.
- Theft and diversion
- Examples of good practice

- Continue to receive reports of harm
- Morphine included, but not limited to this
- Repeat supplies
- Individual review
- Dispensing labels

We have heard about issues for people who are prescribed medicines to treat substance misuse and are admitted to hospital, for example:

- on admission it is not always ascertained when they last took their medicine
- the hospital does not prescribe their medicine
- the hospital prescribes the medicine but does not have it in stock and the patient can't get timely access to it

In some cases, these issues have resulted in avoidable harm for the patient.

# Sharing information about staff involved in diverting controlled drugs



- Continue to hear about incidents associated with this, nationally
- History of diversion can be hidden
- Missed opportunity to provide support
- Appropriate processes in place for employment checks
- Requirements for information sharing

# Concerns discussed at CDLINs



- Pregabalin and gabapentin
- Temporary residents
- Multiple supply sources
- Identity checks
- Self-prescribing



# Concerns discussed at CDLINs



- Temporary staff and local policy changes
- CD balance checks
- Prescription security
- Electronic prescribing in hospitals

# Themes from inspections



- CDAO notifications
- Home Office licenses
- Guidance and safety alerts
- Reporting and learning from incidents
- Record keeping

# Themes from inspections



- CD storage
- Single nurse administration
- Transdermal patches
- Governance

- General trends
- Community pharmacist consultation service
- Ketamine
- Dental prescribing
- Non-medical prescribers

1. Providers need to include controlled drugs governance as part of their COVID-19 recovery plans
2. Providers should enable all health and care staff to freely engage and participate in activities that support reflection and learning
3. Those leading and working in local health and care systems need to collaborate to reduce risks of avoidable harm associated with controlled drugs
4. All health and care professionals need to prioritise personalised patient care in the context of controlled drugs

- CD Annual Update: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/themes-care/safer-management-controlled-drugs-annual-update-2020#information>
- Newsletters: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/controlled-drugs/controlled-drugs-national-group>

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