

Media release

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MEDICINE WASTE CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES ACROSS SOUTH WEST ESSEX



Françoise Price, Local Head of Medicines Waste, shocked at the level of waste on local pharmacy visit.

A new campaign aimed at saving the NHS in south west Essex millions of pounds is being launched today.

The *WASTE NOT, WANT NOT - MEDICINES WASTE* campaign will tackle the issue of unused prescription medicine which is estimated to waste around £2.5million locally.

£2.5million could pay for approximately either:

- 395 hip replacements
- 230 heart bypass operations
- 3,125 cataract operations
- 337 knee replacements or
- 100 community nurses

Healthcare commissioners **NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)** and **NHS Basildon and Brentwood CCG** have joined forces for a year-long crusade to help reduce NHS medicine waste.

The campaign will address the different issues patients, GPs, pharmacists, care homes and carers face when trying to make the best use of medicines.

To help understand the causes of medicine waste, the CCGs are kick-starting the campaign by asking people to take part in an online survey on their prescription re-ordering habits.

Patients and carers with responsibility for managing and administering medication can take part in the survey [here](http://bit.ly/medswaste_ThurrockCCG) (http://bit.ly/medswaste_ThurrockCCG or http://bit.ly/medswaste_BasildonCCG)

Anyone who would prefer to respond via post, can download a paper survey [here](#) or send their stories about medicine waste to the following addresses: for Thurrock, letters should be addressed to **Waste Not Want Not, Thurrock CCG, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays RM17 6SL** and for Basildon/Brentwood, letters should be addressed to **Waste Not Want Not, Basildon and Brentwood CCG, Phoenix Place, Christopher Martin Road, Basildon SS14 3HG**

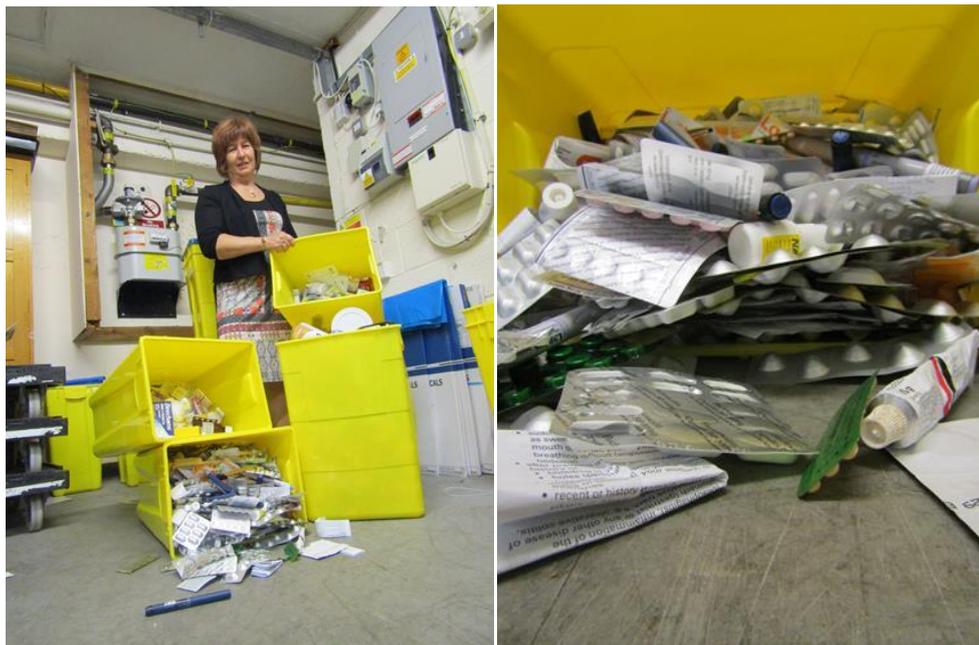
Few patients realise that once they have left a pharmacy with their medicines, even if they never open them, the medicines cannot be recycled or used by anyone else after being returned to the pharmacy and have to be destroyed. Therefore, people are being asked to **check their medicines bag at the pharmacy and only take home what they need.**

The campaign will:

- **Urge patients to check cupboards, only order the medicines they need and not to stockpile**
- **Ask patients, GPs and pharmacists and other professionals involved in prescribing or dispensing to review the use of the medicines**
- **Encourage people to try self-care first, talk to their pharmacist at the first signs of feeling unwell and take more responsibility for their own health**
- **Advise patients to take medicines exactly as prescribed**
- **Discourage the inappropriate use of antibiotics**
- **Remind patients to take their medicines with them when going into hospital**

Françoise Price, Interim Head of a joint dedicated Medicines Optimisation team covering both CCGs, said: “The annual cost of wasted medication is estimated at £300 million in England. The most expensive medicine in the NHS is the one that is never taken. While some drug wastage is inevitable, £2.5 million locally is a lot of money to waste and this is the tip of the iceberg as it does not include the cost of disposal and more importantly the health cost to the individual.

“We are not saying people are deliberately wasting their medicine but they may have stopped taking their medication perhaps because they feel well again, have had side effects, have forgotten to take it or simply because they don’t understand the benefits of the medication they have been prescribed.



(left) Up in smoke! Françoise wades through medications destined for the incinerator. (right) What a waste! Unused medication returned to local pharmacy - part of £2.5million returned each year.

“We urge people and the families and carers of patients who take prescription medicine not to automatically tick the box on their repeat prescription form but check that they are still using the items. Patients should make the most of their medication reviews. The reviews are an opportunity for patients to speak openly about their medication and ask any questions or raise any concerns about the medicines they are using.”

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT- MEDICINES WASTE posters and flyers will be sent out to GP practices, pharmacies and libraries etc.

People will be able to follow the campaign on Twitter **@BB_CCG** or **@ThurrockCCG** or **@Basildonhosp** or by searching the hashtags **#wastenotwantnot** and **#medswaste**

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For further information:

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