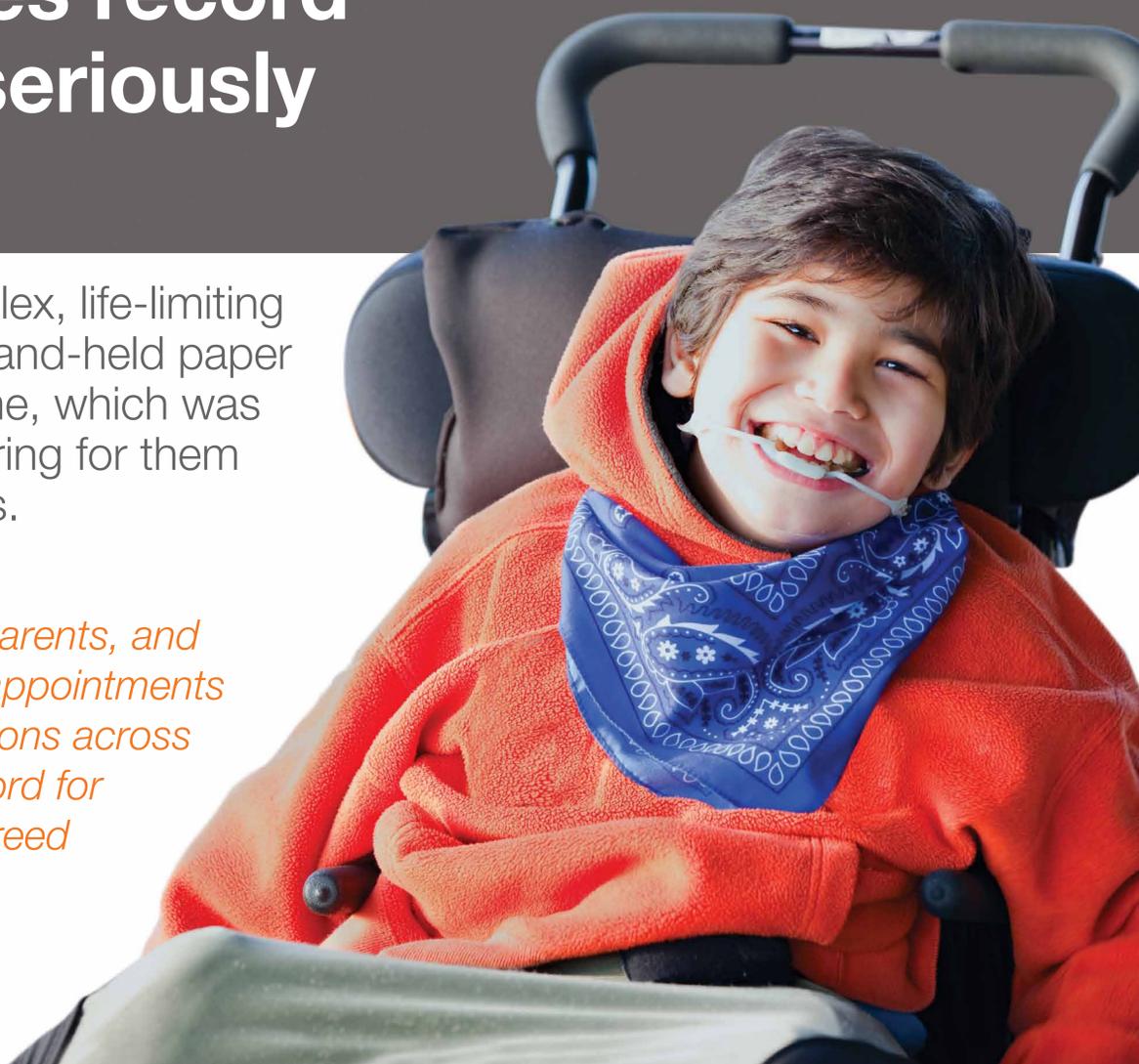


Parent-held medicines record improves safety for seriously ill children

Parents of children in Cornwall with complex, life-limiting medical conditions helped to develop a hand-held paper record of their children's medication regime, which was used by all health and social care staff caring for them across a number of agencies and settings.

“Our ‘My Medicines’ chart was designed by parents, and carried by them to their children’s numerous appointments with different health and social care organisations across the county. Having one central medicines record for each child helped cut medication errors and freed up staff time to spend with the children.”

Steve Turner, Managing Director,
Care Right Now Community Interest Company



Urgent need for robust medicines reconciliation

Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, which runs paediatric community services for the county, identified an issue with multiple medicines records being held by different agencies for local children with complex needs and at the end of life.

This duplication of records was believed to be a major risk factor for medicines errors and a waste of clinical time. It also meant that parents needed to repeat information about their children's medicines time and again, as they accessed services including inpatient services, tertiary centres, community paediatricians, GPs, specialist nurses, short break houses, homecare services and special schools.

The children in question had complex needs including enteral feeding tubes, ventilation, epilepsy and rapidly-changing medicine charts of over 15 drugs per child, with complex titration regimes.

The Trust commissioned Care Right Now to address this issue, beginning with looking at medicines records used at short break houses. The project quickly expanded to cover the entirety of each child's care pathway.

A child-centred ‘My Medicines’ chart

At the start of the project a baseline assessment was conducted with parents and staff. It revealed delays in medicines information reaching children's GPs, difficulties obtaining repeat prescriptions, and a lack of confidence in the organisation of medicines services locally.

As a result, a hand-held personal ‘My Medicines’ chart was designed, detailing all drugs prescribed, doses, formulation, method of delivery and special instructions for each child. Initially designed for use in short break houses, the group quickly saw how useful the chart would be if parents could ‘own’ it and take it with them to all their children's appointments as a central record.

Steve Turner, Managing Director of Care Right Now said: “It's not unusual for these children to be under the care of at least five different local providers, and with no formally agreed process for medicines management across services, the system was inefficient and needed to change.”

Improving safety and incident-reporting

In the first month of the ‘My Medicines’ chart being piloted in practice, 17 ‘near miss’ medicines errors were captured, reported and resolved thanks to the new cross-agency system. Eleven of these ‘near misses’ related to problems of communication between different service providers. Previously such errors and near misses were not being logged as incidents or tracked across organisations.

The project was well received by parents and carers, and resulted in improved communication and engagement between different clinical groups and providers, with the child's own GP at the heart of the process.

As a legacy of the project, a Community Paediatric Pharmacist was appointed specifically to work with this group of children with complex needs and their families. The creation of this new Pharmacist post means that there is now one person available to help manage the children's medicines across many different providers and agencies in Cornwall.

Contact: Steve Turner
Managing Director
Care Right Now CIC
Email: steve@carerightnow.co.uk
Telephone: 01872 248 327

www.nice.org.uk