



## Castle Point and Rochford Clinical Commissioning Group

NHS Castle Point and Rochford CCG  
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Dear Patient

We wish to inform you that NHS Castle Point and Rochford Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) no longer supports the prescribing of gluten-free food. As a result of this your practice will no longer be issuing prescriptions for gluten-free food with immediate effect.

This decision has been taken by NHS Castle Point and Rochford Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) which commissions most local NHS services.

The CCG is facing a significant financial challenge and is reviewing all local services in order to find net savings of more than £11m. This is set against a backdrop of increased demand on local health services, more complex healthcare cases and an ageing population.

As such the CCG has to make difficult decisions in order to ensure available finances are focussed on those patients with the greatest need. In Castle Point and Rochford, gluten-free foods on prescription cost the NHS around £100k a year.

Gluten-free prescribing started more than 30 years ago when such products were not easily available to buy in the shops, and so the NHS offered the prescription service to help coeliac patients better manage their diet. However, due to changing diets and lifestyle choices there is now a much wider variety of foods available in the shops and supermarkets and gluten-free alternatives are widely available too.

The CCG's Clinical Executive Committee, a committee which includes local GPs, reviewed this service as agreed in a public consultation in 2016 which initially saw a 50% reduction in gluten-free prescribing. Clinicians have been closely following the impact in Castle Point and Rochford and in other localities where a total ban is in place to ensure any change would be clinically safe. The CCG's Governing Body has consequently agreed to remove gluten-free food from prescription.

The vast majority of raw ingredients are naturally gluten-free and Coeliac UK ([www.coeliac.org.uk](http://www.coeliac.org.uk)) has produced a useful and comprehensive food directory. This lists the wide range of gluten-free foods now available from supermarkets and other outlets.

Chair: Dr Kashif Siddiqui  
Accountable Officer: Ian Stidston

If you have any queries regarding this decision then please contact NHS Castle Point and Rochford Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG):

(w) [www.castlepointandrochfordccg.nhs.uk](http://www.castlepointandrochfordccg.nhs.uk)

(e) [cpr.ccg@nhs.net](mailto:cpr.ccg@nhs.net)

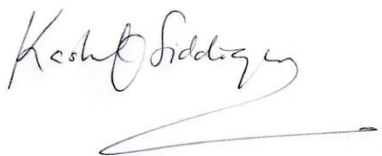
(t) 01268 464586

Alternatively, you can speak with Healthwatch Essex, an independent organisation which provides information and captures your experiences of health and care services in Essex. The contact details are 0300 500 1895 or [info@healthwatchessex.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchessex.org.uk).

Some gluten-free food products are more expensive and so if you have any concerns about money, you can get advice and support from local your Citizens Advice who can help advise on any benefits you might be entitled to.

- Citizens Advice Castle Point: 03444 770808
- Citizens Advice Rochford and Rayleigh: 03444 770808

Yours sincerely



Dr Kashif Siddiqui  
GP Chair  
NHS Castle Point and Rochford CCG



Ian Stidston  
Accountable Officer  
NHS Castle Point and Rochford CCG