# LOTHIAN LOCAL MEDICAL COMMITTEE LIMITED

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**To: All General Practices in Lothian**

Dear Colleague

**Managing Medicines in Schools and Early Years Settings in LOTHIAN**

There have been increasing numbers of patients making appointments with their GP for the sole reason of obtaining prescriptions for children for medication that they would normally buy without requiring medical advice. Apparently some nurseries and schools have developed policies that demand prescriptions even for such non-prescription medicines as paracetamol. When challenged they have stated that they believe this to be following government advice.

Below we quote the advice given by the Department of Health in their ‘Managing Medicines in Schools and Early Years Settings’ document released in March 2005 ([http://www.education.gov.uk/publications//eOrderingDownload/1448-2005DCL-ENv3final.pdf](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/1448-2005DCL-ENv3final.pdf))

**Non-Prescription Medicines (p9)**, i.e. those available over the counter, such as paracetamol.

Staff should never give a non-prescribed medicine to a child unless there is specific prior written permission from the parents.

Where the head agrees to administer a non-prescribed medicine it must be in accordance with the employer’s policy. The employer’s policy should set out the circumstances under which staff may administer non-prescribed medicines.

Criteria, in the national standards for under 8s day care providers, make it clear that non-prescription medicines should not normally be administered. Where a non-prescribed medicine is administered to a child it should be recorded on a form such as Form 5 or 6 (see Annex B) and the parents informed.

If a child suffers regularly from frequent or acute pain the parents should be encouraged to refer the matter to the child’s GP.

**Prescription Only Medicines (p8)**

These “should only be taken to school or settings when essential; that is where it would be detrimental to a child’s health if the medicine were not administered during the school or setting ‘day’. Schools and settings should only accept medicines that have been prescribed by a doctor, dentist, nurse prescriber or pharmacist prescriber.

Medicines should always be provided in the original container as dispensed by a pharmacist and include the prescriber’s instructions for administration.”

This does not seem to support the requirement for a prescription to be issued for drugs available over the counter in pharmacies, though prior written permission from parents is obligatory. Prescribed medicines do require prescriber’s instructions, which should be printed on the original container when dispensed by the pharmacist. Duplicate instructions should not be necessary.

Where school and nursery policies demand prescriptions it may be worth printing this advice out for them together with the reference to allow them to decide for themselves. If they are unable to change their policy then; in order to prevent the waste of both medical and parental time; recommending the NHS Minor Ailment Scheme (which allows patients that do not pay for prescriptions to obtain medication prescribed by the pharmacist) seems to be a reasonable compromise.

It would be helpful if prescribers could consider medication regimes that do not require medicines to be given during school hours where possible.

Should there be any ongoing problems or questions please get in touch with the Lothian LMC Office.

Dr Peter Shishodia

Medical Secretary