



LEARNING DISABILITY, AUTISM & SAFER HEALTHCARE

STOMP

Understanding medication, regular reviews and reducing inappropriate psychotropic prescribing.

The key idea

STOMP is an NHS England programme focused on making sure psychotropic medication is used for the right reason, at the lowest effective dose and for no longer than needed. It is not about stopping medication that is appropriate and helping someone.

What is STOMP?

STOMP stands for Stopping Over Medication of People with a learning disability and autistic people. It is a national NHS England work programme aimed at reducing inappropriate prescribing of psychotropic medication and improving the quality of medication reviews. STOMP applies across children, young people and adults; the related STAMP programme focuses specifically on children and young people.

In everyday language

STOMP asks a simple set of questions: Why is this medicine being used? Is it helping? Is the dose right? Are side effects being checked? Is it still needed? Could other support help as well?

What is psychotropic medication?

Psychotropic medication affects the brain and can influence mood, thoughts, perception or behaviour. The term covers different groups of medicines, including antipsychotics, antidepressants, medicines used for anxiety, sedatives, stimulants and some anti-seizure medicines. Many of these medicines have important and appropriate clinical uses.

Important to know

STOMP is not an anti-medication campaign. The aim is appropriate prescribing: medication for a clear reason, with benefits and side effects monitored and the continued need reviewed.

Why was STOMP introduced?

NHS England reports substantial prescribing inequalities. In 2025, people with a learning disability were thought to be around 15 times more likely, and autistic people around 7 times more likely, to be prescribed an antipsychotic than the general population. A higher prescribing rate does not by itself show that every prescription is inappropriate, but it is one reason careful review and monitoring matter.

Medication and behaviour

Sometimes psychotropic medication is prescribed when a person's behaviour is described as challenging. Behaviour is not itself a diagnosis. Pain, physical illness, communication barriers, sensory distress, trauma, sleep difficulties, environmental demands and unmet support needs can all influence behaviour and should be considered.

What this might look like

A person begins hitting their head more often. Before assuming they need a stronger sedating medicine, the team considers possible pain, constipation, dental problems, changes in routine, sensory overload and communication difficulties, alongside an appropriate clinical assessment.

When antipsychotic medication is considered for behaviour

NICE guidance says antipsychotic medication for behaviour that challenges should only be considered in particular circumstances, such as when psychological or other interventions have not produced sufficient change, treatment of a coexisting health problem has not reduced the behaviour, or the risk to the person or others is very severe. When used for this purpose it should be combined with psychological or other interventions.

For professionals

NICE recommends identifying the target behaviour, deciding how improvement will be measured, using the minimum effective dose, monitoring side effects and having a clear review and stopping strategy.

What should a medication review explore?

A good review is person-centred and looks beyond the prescription list. It considers why each medicine was started, whether it is helping, side effects, physical and mental health, behaviour and wellbeing, other medicines, the person's own experience, and whether the original reason for treatment is still present.

What you can ask

What is this medicine for? What benefit are we expecting? How will we know if it is working? What side effects should we look for? When will it be reviewed? Is there a plan for reducing or stopping it if it is no longer helping?

Side effects matter

Psychotropic medicines can cause side effects that affect health and quality of life. Depending on the medicine, these can include sedation, weight gain, metabolic changes, movement problems, hormonal effects and sexual side effects. Monitoring should reflect the particular medicine and the person's individual risks.

What this might look like

Someone is calmer after starting medication but is now sleeping through much of the day and has stopped taking part in activities they previously enjoyed. A review should consider both the apparent benefit and the impact of sedation on their quality of life.

Alternatives and additional support

STOMP encourages teams to consider appropriate non-drug approaches as well as medication. What helps will depend on why the difficulty is happening. Possibilities may include treating pain or illness, communication support, environmental or sensory adjustments, sleep support, psychological intervention, changes to care and support, or positive behavioural approaches where appropriate.

Reasonable adjustments

Information about medication and reviews should be accessible to the person. Adjustments might include Easy Read information, visual explanations, additional processing time, a quieter appointment, an advocate or supporter, alternative communication methods, or arranging the appointment in a way that is more manageable.

Reasonable adjustment

A person who finds rapid spoken information difficult could receive the medication questions in writing before the appointment, have longer to respond, and be given a written summary of what was agreed afterwards.

Involving the person

People should be involved in decisions about their medication as far as possible. Information should be presented in a way they can understand and use. Family members, carers or advocates may contribute valuable information when appropriate, but the person's own preferences, communication and rights remain central.

Do not stop medication suddenly

STOMP does not mean abruptly stopping prescribed medication. Some psychotropic medicines can cause withdrawal effects or a return of symptoms if they are reduced too quickly. Changes should be planned with the relevant prescriber and monitored appropriately.

Important to know

If you are worried about a medicine, ask the prescriber, pharmacist or clinical team for a review rather than changing the dose or stopping it independently.

At your appointment

It can help to bring an up-to-date medication list and notes about changes in sleep, appetite, mood, behaviour, alertness, movement or physical health. If the person communicates distress or side effects in an individual way, explain this clearly. Ask who will review the medicine next and when.

Practical check

Do we know why each medicine is prescribed? Is there a clear target or intended benefit? Are side effects being monitored? Has the person's experience been heard? Have physical health, communication, environment and other support needs been considered? Is there a clear review plan?

References & Further Resources

These resources provide current guidance and practical information about STOMP, medication reviews and the use of psychotropic medication for autistic people and people with a learning disability.

NHS England - STOMP & STAMP

The main NHS England programme page explains the purpose of STOMP and STAMP, psychotropic medicines, medication reviews, organisational responsibilities and resources for people, families and professionals.

NICE NG11

Guidance on prevention and interventions for behaviour that challenges in people with a learning disability, including when antipsychotic medication may be considered and how it should be initiated, monitored and reviewed.

NHS England Easy Read STOMP

An accessible explanation of STOMP designed to make information about medication and reviews easier to understand. NHS England also provides translated versions.

STOMP/STAMP family resources

NHS England signposts practical guides for families and carers, advocacy information, medication pathways and materials that can support conversations with prescribers.

How to use these resources

STOMP supports safer, more person-centred prescribing; it does not replace individual clinical assessment. Decisions about starting, changing or stopping medication should be based on the person's needs, the reason for treatment, current guidance and appropriate monitoring.