



National Allergy Strategy Group Briefing

The problem

- Despite allergy being common and increasing in prevalence, severity and complexity and with an estimated 8% of children now living with food allergy NHS allergy services are poor.
- There is a wide and unacceptable gap between patient need and service provision. At all levels in the NHS there is insufficient expertise in allergy
- This is because of a lack of funding and priority for allergy. Commissioning for local services is inadequate, often because they are not aware of the need.
- About 1 in 3 of the population or 21 million have a disease where allergy may be involved. Many of these could be managed in primary care by a family doctor yet there is a lack of knowledge amongst GPs to ensure that patients are diagnosed or managed in primary care or referred appropriately.
- Up to 7 million have allergy severe enough to require specialist allergy care yet there are only a small number of allergy specialists. This is because few posts are funded and few doctors are being trained in allergy. There are currently only approximately 33 whole time-equivalent allergy specialists working in England

The solution

- GPs, practice nurses and health visitors should receive increased and improved training in allergy to improve allergy awareness, enabling them to manage the simpler allergies in primary care and refer effectively
- Undergraduate medical curricula should include increased and improved education in allergy
- Care pathways should be significantly improved to ensure patients receive an accurate and timely diagnosis and are not relying on wholly inappropriate and potentially dangerous alternative testing
- Critical to better care is to increase the body of expertise. The NASG believes that to address this, more allergy specialist posts need to be created and funded in the NHS
- Priority is given to the clinical and cost effective commissioning of allergy services so that patients have access to appropriate treatment