

Implementation Guide: Responding to Prevention of Future Deaths Reports – Addison’s Disease

A simple, practical approach for general practice

Context

Recent Prevention of Future Deaths reports have highlighted the importance of supporting patients with Addison’s disease to carry a Steroid Emergency Card.

These cards are critical. In an emergency, they alert healthcare professionals that steroid treatment must not be stopped, particularly if a patient is unable to communicate.

The challenge for practices is turning this into something practical and achievable within existing workload.

This guide sets out a simple, low-burden approach to support implementation.

What good looks like (in practice)

- * Patients with Addison’s disease have and carry a Steroid Emergency Card
- * Their emergency plan is documented (e.g. within a Universal Care Plan where used)
- * Processes are in place to support this consistently over time

A simple step-by-step process

Step 1: Assign ownership (5 minutes)

Allocate this to a single role, for example:

- * Care coordinator
- * Admin lead
- * Practice pharmacist

This avoids it becoming “everyone’s job” (and no one’s job).

Step 2: Order Steroid Emergency Cards

Cards can be ordered via:

- * PCSE online
- * NHS Forms / Print / Exemptions / Cards

Tip: Order a small batch initially (e.g. 20–50) and store centrally.

Step 3: Identify patients

Run a clinical system search for:

- * Addison’s disease
- * Primary adrenal insufficiency

Where appropriate, include relevant SNOMED/Read codes.

Step 4: Make cards available to patients

Ensure cards can be issued through existing touchpoints:

- * Reception
- * Routine GP or nurse appointments
- * Medication or long-term condition reviews

Focus on opportunistic distribution, rather than creating additional workload.

Step 5: Record and code

Add a simple note or code when a card is issued, for example:

- * “Steroid Emergency Card issued”

This supports:

- * Clinical record keeping
- * Governance and future review



Step 6: Check emergency plans

Where appropriate:

- * Ensure emergency advice is documented
- * Add or update within a Universal Care Plan (where used)

Step 7: Build into routine workflow

To sustain this over time, incorporate into: * New patient record checks

- * Long-term condition reviews
- * Medication reviews

This prevents it becoming a one-off exercise.

Why this matters

This is a small, practical intervention with potentially life-saving impact.

The key is not adding complexity, but making it easy for practices to act:

- * Clear ownership
- * Simple identification of patients
- * Use of existing workflows
- * Opportunistic follow-through

Make it easy for your team

This is the kind of task that can easily sit on a list and not get done.

But with a simple process like this, it becomes:

"Right, I'm going to do that."

Further information

- * NHS England website
- * NICE website

Source

Based on NHS England bulletin: "Remind patients to carry their emergency card for Addison's disease"