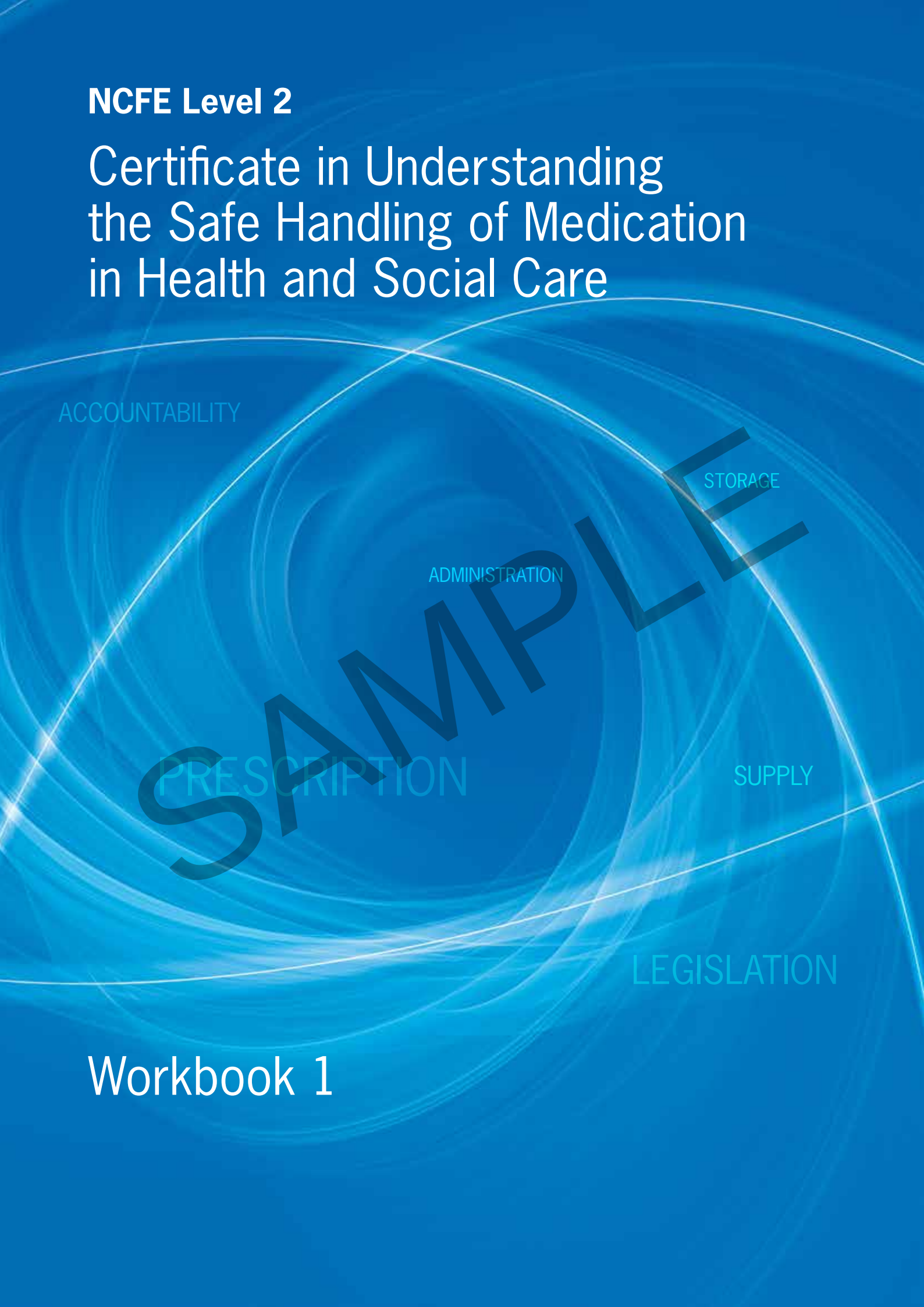
NCFE Level 2

Certificate in Understanding the Safe Handling of Medication in Health and Social Care



Workbook 1

This section will introduce the types of medicine you will come across in the work environment. You will also look at legislation and guidance about medicines.

The different types of medicine available and why they are used

Please read the following as it will help you to answer question 1.

Medicines play an essential role in maintaining health, preventing illness, managing chronic conditions and curing disease. In some cases medicines can be life-saving, but every medicine, no matter how 'safe', can result in side effects and may be dangerous or even life-threatening if given in the wrong dose, by the wrong route or to the wrong person. For this reason, your employer must provide you with guidelines for the safe handling of medication. The guidelines are set out within the organisation's policies. The policies and associated procedures are there to protect everyone who is involved in handling medication, including individuals, colleagues and yourself. Therefore, if you handle medicine, it is vital that you are familiar with, and follow, these policies and procedures.

Medicine names

There are many different types of medicine on the market, and most of them are known by more than one name. There are literally thousands of different names for medicines, some of which are **brand names** and some of which are **generic names**.

Fact

Generic names are based on the main ingredient of each medicine, and names may often sound similar. For example a group of antibiotics that all work in a similar way (penicillin, amoxicillin, flucloxacillin, ampicillin) have names that sound alike.

The **brand name** of a medicine is the name given by the manufacturer. Several companies may make the same medicine and each one will have their own brand name.

A very common medicine that is known by its generic as well as brand names is Paracetamol. Paracetamol is the generic name, but it is also sold under brand names such as Panadol and Calpol.

The brand name of a medicine is usually written most prominently on packaging, and can be recognised by the symbols ® or ™. The generic name must also be included on the packaging, but is often in smaller print.

Different brands of a medicine may vary in colour, shape and size. Some may have a different coating or taste. This can be confusing to an individual who has been used to taking a tablet of a certain size or colour. In such instances, it will be important to explain the reason for the difference, to help the individual understand that the medicine is the same, and it is just the brand that has changed.

Knowledge Activity 1: Take a look at some medicines that are commonly used. Make a note of their generic names and their brand names.

Types of medicine

There are many different medicines which are used for a variety of different conditions. Medicines can be put into groups depending on what they are used for. For example:

- The body part or system they affect – e.g. cardiovascular medicines are used to treat conditions of the heart (cardio) and blood vessels (vascular).
- The type of illness/condition or disease they are used to treat – e.g. antidepressants are used to treat depression.

Some medicines are classified according to the chemical group to which they belong.

Below are some of the more common groups of medicines that you are likely to come across in a health or care setting. These medicines have been grouped according to the type of illness/condition or disease they are used to treat.

Type of medicine	What this medicine is used for	Examples of medicines in this group
Antibiotics	Antibiotics are used to treat bacterial infections. Some antibiotics can be used to treat a wide range of bacterial infections and are known as broad spectrum antibiotics. Other antibiotics are only effective against specific types of bacteria and are known as narrow spectrum antibiotics.	Amoxicillin Penicillin Vancomycin Erythromycin
Analgesics	Analgesic medication, also known as painkillers, is used to relieve pain. There are several different types of analgesics that can be used for pain control, and the type of analgesic chosen would depend upon the type and severity of the pain.	Paracetamol Ibuprofen Tramadol Morphine
Anticonvulsants	Anticonvulsants are used in the treatment of seizures caused by epilepsy.	Carbamazepine
Antihypertensive medication	Antihypertensives are used to treat and lower high blood pressure.	Amlodipine Atenolol Propanalol
Antiemetics	Antiemetics are used to prevent and control vomiting and sickness.	Metoclopramide Prochlorperazine Domperidone
Antihistamines	Antihistamines are used to treat and relieve allergy-type symptoms associated with conditions such as hay fever. Antihistamines work by blocking the release of histamine, and consequently by reducing symptoms associated with allergies.	Chlorampheniramine Loratadine Fexofenadine

Controlled drugs are a sub-category of POM, and include medicines which may be especially harmful or open to abuse (e.g. morphine, pethidine and methadone). There are extra controls for these drugs, including:

- who can prescribe them
- how much can be prescribed
- how the prescription is written
- how they are stored and disposed of
- how records are kept

Fact

These drugs are very powerful and as well as being very beneficial to people for whom they are prescribed, they are open to being misused. The additional precautions are necessary, not only because they are highly dangerous if given to the wrong person or in the wrong dosage, but also because many CDs are valuable to criminals who supply illegal drugs.

Current legislation and guidance relating to medication

Please read the following as it will help you to answer questions 4a and 4b.

There are several pieces of legislation and guidance that relate to and govern how medicines can be prescribed, dispensed, stored, administered and disposed of. An outline of these pieces of legislation and guidance can be found below.

Legislation	Outline
The Medicines Act 1968	The Medicines Act sets out the classification of medicines and covers the licensing and sale of medicines.
The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971	The purpose of this Act is to regulate controlled drugs in order to prevent their misuse. These are drugs that tend to be addictive (prone to causing a physical dependency) and can cause harm if used incorrectly or illegally. A special license is required in order to stock controlled drugs, and it is this piece of legislation that enforces the requirement to ensure that controlled drugs are more stringently managed than non-controlled medication. Care homes that stock controlled drugs are required to obtain a license from the Home Office. The Act imposes a total exclusion upon the possession, supply, manufacture, import or export of controlled drugs, except where possession, supply and manufacture have been made legal by the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001.