

Area Prescribing Group report

Date: Friday 05 September 2025 **Quorate:** Yes

The items in this report are supported by the area prescribing group (APG) and approval by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB) is detailed below.

All document links provided for any CMAPG recommendations, can be found via the [legacy Pan Mersey formulary](#). The [legacy Cheshire formulary](#) will also be updated to reflect these changes.

The legacy Pan Mersey APC website is now closed. All legacy Pan Mersey APC documents are available by using the search function of the [legacy Pan Mersey formulary](#) until harmonisation concludes.

CMAPG governance documents are hosted on the [Prescribing](#) section of the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside website.

Please note there may be items that have been considered by APG but not yet approved by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB. Items will be reported in the month that they are approved.

New medicines other

| Proposal | Notes | Financial implications | Approval |
|---|---|--|--|
| Doxylamine/pyridoxine for nausea and vomiting of pregnancy and hyperemesis gravidarum RAG designation: Green APG subgroup: 08 Aug 2025 APG: 05 Sep 2025 | <p>New harmonised prescribing statement in line with RCOG guidance for the management of nausea and vomiting of pregnancy (NVP) and hyperemesis gravidarum (HG).</p> <p>Doxylamine/pyridoxine was green in both legacy Cheshire and</p> | <p>No financial implications on current expenditure.</p> | <p>ICB Medicines Optimisation and Pharmacy (MOP) Group: 18 September 2025, approved by MOP group.</p> |

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| | <p>Merseyside formularies. Use in HG has been included as the legacy Cheshire formulary specified use for this indication.</p> <p>Doxylamine/pyridoxine is the only licensed treatment for NVP. Concerns over the higher cost compared to other off-label antiemetic treatments have been acknowledged. However, the formulary does not specify lines of therapy for NVP and HG and the intention is for doxylamine/pyridoxine to remain available as a treatment option.</p> | | |
| <p>Addition of biosimilar products to the formulary – denosumab</p> <p>RAG designation: N/A</p> <p>APG subgroup: 08 Aug 2025</p> <p>APG: 05 Sep 2025</p> | <p>New biosimilar denosumab products will be added to the formulary as they become available, provided that costs are lower than originator products (Prolia and Xgeva).</p> <p>This will ensure that the formulary does not preclude use of denosumab biosimilar products and will support future work on implementation of biosimilars.</p> | None. Supports cost effective prescribing. | <p>ICB Medicines Optimisation and Pharmacy (MOP) Group: 18 September 2025, approved by MOP group.</p> |
| <p>Sotrovimab for treating COVID-19</p> <p>RAG designation: Red</p> <p>APG subgroup: 12 Sep 2025</p> <p>APG: 05 Sep 2025</p> | <p>Sotrovimab is no longer available through the community service for COVID drugs in Cheshire and Merseyside and should only be used within hospital settings.</p> | None. | <p>ICB Medicines Optimisation and Pharmacy (MOP) Group: 18 September 2025, approved by MOP group.</p> |

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| | This aligns with Lancashire and Manchester, where sotrovimab has also been removed from the community pathway. | | |

Formulary and guidelines

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| High-Cost Drugs Pathway for Rheumatoid Arthritis RAG designation: Red APG subgroup: 19 Aug 2025 APG: 04 Sep 2025 | <p>Harmonised Cheshire and Merseyside High-Cost Drugs Pathway, developed as part of the formulary harmonisation process.</p> <p>Blueteq is due for go live across Cheshire and Merseyside for rheumatology indications on 01 October 2025. The High Cost Drugs pathway confirms commissioner arrangements and underpins the content of the Blueteq forms.</p> <p>The Cheshire and Merseyside High-Cost Drugs Pathway for Rheumatoid Arthritis aligns with NICE guidance except for the following:</p> <p>NICE TA195 recommends rituximab as the preferred second-line agent for patients with inadequate response to, or intolerance of, other DMARDs, including at least one TNF inhibitor. The draft pathway includes all agents as therapeutic options;</p> | No financial implications on current expenditure. | ICB Medicines Optimisation and Pharmacy (MOP) Group: 18 September 2025, approved by MOP group. |

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| | <p>however, where multiple treatments are clinically appropriate, the most cost-effective option should be selected. The deviation is not expected to create financial pressure, as lower-cost second-line options are now available that were not at the time of NICE TA195's publication.</p> <p>Abatacept and rituximab monotherapy are off-label and outside of NICE, but evidence based and approved locally. Inclusion in the pathway is not expected to create financial pressure.</p> | | |
| High-Cost Drugs Pathway for Axial Spondyloarthritis RAG designation: Red APG subgroup: 19 Aug 2025 APG: 04 Sep 2025 | <p>Harmonised Cheshire and Merseyside High-Cost Drugs Pathway, developed as part of the formulary harmonisation process.</p> <p>Blueteq is due for go live across Cheshire and Merseyside for rheumatology indications on 01 October 2025. The High Cost Drugs pathway confirms commissioner arrangements, underpins the content of the Blueteq forms, and aligns with NICE guidance.</p> | No financial implications on current expenditure. | ICB Medicines Optimisation and Pharmacy (MOP) Group: 18 September 2025, approved by MOP group. |
| Trixeo Aerosphere (budesonide/formoterol/ | <p>Trixeo – formulary entry changed to delete <i>Metered Dose Inhaler (MDI) Devices - reserve for use where a DPI is unsuitable</i> and replace with</p> | No financial implications on current expenditure. | ICB Medicines Optimisation and Pharmacy (MOP) Group: 18 |

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| glycopyrronium) MDI – amendment to formulary RAG designation: Green APG subgroup: 19 Aug 2025 APG: 04 Sep 2025 | <i>low carbon footprint MDI comparable to DPIs.</i> This is due to a change in propellant (new propellant HFO-1234ze) with near zero global warming potential. | | September 2025, approved by MOP group. |
| Freestyle Optium – removal from formulary (now absent from formulary section) RAG designation: n/a APG subgroup: 15 Jul 2025 APG: 01 Aug 2025 | Removal of Freestyle Optium blood glucose and ketone testing strips entry from formulary, and withdrawal of legacy Merseyside statement. Meters with equivalent functionality to Freestyle Libre but at lower cost are listed in NHS England (2024): Commissioning recommendations following the national assessment of blood glucose and ketone meters, testing strips and lancets and may be used as an alternative. Freestyle Optium has been used extensively in paediatrics. Alder Hey require an implementation period to switch their patients to alternatives and have provided assurance that this work is underway. No new patients to be initiated on Freestyle Optium. | Potential cost saving of £296,000 - £348,000. | ICB Medicines Optimisation and Pharmacy (MOP) Group: 18 September 2025, approved by MOP group. |
| Mexiletine hydrochloride for ventricular arrhythmias. GP communication letter RAG designation: Amber retained | Updated GP communication letter to be used by specialist when requesting primary care prescriber | Cost avoidance – ensuring most cost-efficient product is prescribed. | ICB Medicines Optimisation and Pharmacy (MOP) Group: 18 September 2025, approved by MOP group. |

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| APG subgroup: n/a APG: n/a | undertakes prescribing of mexiletine for ventricular arrhythmias. The letter now includes instructions on adding to GP prescribing system repeat prescription screen to ensure the most cost-efficient product is prescribed. | | |

Antimicrobials

| Proposal | Notes | Financial implications | Approval |
|---|---|------------------------|---|
| Laboratory antibiotic susceptibility definitions and changes RAG designation: not applicable APG subgroup: 13 Aug 2025 APG: 05 Sep 2025 | Summary of changes to laboratory susceptibility definitions and reporting for primary care. Developed in response to a request from local laboratory services to support consistent, high-quality advice for primary care prescribers. | None. | ICB Medicines Optimisation and Pharmacy (MOP) Group: 18 September 2025, approved by MOP group. |

APG reports

| Title | Notes | Financial implications | Approval |
|--|-------------|------------------------|--|
| NICE TA adherence checklist July 2025 | For noting. | N/A | ICB Medicines Optimisation and Pharmacy (MOP) Group: 18 September 2025, noted by MOP group. |