

Enclosure number:	1/AWMSG/0925
Agenda item:	1 – Minutes of previous meeting
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All Wales Medicines Strategy Group (AWMSG)

**Minutes of the AWMSG meeting held
at 09:30 am on Tuesday, 15th July 2025 at the All Nations Centre,
Sachville Avenue, Cardiff, CF14 3NY**

Voting members present:

**Did not
participate
in agenda
item:**

- | | | |
|------------|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Prof Iolo Doull | Chair |
| 2. | Prof Stephen Monaghan | Consultant in Public Health Medicine |
| 4. | Prof Dyfrig Hughes | Health Economist |
| 5. | Mr Farhan Mughal | ABPI (Wales) |
| 6. | Ms Julie Wilson-Thomas | Lay Representative |
| 7. | Mr Dylan Jones | Community Pharmacist |
| 8. | Dr Richard Skone | Medical Director |
| 9. | Dr Richard Brown | General Practitioner with an interest
in therapeutics |
| 10. | Ms Lois Gwyn | Managed Sector Pharmacist –
Primary Care |
| 11. | Mr David Fox | Managed Sector Pharmacist –
Hospital Pharmacist |
| 12. | Mrs Susan Newport | Senior Nurse |
| 13. | Mrs Cathy Wynne | Other healthcare professions eligible
to prescribe not already represented |
| 14. | Dr Alison Thomas | Clinical Pharmacologist |
| 15. | Mr Jonathan Simms | Director of Pharmacy |

Welsh Government:
Mr Owain Jones

Medicines Values Unit:

Ms Rhiannon Walters-Davies

AWTTC staff:

Mrs Helen Adams, Senior Pharmacist

Ms Shaila Ahmed, Advanced Pharmacist

Dr Andrew Champion, Programme Director

Dr Thomas Curran, Principal Scientist

Dr Stephanie Francis, Principal Scientist

Dr Carolyn Hughes, Medical Writer

Mrs Ruth Lang, Senior Liaison Manager

Miss Laura Phillips, Administration Manager

Mr Anthony Williams, Head of PAMS

Mrs Claire Thomas, Head of WAPSU and Medicines Optimisation

List of abbreviations:

ABPI	Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry
AWMSG	All Wales Medicines Strategy Group
AWPAG	All Wales Prescribing Advisory Group
AWTTC	All Wales Therapeutics and Toxicology Centre
CAS	All Wales Common Ailments Service
CASWG	Commercial Arrangement Scheme Wales Group
CMAT	Commercial Medicines Access Team
HTA	Health Technology Appraisal
ILAP	Innovative Licensing and Access Pathway
JCC	NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee
LOWMAG	Licensed One Wales Medicines Assessment Group
MHRA	Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency
MMDi	Medicines and Medical Devices initiative
NHS	National Health Service
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
NPGG	National Pharmacogenomics Group
NTF	New Treatment Fund
OWMAG	One Wales Medicines Assessment Group
PAMS	Patient Access to Medicines Service
PIL	Patient information leaflet
VPAG	Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing, Access and Growth
WAPSU	Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit
WTE	Whole time equivalent

1. Welcome and introduction

The Chair opened the meeting, welcomed members and observers, and explained the meeting protocol. The Chair confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

2. Apologies:

Mrs Pam James, Lay Representative

Mr James Leaves, Director of Finance

Mr Hywel Pullen, Director of Finance

Dr Owen Seddon, Hospital Consultant

Dr Rachel Gemine, NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee

3. Declarations of interest:

The Chair invited declarations of interest. There were none.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

The draft minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 June 2025 were checked for accuracy and approved. There were no matters arising.

5. Chair's report (verbal update)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chair confirmed that after receiving Welsh Government ratification, AWMSG's recommendations and implementation information relating to teriparatide, panitumumab and trametinib, which were agreed at the AWMSG meeting in June, were disseminated to the service and published on the AWTTTC website.

The Chair said that after discussions at AWPAG, the Wales General Ophthalmic Services Signed Orders Formulary has gone out for consultation. He would be grateful if members could respond with any comments before the close date of Friday 8 August 2025.

The Chair confirmed that AWMSG members' response to the Health Minister's remit letter is being drafted and will be shared with members at the earliest opportunity.

The Chair said that the AWMSG Annual Report is on target for publication in September, and he would update members at the next meeting on Wednesday 10 September 2025.

The Chair invited Dr Andrew Champion, AWTTTC Programme Director, to update members on work currently ongoing within AWTTTC.

6. AWTTTC Programme Director's report

Dr Andrew Champion, AWTTTC Programme Director, gave an update on the work of AWTTTC's Patient Access to Medicines Service (PAMS), beginning with the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing, Access and Growth (VPAG) work programme, for which AWTTTC secured substantial funding over the next four years to explore innovative approaches to HTA.

Dr Champion reported that the VPAG PMO is now established, and the first meeting of the Programme Board is scheduled for September. Terms of Reference have been drafted to ensure a diverse membership and to describe the remit and responsibilities. Four teams in AWTTTC have been set up to lead each of the programme projects:

- horizon scanning and financial forecasting;
- medicines ecosystem;
- implementation; and
- unlocking data

AWTTC has been recruiting staff to meet the needs of the VPAG programme and he hopes to have most new staff in post by the end of September 2025.

Dr Champion reported significant progress in the VPAG programme, with the introduction of the AWMSG Scrutiny Panel, and the development and refinement of the two main medicines assessment committees – LOWMAG and OWMAG. The first medicines have already gone through the life cycle of the new medicine assessment ecosystem route, providing recommendations to NHS Wales for abiraterone, guanfacine and teriparatide. This will ensure equity of access across Wales to these medicines. Five medicines are scheduled to be considered by the AWMSG Scrutiny Panel at its August meeting.

Dr Champion said that AWTTC have made headway with the implementation of Blueteq across Wales and the introduction of the Commercial Arrangement Scheme Wales Group (CASWG) - two key AWTTC priority areas where AWTTC are enhancing a central, co-ordinated role to support the implementation of new medicines. CASWG was established in April 2025 and meets monthly to support implementation of AWMSG- and NICE- recommended medicines associated with a commercial arrangement.

CASWG is supported by the Commercial Medicines Access Team (CMAT), a collaborative multi-organisational team of colleagues from AWTTC, NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership and the Medicines Value Unit. The number and complexity of commercial arrangements that need to be implemented have increased markedly over the last 12–18 months, putting significant strain on the CMAT team to keep pace with the demand. The team are keen to future-proof requirements to ensure NHS Wales gets the best value for medicines that are approved by NICE and AWMSG and are actively seeking solutions to ensure future sustainability of the service.

The CASWG and Blueteq workstreams overlap, as many of the high-cost medicines eligible for a Blueteq form are also associated with a commercial arrangement and require the additional clinical and financial governance.

Phase II of the Blueteq rollout began in April 2025 and all health boards and trust are actively engaged in the implementation. The Blueteq Steering Group meets monthly and prioritises forms for all historic high-cost medicines. An update on key milestones is on the AWTTC website.

From a medicine uptake perspective, AWTTC are scoping issues around implementation of recommended medicine; one paper will be discussed in this meeting. AWTTC are keen to identify and assist with implementation issues across Wales. Dr Champion said he looks forward to discussions in this meeting and at subsequent meetings about how AWTTC can take steps to address this important issue.

Dr Champion also updated members on the recent work of AWTTC's Medicines Optimisation team. The annual AWTTC Best Practice Day was held on 2 July 2025, focusing on medicines safety. Over 160 healthcare professionals from across Wales attended to hear speakers from London, Scotland and Wales present on topics such as: safety considerations when

prescribing injectable weight loss medicines; problematic polypharmacy; and the potential harms associated with prescribing propranolol. In the afternoon, delegates took part in interactive breakout sessions with a range of subject matter experts. Sessions included pharmacogenomics; medicines waste campaigns and the MHRA biobank. The event was a great success, and feedback received so far has been excellent.

In the previous week AWTTTC held the latest in a series of Learning at Lunch sessions. Topics included the *Decarbonisation of medical gases – Nitrous oxide project*, which linked to the recently endorsed AWMSG guidelines; an update on the New Medicines Ecosystem in Wales; and a roundup of therapeutic news from Dr Tessa Lewis. The session will soon be available on the AWTTTC website.

Dr Champion also highlighted other work by AWTTTC, including ILAP – the Innovative Licensing and Access Pathway that is a partnership between the UK HTA agencies, the MHRA and the NHS. In 2024 the ILAP process, which had been running since 2021, was reviewed and updated. The result, ILAP version 2.0, launched in March 2025 and applications for new products to access the pathway was opened on 31 March. This first application window ran for three months and closed at the end of June. Applications that have been received will now be assessed by the ILAP Delivery Group against the new eligibility and selection criteria. The outcome of the first round of applications will be announced in October.

The Medicines and Medical Devices initiative (MMDi) is another UK-wide programme involving AWTTTC. The MMDi was set up with the goal of improving patient access to safe, clinically and cost-effective healthcare products, and to share intelligence and good practice across the four nations, reduce duplication and variability and improve patient access. Current work focuses on horizon scanning and information sharing.

Dr Champion highlighted collaborative work that AWTTTC are leading on in partnership with Advanced Therapies Wales, focusing on system preparedness for the deliverability of complex therapies, such as advanced medicinal therapeutic products and other medicines that carry significant service or capacity challenges to the system. It was recognised that the service is often unprepared for these treatments and plans for their implementation are lacking. This can cause a significant delay in medicine access and can lead to inequality of access to some treatments across Wales.

In 2024 AWTTTC agreed to bring together a national group of interested and experienced individuals to address these challenges (now referred to as the National Pathway Mapping Group and chaired by Suzanne Rankin, Chief Executive of Cardiff & Vale University Health Board). The Group's remit is to develop long-term solutions to ensure that demand and capacity across Wales is understood and quantified, and appropriate planning and commissioning is enabled to increase system capacity for national delivery of NICE and AWMSG recommended therapies.

The National Pathway Mapping Group have outlined a proposal for a national process and governance structure for supporting and managing the introduction of complex therapies, so that service planners and commissioners understand the capability of delivering these complex medicines. The Group plan to bring this proposal to AWMSG for discussion in the autumn.

The Chair invited comments from members. One commented that AWTTTC's recent Best Practice Day was excellent, and another that the plans for the complex delivery of medicines would help patients.

7. Reviewing medicines uptake across NHS Wales (for discussion)

Dr Stephanie Francis introduced the paper, which included a case study of the challenges of making mavacamten available across Wales through the New Treatment Fund (NTF). Dr Francis outlined the aims of future work to improve implementation of medicines advice in NHS Wales, in which AWTTTC would play a bigger role in monitoring medicines on the NTF and in supporting health boards to make medicines available. This ties in with a recent Welsh Government directive.

Dr Francis set out the next steps for AWTTTC in this work, including developing a process and governance structure to identify, monitor and report issues, supporting the implementation of the All Wales High Cost Drug System, and coordinating the work of the Commercial Arrangements Scheme Wales Group (CASWG). AWTTTC will be responsible for reporting issues and AWMSG will challenge unwanted variation in medicines access.

The Chair invited questions and comments from AWMSG members. Members asked about pharmacogenomic testing, how it works and how it would affect the 60-day period to make a medicine available. It was clarified that if a genomic test is required, the date of the 60-day period would not start until the genomic test is approved/ready. Members discussed how similar cases to mavacamten might be addressed in future, how AWTTTC's horizon scanning team will identify those medicines needing a genetic test and highlighted the importance of timely collaboration with NICE and the pharmaceutical industry.

Members considered potential issues raised by Wales not being included in NHS England's National Test Directory (which means that Wales is not alerted in good time to get a test ready), and the current lack of a process for getting a genomic test for a Wales-approved medicine into the Test Directory. It was noted that a work plan to address these issues is currently being scoped.

8. Primary care antimicrobial guidelines – COVID-19 antivirals monograph (for endorsement)

Dr Thomas Curran introduced the monograph on COVID-19 antiviral agents, which is to be incorporated into the AWMSG-endorsed primary care antimicrobial guidelines. The document aims to support primary care prescribing of antiviral agents for COVID-19 infection, which have recently become routinely available for prescribing in primary care and dispensed by

community pharmacies and dispensing doctors. Ms Meryl Davies described the development of the monograph, the comments from consultation and the changes made afterwards.

The Chair invited questions and comments from members. Members asked if there was specific information in the monograph about the use of the medicines in pregnancy and breastfeeding, and about drug-drug interactions. Ms Davies said that the document contained a link to this information through each medicine's Summary of Product Characteristics (SmPC). She also said that there were plans for AWTTTC to host a webinar on this for primary care providers, who would be less familiar with these medicines.

AWMSG endorsed the COVID-19 antivirals monograph.

9. All Wales Shared Care Framework (for endorsement)

Ms Shaila Ahmed introduced the framework and explained that it had been developed to promote consistency in shared care across Wales both in the core principles and in how those principles are applied when developing and reviewing shared care arrangements. The framework includes a set of shared care principles, criteria for identifying medicines suitable for shared care, patient-centred considerations, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, guidance on reviewing shared care protocols, a decision-support flow diagram, an audit template, and a patient information leaflet.

The Chair invited comments and questions. Members said that the framework would be really helpful to support GP practices, patients, and non-medical prescribers, and the section on patients transferring from one specialist service or GP practice to another would be particularly useful. A member asked whether the patient information leaflet would be available in Welsh. Ms Ahmed confirmed that the leaflet would be available in both English and Welsh, and that easy-read versions would also be developed in both languages.

A member asked about the communication process for notifying stakeholders of any changes to shared care protocols during reviews. Ms Ahmed explained that it was intentional not to define a single, standardised communication process, based on feedback received during the consultation. Instead, the framework emphasises the importance of health boards ensuring that robust communication processes are in place for all those involved.

AWMSG endorsed the framework.

10. Strategies to reduce gabapentinoid prescribing in NHS Wales – Evidence report (for information)

Ms Shaila Ahmed provided some background on the document and explained that the Gabapentinoid Task Force, established by AWTTTC, was formed to develop strategies in response to the increasing rates of gabapentinoid prescribing in Wales. The report outlines current approaches to deprescribing gabapentinoids, drawing on a range of sources including health board initiatives, published studies, service improvement projects, clinical guidelines, and other relevant materials. It provides an overview of the current landscape and sets out key actions to support the development of

national resources.

Ms Ahmed explained that the Task Force had reviewed the report and agreed that a coordinated national approach is needed. As a result, they proposed the development of an All Wales gabapentinoid resource pack. This pack will include practical tools such as patient information leaflets, medication initiation and review templates, shared decision-making aids, audit templates, posters, letter templates, and other resources designed to support safe and effective prescribing practices. AWTTTC is currently developing these materials, which will be reviewed by AWPAG later this year.

The Chair invited comments and questions. One member commented that the work is fantastic, and is an exemplar approach to trying to find an intervention to help reduce an issue where prescribing needs to improve, and identify good practice. They congratulated the team on the approach taken.

A member asked if this work will be shared with primary and secondary care. Ms Ahmed confirmed that the Task Force includes representatives from both sectors, who are contributing directly to the development of the resource pack to ensure it meets the needs of all care settings.

Members commented that it would be good to have all these resources in one place, where it will be useful and helpful day-to-day. Another mentioned that some patients do not want to have a paper patient information leaflet – they would prefer to link to a web or other resource.

A member asked how drug deaths from gabapentin compare to deaths from other medicines in Wales, and Ms Ahmed said that they would look into the data, which comes from the National Poisons Centre.

11. All Wales Common Ailments Service Formulary – Minor updates (Sore throat) (for information)

Dr Thomas Curran introduced this work, which involved minor changes made to the Common Ailments Service Formulary monograph on sore throat. The changes were minor, such as text being moved, small rewording changes. The biggest change was reflecting the change in service specification which sees the monograph apply to individuals aged 5 years and over (where previously it was 6 years and over).

There were no questions or comments.

12. Any other business

There was no other business.

The Chair thanked AWMSG members and confirmed the date of the next meeting on, **Wednesday, 10 September 2025 at the All Nations Centre, Sachville Avenue, Cardiff, CF14 3NY**