

ALL WALES PRESCRIBING ADVISORY GROUP (AWPAG)

**Minutes of meeting held on
19th March 2025 commencing at 9.30 am
Held at the All Nations Centre, Cardiff and via Teams**

Chair – Dr Laurence Gray Consultant Clinical Pharmacologist, Cardiff & Vale UHB

Voting members

Mrs Dianne Burnett	National Lead, Medicines Information
Mrs Clare Clement	Lead Pharmacist for Primary, Community and Intermediate Care, Cardiff & Vale UHB
Ms Helen Davies	Principal Pharmacist for Medicines Optimisation in Primary Care, Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB
Ms Cassandra Edgar	Pharmacist, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB
Dr Jennifer Ellis	General Practitioner, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB
Mrs Sian Evans	Consultant in Public Health, Public Health Wales
Mrs Eryl Smeethe	Pharmacist, Aneurin Bevan UHB
Dr Lynette James	All Wales Consultant Pharmacist, Acute Care & Medication Safety
Ms Rachel Jenkins	ABPI representative
Mr Malcolm Latham	Lay member
Mr Usman Malik	Principal Pharmacist, Velindre NHS Trust
Mr Jonathan Smith	Community Pharmacist
Ms Bethan Thain	Pharmacist, Swansea Bay UHB
Mr Owain Williams	Director of Pharmacy
Mrs Fiona Woods	Lay member

In attendance (non-voting)

Ms Joe Castle	ABPI
Mrs Claire Thomas	AWTTC Head of WAPSU and Medicines Optimisation
Dr Tom Curran	AWTTC Principal Scientist
Dr Paul Deslandes	AWTTC WAPSU Pharmacist
Mrs Karen Jones	AWTTC Senior Pharmacist
Ms Shaila Ahmed	AWTTC Senior Pharmacist
Dr Katherine Chaplin	AWTTC Scientist
Mr David Haines	AWTTC Medical Writer

External presenters

Mr Emyr Jones	Update and discussion on social and community care projects	7.1 – 7.4
Ms Meryl Davies	Primary Care Antimicrobial Guidelines (minor updates)	8.1
Dr Craig Holley	Policy for the sustainable procurement, management, administration and disposal of medical gases to achieve decarbonisation	8.2

Key of abbreviations

4Cs	Group of antimicrobials
ABPI	Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry

AWASH	All Wales Heads of Adults Services Group
AWMSG	All Wales Medicines Strategy Group
AWPAG	All Wales Prescribing Advisory Group
AWTTC	All Wales Therapeutics and Toxicology Centre
BGMA	British Generic Manufacturers Association
CAS	Common Ailments Service
MADC	Medication Administration in Domiciliary Care Working Group
MARRS	Medicines Administration, Recording, Review, Storage
MDS	Monitored Dosage Systems
MMTs	Medicines Management Teams
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
NPIs	National Prescribing Indicators
OME	Oral Morphine Equivalence
PHW	Public Health Wales
RTI	Respiratory Tract Infection
SABA	Short Acting Beta Agonists
SGLT-2	Sodium-glucose Cotransporter-2 Inhibitor
SIGN	Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network
SPIRA	Server for Prescribing Information Reporting and Analysis
THB	Teaching Health Board
UHB	University Health Board
UTI	Urinary Tract Infection
WAPSU	Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit
WMAS	Welsh Medicines Advice Service
YMYH	Your Medicines Your Health

1.0 Welcome and introduction

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance.

2.0 Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Mrs Sarah Davies	Senior Lecturer Advanced Clinical Practice, Swansea University
Ms Hazel Hopkins	Prescribing Support Pharmacist, Hywel Dda UHB
Mrs Sue Knights	ABPI representative
Mr Paul Fleming	BGMA
Mrs Vicky Allum	Head of Pharmacy, Primary Care and Community Services, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB
Mr Michael Clarke	BGMA

3.0 Declarations of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement

The Chair asked members to declare any interests relevant to the agenda; no relevant interests were declared.

4.0 Chair's report

Membership

Resignations

The Chair informed members that Dr Richard Brown, General Practitioner, Hywel Dda UHB had resigned from the group and moved to AWMSG. The Chair thanked Dr Brown for his contributions during his tenure and wished him well.

Appointments

The Chair welcomed Owain Williams, Director of Pharmacy, Hywel Dda UHB as the Director of Pharmacy representative, to his first meeting.

The Chair reminded members that there are currently vacancies for doctors for Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB, Swansea Bay UHB and Powys THB, along with a doctor member from Velindre NHS Trust. Members were informed that an advert had recently been circulated and asked members to share with their colleagues.

The Chair highlighted that agenda items would have to be moved around to accommodate the availability of external presenters at the meeting.

5.0 Minutes of previous AWPAG meeting – 11th December 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting were checked for accuracy and agreed.

6.0 Feedback from AWMSG – 12 February and 11 March 2025

Members were provided with feedback from the most recent AWMSG meetings:

For endorsement

- Managing medicines shortages in Wales – Information for patients
- Medicine shortages: standard wording for medicines shortages letters

For acknowledgement

- All Wales Guidance on Flushing Intravenous Administration Lines in Adults
- Guidance for clinicians on prescribing antidepressants in the perinatal period and accompanying poster for patients

For information

- All Wales Common Ailments Service formulary – minor updates
- Primary Care Antimicrobial Guidelines – minor updates
- Review and retirement of AWMSG-endorsed medicines optimisation documents: Update for members
- Variation in prescribing
- NHS Wales inhaler carbon footprint report - data to November 2024
- National Prescribing Indicators 2024–2025: Analysis of prescribing data to September 2024
- National Prescribing Indicators 2024–2025: A focus on total opioid burden
- Impact of MHRA safety alert on fluoroquinolone and 4C prescribing

Dr Tom Curran provided a summary of the latest data presented in the inhaler carbon footprint report.

Dr Katherine Chaplin provided members with an update on the 'Focus on total opioid burden' paper, which had been updated to incorporate additional information. Data relating to trauma and orthopaedic waiting times, health board demographics and comparisons of opioid prescribing between Wales and England had been included since AWPAG had last seen the paper. Members were informed that it was not possible to include deprivation data yet. There was a general discussion on the differences in opioid prescribing between areas of high deprivation in England and Wales.

Dr Katherine Chaplin provided a summary of the report looking at how 4C antimicrobial prescribing data had changed following an MHRA safety alert on fluoroquinolones. Members discussed how this might have also changed prescribing of non-4C antimicrobials.

Dr Chaplin informed members that a webpage including all of the [NPI Good Practice Spotlights](#) was now live on the AWTTTC website. Members were encouraged to view the page and share with colleagues.

7.0 Update and discussion on social and community care projects

Ms Karen Jones and Mr Emyr Jones presented members with an update on four projects that support medicines optimisation across health and social care currently underway/proposed for development:

7.1 All Wales Medicine Management Guidelines for Integrated Community Based Services

Following a consultation for these guidelines, and further work with key stakeholders such as AWASH, Welsh Government Care Home Policy team, MADC and health board MMTs, changes have been made and consultation responses worked through. Issues such as social care support workers responsibility for medicines support are still being worked through with stakeholders in social care and the next steps will be to try and agree aspects of governance and responsibility with these stakeholders in order to move the document forward and ensure implementation. It is hoped that a final draft document will be prepared for a future AWPAG meeting. It was also noted that without support from key stakeholders in social services, the guidelines may not be implemented widely upon publication. Sian Evans raised the issue of it being important for this guidance to proceed, as the work identifies and highlights a need for integrated medicines management guidance, and the potential risk to patients if no guidance is available. It was suggested that the committee may wish to raise the issue at a higher level if there is no progression with stakeholders.

7.2 Supporting patients to manage medicines safely and effectively: All Wales guidance on the use of compliance aids (to replace Monitored dosage systems guidance and standards)

Members were informed that work had been started due to feedback on monitored dosage systems (MDSs) during the development of the All Wales Medicine Management Guidelines for Integrated Community Based Services, and as a result of consideration of the current AWMSG MDS Standards for retirement.

It was noted that ensuring that patients are supported to remain independent in managing their medicines safely and effectively in the community is important in health and social care, as it can help to ensure that patients remain independent for as long as possible with the potential to reduce or delay the need for formal care and to ensure that the use of MDSs/multi-compartmental compliance aids is appropriate and safe for the person for whom the medicine is prescribed.

Members were informed that a working group had been set up, including representation from Emyr Jones, Welsh Government, Community Pharmacy Wales and AWTTC, and the possibility of adapting an NHS England resource is being explored.

Members discussed how the work will include community pharmacy and consider the governance around people in the community, their carers and prescribers, and also how this work could be included in sustainability agendas. It is anticipated that a draft will be shared at the next meeting of AWPAG in June.

7.3 All Wales guidelines for medicine training and competency assessment of support workers in health and social care (to replace All Wales guidance for health boards/trusts and social care providers in respect of medicines and care support workers)

Members were informed that this guideline is intended to incorporate and replace existing AWMSG guidance for Health Boards/Trusts and Social Care Providers in Respect of Medicines and Care Support Workers. The updated version will have a boarder scope to fit with current standards. Members raised the point that it is important to avoid placing too many training and qualification demands on some social care staff as this could have a negative effect on staff hiring and retention.

7.4 Updates to Care home medicines optimisation toolkit

Ms Karen Jones presented a brief summary of the proposed updates to the toolkit, based on feedback from the All Wales Care Home Group. Updates will be presented at a future AWPAG meeting.

8.0 Documents for discussion

8.1 Primary Care Antimicrobial Guidelines – minor updates

Ms Meryl Davies presented changes to three sections of the Primary Care Antimicrobial Guidelines, with members asked to consider whether the changes should be classed as minor, or major:

- Lower UTI in adults

This section had been updated in order to better align with recently published guidance from NICE and SIGN on the use of ibuprofen for mild symptoms. Members agreed that clarity was required explaining that diagnosis based on mild symptoms was dependent on clinical assessment, and it was also agreed that it needed to be explicit that dipstick in people aged over 65 should not be used for diagnosis of UTI. It was agreed that these further minor changes would be circulated for electronic sign-off by members before publication.

- Threadworm

This section had been updated to reflect that recommended hygiene measures are not always practical for women who are breastfeeding, therefore medical options have been added. This change was agreed by members as minor.

- Acute Rhinosinusitis

This section had been amended to align with NICE guidance. Members briefly

discussed and agreed some additional wording related to back-up prescriptions and the use of inhaled corticosteroids prior to antibiotics, and agreed that the changes were minor.

Action: 'Lower UTI in adults' monograph to be amended and circulated for electronic sign-off, followed by publication and presentation to AWMSG for information.

Action: Publish 'Threadworm' and 'Acute Rhinosinusitis' monographs and present to AWMSG for information.

8.2 Policy for the sustainable procurement, management, administration and disposal of medical gases to achieve decarbonisation

Dr Craig Holley presented members with updates to the policy following consultation. Members were asked to consider whether the document could proceed to AWMSG for endorsement.

Members were supportive of the document and felt it fitted very well with the AWMSG strategy. It was agreed the document should proceed to AWMSG for endorsement. The Chair additionally thanked Dr Holley and members of the clinical engineering team who had contributed to the consultation.

Action: Document to proceed to AWMSG for endorsement

8.3 All Wales Common Ailments Service Formulary – Allergic rhinitis

Mrs Dianne Burnett provided members with an update on the allergic rhinitis monograph following consultation. A brief discussion followed regarding the appropriate course of action for individuals presenting with headache, photophobia, and fever. Members agreed that the monograph should be amended to clarify that individuals with possible symptoms of meningitis should be advised to seek care from the most appropriate clinician (a GP or A&E) to ensure timely evaluation and to rule out meningitis without delay.

Action: Document to proceed to AWMSG for endorsement

8.4 Urgent Requests for Repeat Medication – Guidance for NHS 111 and out-of-hours primary care services

Dr Paul Deslandes and Dr Lynette James provided members with an update on the document following consultation. Many comments were received during the consultation asking for clarity on the role of community pharmacy, and the document had been changed to reflect this with additional resources added.

Discussion started on the scope of the document, as some members felt that it had grown beyond its original purpose and questioned who it was actually aimed at. It was acknowledged that adding sections for community pharmacies had complicated the document, and some changes in terminology were agreed to avoid confusion within the document. It was also felt that some key bodies such as NHS 111 directorship and large patient groups had not responded to the consultation, despite the document being shared widely for comment. It was agreed that members may wish to share the document again with relevant colleagues for any further feedback before presentation to AWMSG. Members also suggested additions for wording around preventing patients from using this request route as a standard way of receiving their medication, and also to

maintain the document's primary focus of helping NHS 111 and out-of-hours. It was agreed that the document would be amended before sharing with members for onward sharing with colleagues. Based on feedback received, the document will be updated and presented to members for electronic sign-off before proceeding to AWMSG.

Action: Document to be amended and forwarded to members for sharing with relevant colleagues for feedback. This will be followed by electronic sign-off by members, before presentation to AWMSG for endorsement.

8.5 All Wales Shared Care Framework

Members were asked to consider and comment on the document, which is an update to the existing Shared Care Prescribing and Monitoring Guidance. The All Wales Shared Care Framework includes several new sections, and the updates were made in response to challenges identified across Wales that affect the success of shared care arrangements for both patients and clinicians.

A request was made for the document to include Shared Care with Private Providers and to reference the AWMSG document *Prescribing Dilemmas: A Guide for Prescribers*. Members also suggested exploring an electronic solution to facilitate the exchange of shared care agreements between specialists and primary care clinicians.

There was a discussion about potential issues that may arise when patients on shared care drugs move to different areas and how to ensure continuity of care. While local arrangements may already exist, members agreed that including advice on out-of-area shared care in the All Wales Shared Care Framework would be beneficial.

Additional requests included a minor amendment to the decision support flow diagram, an update to the patient information leaflet to recognise non-medical prescribers as specialists, and the addition of wording to clarify that a patient could choose to leave a shared care arrangement if their preferences change.

Action: Document to be updated then proceed to consultation

8.6 Phenoxymethylpenicillin prescribing in Wales

Dr Katherine Chaplin provided members with an overview of report, which had been requested by Welsh Government, looking at trends in phenoxymethylpenicillin prescribing in Wales. Members felt that the report was timely and that the data provided useful information. Some discussion of the data and subsequent areas for investigation followed. Members also discussed how to use the data at local levels and how this report could be disseminated to those using phenoxymethylpenicillin in practice.

Action: Document to be presented to AWMSG for information

8.7 National Prescribing Indicators 2025-2026 – Specifications

Dr Katherine Chaplin provided members with an update to the NPI specifications and thresholds for 2025–2026. These updates included changes to some of existing indicators (antimicrobial stewardship, biosimilars [inclusion of ustekinumab] and low value for prescribing) and inclusion of the new

indicators (course duration for RTI antibiotics, SABA prescribing and SGLT-2 inhibitors). Members were informed of the availability of a new SPIRA dashboard and that the existing dashboard had been updated to reflect the latest set of NPIs. An update was provided regarding progress on development of the SGLT-2 NPIs.

Members discussed whether demeclocycline and rifaximin should remain in the total antibacterial basket, noting that they are primarily used for non-infective indications. As prescribing is minimal, members agreed that their removal would have little impact on the indicator. It was agreed to keep the basket unchanged while closely monitoring any increase in prescribing.

The specifications document has now been published on the [AWTTC website](#).

8.8 All Wales policy for Medicines Administration, Recording, Review, Storage and Disposal (MARRS)

Ms Karen Jones and Dr Lynette James presented members with details of updates to the MARRS document, which have been made to ensure that the document can be aligned to other relevant policies and care settings. Feedback was received as part of the consultation on the '*Medicines management guidelines for integrated community-based services*' that describing levels of supervision for patient/carer self-administration with differing numbering systems across different care settings has the potential to cause confusion and that aligning the descriptions would support integrated care across settings. Removing the numbering of levels whilst retaining the different definitions will address the concerns, support alignment with other guidance and allows health boards to continue using their existing policies. Members agreed the change was minor and could be implemented without any further consultation.

Action: Document to be presented to AWMSG for information

Lynette James left the meeting after presenting this item.

Sian Evans and Joe Castle left the meeting as members broke for lunch.

9.0 Document review process

9.1 AWMSG-endorsed medicines optimisation documents - process for consideration of older resources for review

Dr Thomas Curran outlined progress on the review process for older resources hosted on the AWTTC website, and members were asked for their thoughts on retiring the resources below. For each one Dr Curran outlined the reasons for retiring, including data on how often each resource had been accessed, and highlighted superseding guidance and alternatives that could be signposted to.

1. Safeguarding users of opioid patches by standardising patient and caregiver counselling

Members considered whether this resource could be amalgamated into the latest AWMSG-endorsed 'Resources for pharmacological management of pain'. It was agreed to retire the resource but to raise with the All Wales Pain Specialist Pharmacist group before retiring.

2. Multidisciplinary medicines reconciliation policy
Members agreed this resource should be retired.
3. Vitamins for babies, children, and pregnant and breastfeeding women
Members agreed that this should be retired with signposting to appropriate NICE guidance.
4. Prescribing of amiodarone for atrial fibrillation and atrial flutter in Wales
Members agreed that this should be retired with signposting to appropriate NICE guidance.
5. Prescribing of low molecular weight heparin in Wales
Members agreed to retire this guidance, but to first ensure the Medicines Safety Network was informed of this.
6. Supply and administration of intranasal fentanyl protocol
Members agreed to retire this guidance, but to first ensure the Medicines Safety Network was informed of this.
7. Prescribing guidelines: Initiation contraception in primary care
Members agreed this resource should be retired, with signposting to appropriate alternative guidance.
8. Prescribing medicines for adults who are unable to swallow oral solid dosage forms
Members agreed this resource should be retired, with signposting to appropriate alternative guidance (including NEWT guidelines).

10.0 Best Practice Day 2025

Mrs Claire Thomas gave an update on the Best Practice Day 2025, due to be held in July, with the theme of medicines safety. The event is being held in conjunction with the Yellow Card Centre Wales. Members representing health boards were asked to consider whether they had an examples of medication safety initiatives that they could share during the event, and members were also informed that this year's event will include a poster competition.

11.0 Verbal updates

11.1 SPIRA Steering Committee feedback

Dr Katherine Chaplin provided feedback from the committee meeting on the 4th March, including updates on the controlled drugs dashboard and access to MHRA yellow card data. Members were asked for suggestions on SPIRA training topics.

11.2 Your Medicines, Your Health

Mrs Claire Thomas updated members on progress with Your Medicines Your Health (YMYH) and informed members that the first meeting of the Strategic Board had been held in February. A strategy is in development and a literature review is underway. The standalone YMYH website is currently being migrated to be hosted on the AWTTTC website, AWTTTC and colleagues are working with the behavioural insights team in PHW to review the current messaging.

11.3 Gabapentinoids Task Force

Ms Shaila Ahmed informed members about the work of the gabapentinoids task force. AWTTTC has prepared a report on deprescribing strategies, which has been shared with the task force ahead of a meeting in April. Further work will be undertaken based on the report's findings.

11.4 Learning at Lunch

Members were informed that the latest Learning at Lunch webinar was held on the 4th February 2025. Topics included presentations on 'Back-up antibiotic prescribing: Good practice guide'; 'AWTTTC – News you can use', which included an update regarding current trends in poisoning; 'What's new for the National Prescribing Indicators 2025-2028?'; and rapid therapeutics update from Dr Tessa Lewis. There were 166 delegates in attendance and feedback received so far has been very positive.

The next webinar will be held on Wednesday 7th May 1-2pm and presentations will include Propranolol poisoning by Dr Laurence Gray, and the Chronic Kidney Disease: Quality Improvement Project by Dr Alexa Wonnacott, along with AWTTTC news, poisons update and a rapid therapeutics update.

Members were advised to contact AWTTTC if they wish to register.

11.5 Prescribing dilemmas

Dr Paul Deslandes updated members regarding a recently circulated letter and patient information leaflet relating to companion tests. Members discussed whether this was appropriate for the prescribing dilemmas document. It was agreed that AWTTTC would circulate additional information to members for their consideration before any changes were made.

Action: AWTTTC to share letter and leaflet with members

12.0 Feedback from the All Wales Directors of Pharmacy Peer Group

Owain Williams provided an update from the group, informing members of the formation of a number of delivery assurance groups related to *Pharmacy – Delivering a Healthier Wales*, and noted that the remit, deliverable outcomes and workplan for these assurance groups were in development.

13.0 Feedback from Health Boards and Velindre NHS Trust

Owain Williams, Hywel Dda UHB, raised some ongoing issues regarding branded generics and the AWMSG position statement.

Clare Clement, Cardiff and Vale UHB, highlighted issues with finances and noted that movement of patients across care sectors was causing some problems.

Eryl Smeeth, Aneurin Bevan UHB, shared plans for implementation of an 'Only order what you need' campaign which could link with YMYH. Claire Thomas agreed to join a meeting to discuss.

There was no feedback from other health boards/Velindre NHS Trust.

14.0 Feedback from Public Health Wales

Prior to leaving the meeting, Ms Sian Evans provided feedback from Public Health Wales. Work is ongoing on long term public health interventions, with a

focus on prevention, sustainability, medicines management and inequalities within GP clusters.

15.0 Any other business (Chair to have been informed prior to the meeting)

Mrs Claire Thomas informed members that the All Wales asthma guidelines are currently being reviewed by the authors, in light of the recently published NICE guidelines. Members will be kept informed of progress.

Mrs Dianne Burnett informed members of changes to the CAS back pain monograph, which will be circulated to in the coming weeks for advice of whether the update should be classed as minor or major.

The Chair thanked everyone for their time and closed the meeting.

16.0 Date of next meeting: Wednesday 25th June 2025