

NEL Prescribing and Medicines Newsletter

December 2025

Updates for Community Pharmacies across North East London

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1. Shortage of Rivastigmine 4.6mg/24hours and 9.5mg/24hours transdermal patches

On 3 December 2025 DHSC/NHSE issued a Medicines Supply Notification (MSN) on the [shortage of Rivastigmine 4.6mg/24hours and 9.5mg/24hours transdermal patches](#). Please note that **anticipated resupply** will commence on **19th December 2025**. For updates on stock availability, optimisation of doses and symptom control, as well as specific information on the availability of alternatives, please refer to the [Specialist Pharmacy Service \(SPS\) Medicines Supply Tool](#).

Actions for community pharmacists:

You should not be receiving prescriptions for patients who are newly initiated on rivastigmine transdermal patches until the supply issue has resolved and you should:

- contact the prescriber to discuss potential alternatives for patients who have been newly initiated on rivastigmine transdermal patches whilst they are in short supply.
- check with patients and carers to establish if they have sufficient supply to last until the resupply date, to avoid abrupt cessation of treatment and risk of worsening cognitive or behavioural symptoms;
- prioritise remaining stock for patients unable to swallow oral formulations or who cannot tolerate their gastrointestinal side effects;
- for patients able to swallow solid dosage forms, oral rivastigmine formulation ([see Supporting Information](#)) may need to be sourced after discussion with the prescriber, taking into account treatment history.
- where these options are not suitable, unlicensed supplies of rivastigmine patches may need to be sourced after discussion with the prescriber ([see Supporting Information](#)).



You should encourage primary care prescribers and clinicians to seek advice **from specialists** if the above options are not considered suitable. For prescribing recommendations about alternatives to rivastigmine transdermal patches, please refer to the [MSN](#).

Note: Please exercise care when switching between different formulations of rivastigmine to avoid risk of dosing or dispensing errors.

2. Important Update: Safe Transition to New Rybelsus® (Oral Semaglutide) Formulation in NEL

The latest information on the Rybelsus® (oral semaglutide) formulation change is now available. It outlines how to safely initiate and switch to a new, higher bioavailability formulation with different tablet strengths. Please prioritise the safe prescribing and dispensing of the new formulation, especially for patients already prescribed Rybelsus®. Review all affected patients and ensure timely transition before the old version is phased out by **31st January 2026**.

Further details can be found in the guidance note [Important Update: Safe Transition to New Rybelsus® \(Oral Semaglutide\) Formulation in NEL Primary Care – North East London](#) and the MHRA Drug Safety Update [Rybelsus transition to new formulation and risk of medication error.pdf](#)

3. MHRA Drug Safety Updates

Medicines shortages

Please refer to the [SPS Medicines Supply Tool](#) for details of all current medicines shortages (free registration to access).

NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) Serious Shortage Protocols (SSPs)

All active SSPs can be accessed [here](#).


Further information on medicines safety

- NHS England London Region [Controlled Drugs Newsletter Winter Edition 2025](#)
- [MHRA Safety Round Up: November 2025](#)

Please consult the following for further information on alerts, recalls, supply issues and medicines safety information [MHRA](#) tab on the Medicines Safety section of the Medicines Optimisation page on the Primary Care Portal.

4. Pharmacy First – Urgent Supply of Repeat Medicines Service: Key Updates

The NHSE London CD Accountable Officer would like to remind all providers of the following points before making supplies as part of this service:

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- Emergency supplies under Pharmacy First must follow regulations ([225 HMR 2012](#)), with clear documentation of satisfaction of the urgent clinical need and medicines **MUST** be labelled 'emergency supply'. Only previously prescribed medicines may be supplied and timing of last prescription issued should be considered.
 - Schedule 4 and 5 controlled drugs (e.g., co-codamol, dihydrocodeine, diazepam, z-drugs) are limited to a **five-day supply**. If original packaging cannot be split, dispensing is not permitted (this applies to most testosterone products).
 - These drugs can be subjected to abuse and pharmacists should always check patient's national care records before supplying and assess clinical appropriateness if consent to view records is withheld.
 - **Schedule 1, 2, or 3 controlled drugs (including tramadol) cannot be provided in emergencies except phenobarbitone for epilepsy.**
 - If urgent need exists for a non-permitted drug, refer the patient to their GP or local out-of-hours provider.
 - It is the pharmacist's responsibility to determine whether any urgent medicines referral to supply a medicine is appropriate, not the person who issued the referral. Pharmacists should balance the potential for misuse against clinical need. Interim supply may be offered to allow patient time to access their GP surgery when suitable.

5. Bank Holiday Community Pharmacy Opening Hours

Please find [here](#) the list of North East London (and other London) community pharmacies commissioned to be opened over the upcoming Christmas and New Year Bank Holiday Days.

There may be additional pharmacies that open on these days that are not listed and may have different opening hours. Please check at www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-pharmacy or by calling NHS 111.

6. Calling Designated Prescribing Practitioners to Support London Teach & Treat Programme

Prescribers interested in providing Designated Prescribing Practitioner (DPP) support to NEL pharmacists training to become independent prescribers are invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) for the London Teach and Treat Programme.

Teach & Treat is a national NHS England initiative supporting community pharmacists to train as independent prescribers in 2026 through supervised clinical practice. This EOI is to enable the ICB to identify North East London-based DPPs who may be willing and eligible to supervise and support community pharmacists through an NHSE-funded prescribing programme. The programme includes providing the pharmacists in the programme with access to 90 hours of supervised prescribing practice and up to 90 hours post registration prescribing exposure. The DPPs will be reimbursed £1500 for their full participation. Completing this EOI is not a commitment to acting as a DPP; it simply confirms potential eligibility, capacity and willingness. Deadline for submission: 4 January 2026 (midday).

Submissions will be reviewed promptly after the deadline. Successful DPPs will need to be willing to support applicants for the prescribing course at very short notice as the deadlines for pharmacists undertaking their independent prescribing courses are in January e.g. University College London's deadline is 16th January.

Please find the EOI form here: [Expression of Interest: London Teach & Treat – DPPs](#)



7. NHS England Workforce Training and Education National Independent Prescribing training offer

The National NHS England Workforce Training and Education (WT&E) Independent Prescribing (IP) training offer (2025-26) for pharmacists continues until March 2026.

Please see the NHS England WT&E [Independent Prescribing website](#) for further details on NHS England funding eligibility criteria and approved course providers including University College London (UCL).

For all learners and employers:

- London learners may apply to any national approved provider including those outside of the London region. Funding is available for [approved providers](#) only.
- Learners must meet both NHS England and university eligibility requirements to receive NHS England WT&E funding.
- Learners and employers should review all IP course options including those outside of London when considering which course to apply to.
- London has limited GPhC accredited IP provider capacity. The UCL course was significantly oversubscribed in 2024-25. For 2025/26, UCL applications will open at 09:00 on Monday 8th December 2025 and close at 09:00 on Friday 16th January 2026. See the [UCL website](#) for further information on their course requirements and guidance to support applications.

For any queries regarding this training offer, please contact england.wtpharmacy.london@nhs.net

8. NEL Training Hub for Primary Care Workers

The North East London Training Hub <https://neltraininghub.org/> supports primary care health and care workers across North East London with their education, training and development needs. NEL Training Hub is your “go to” place for information about primary care workforce initiatives and for access to high quality primary and community care education and training.


The NEL ICB primary care workforce development team in conjunction with the NEL Training Hub is launching a series of new leadership, management, digital and administration/clerical training for all primary care staff Community pharmacy staff can access these programmes. Training areas on offer fall under the following themes

- Quality Improvement
- Digital and AI
- Neighbourhood and INT Development
- Population Health Management
- Administration and Clerical

To receive the Training Hub’s weekly newsletter of upcoming training events, please click here [About – NEL Training Hub](#), scroll to JOIN OUR MAILING LIST and complete the required fields. In case of any issues registering for the newsletter or any queries relating to the training hub, please email:- thgpcg.neltraininghub@nhs.net

9. PrescQIPP Updates

Free PrescQIPP resources for community pharmacies — register today



Community pharmacies across North East London can access PrescQIPP's evidence-based medicines optimisation resources, tools and training at no cost. To see what's available on PrescQIPP please explore the following PrescQIPP flyer ([click here](#)) and cascade wider within your teams.

What is available

PrescQIPP provides a wide range of practical, quality assured support medicines optimisation resources including:

- **Clinical bulletins** across priority areas such as pain, respiratory, anticoagulation, antimicrobial stewardship and polypharmacy.
- **Virtual Professional Groups** for peer networking and shared learning (e.g. medication safety, antimicrobial stewardship, care homes, pharmacy technicians, polypharmacy/deprescribing).
- **Monthly clinical masterclasses and skills webinars** led by national experts, plus on demand recordings to learn at a time that suits you.
- **'Talking Meds' podcast** and other learning offers to keep you current on prescribing hot topics.

How to register (takes approximately 2 minutes)

1. Go to **PrescQIPP** [prescqipp.info/login](https://www.prescqipp.info/login) and register using your **NHS email address**
2. When prompted for organisation, please select **"ICS North East London"**.

Upcoming webinars

Upcoming PrescQIPP clinical masterclass webinar:

Pharmacy professionals may find the following monthly upcoming webinar (1-2pm) useful.

Date	Webinar
29th January 2026	Safe and appropriate use of medicines in paediatrics

View previous webinars at <https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/clinical-masterclasses/>

Upcoming PrescQIPP prescribing mastery webinars:

Pharmacy Professionals may find the following monthly upcoming webinars (1-2pm) useful.

Date	Webinar
14th January 2026	Skin conditions: Prescribing in Primary Care (Session 1)
28th January 2026	Skin conditions: Prescribing in Primary Care (Session 2)

View previous webinars at <https://www.prescqipp.info/learning/prescribing-mastery-webinars/>

Upcoming Practice Plus webinar:

PCN pharmacists, practice pharmacists and pharmacy technicians may find the following monthly upcoming webinar (1-2pm) useful.

Date	Webinar
21st January 2026	Menopause

View previous webinars at <https://www.prescqipp.info/learning/practice-plus/>

Upcoming Virtual Professional Groups - Polypharmacy and deprescribing group:

Clinicians may find the following monthly upcoming webinars (1-2pm) useful.

Date	Webinar
13th January 2026	Polypharmacy and deprescribing

Register [here](#) for PrescQIPP resources and select "ICS North East London" as the organisation.

10. Thank you!

The NEL ICB Pharmacy and Medicines Optimisation team would like to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of general practice, PCN and community pharmacy teams to improve the quality and safety of prescribing and supply of medicines as well as medicines related counselling to NEL residents and patients.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

11. Contact Details and Additional Resources

CONTACT DETAILS

NEL ICB Pharmacy and Medicines Optimisation Team	Prescribing and medicines enquiries (HCP use only): nelondonicb.prescribingqueries@nhs.net
Specialist Pharmacy Service (SPS) Medicines Advice	For all patient specific clinical queries please use the following SPS contact: askspis.nhs@sps.direct
For all enquires, reporting concerns or incidents relating to Controlled Drugs	england.londonaccountableoffice@nhs.net Report CD incidents using the national reporting tool www.cdreporting.co.uk

RESOURCES

NEL Joint Formulary	https://www.nel-jointformulary.nhs.uk User guide: NEL netFormulary User Guide FINAL .pdf
Pharmacy & Medicines Optimisation Resources	https://primarycare.northeastlondon.icb.nhs.uk/home/meds/
Medicine Supply Shortages	Click here for SPS Medicines Supply Tool which offers up-to-date information on Medicines Shortages, provided by DHSC and NHSE/I. Register with SPS free-of-charge to access.
PGD Updates	UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) – click here SPS – click here NHS England (NHSE) – click here
MHRA information	For all MHRA updates on alerts, recalls and safety information on drugs and medical devices Alerts, recalls and safety information: drugs and medical devices - GOV.UK
Learn from Patient Safety Events Service (LFPSE)	For reporting patient safety incidents and misses NHS England » Learn from patient safety events (LFPSE) service
Medicines Safety Tools - PrescQIPP	PrescQIPP - Medicines safety
Reporting suspected adverse effects/defects of medicines or devices – Yellow Card Scheme	Yellow Card Making medicines and medical devices safer

For your information:

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