

# NEL Prescribing and Medicines Newsletter

## March 2026

### Updates for Community Pharmacy across North East London

#### Contents

1. <a href="#">Outbreak of Invasive Meningococcal Disease in South East England</a> .....	1
2. <a href="#">Important update: Levemir® (Insulin Detemir) Discontinuation</a> .....	1
3. <a href="#">MHRA Drug Safety Update</a> .....	2
4. <a href="#">Formulary and Pathways Group Update</a> .....	2
5. <a href="#">Guidance on use of antiviral agents for the treatment and prophylaxis of seasonal influenza</a> .....	3
6. <a href="#">Prevention of future death reports – Shared Learning</a> .....	3
7. <a href="#">London-wide medicines waste campaign</a> .....	5
8. <a href="#">PresQIPP Updates</a> .....	5

## 1. Outbreak of Invasive Meningococcal Disease, South East England

Following the recent outbreak of meningococcal disease in Kent, this alert outlines the recommended courses of action to manage cases of infection and contacts.

Access the safety alert here: [Outbreak of invasive meningococcal disease, South East England - GOV.UK](#)

**For action: urgent vaccination response to outbreak of meningococcal disease linked to University of Kent and the area of Canterbury**

Access the guidance here: [NHS England » For action: urgent vaccination response to outbreak of meningococcal disease linked to University of Kent and the area of Canterbury](#)

Further information about Meningitis B Outbreak management can be found here: [Meningitis B outbreak: what you need to know – UK Health Security Agency](#)

## 2. Important update: Levemir® (Insulin Detemir) Discontinuation

Novo Nordisk® will be discontinuing **Levemir® Penfill®** and **Levemir® FlexPen®**, with supplies expected to be discontinued by **31 December 2026**.

There is no direct switch for Levemir® (insulin detemir) and patients will need careful switching and additional monitoring when moving to alternative insulin products.

Actions for community pharmacy and stock availability are outlined in the [Primary Care Bulletin](#). Please refer to the [NEL Guidance note](#) for more information.

## 3. MHRA Drug Safety Update

### Alerts, recalls and safety information

Please refer to the [MHRA](#) for alerts, recalls, supply issues and medicines safety updates.

### Monthly updates on medicines safety

MHRA Safety Roundup: [February 2026](#)

SPS Medicines Safety Update: [February 2026](#)

### Medicines Supply

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

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

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

For further medicines safety updates, please consult the Medicines Safety section of the [Medicines Optimisation page](#) on the Primary Care Portal.

## 4. Formulary and Pathways Group Update

Formulary Updates	
Approved Item / Guidance and Pathway	Additional Information
<b>NEL Oral Contraceptives</b> <b>Formulary:</b> Updated to include <b>Drospirenone</b> as 2 <sup>nd</sup> line option	<a href="#">Oral-contraceptives-formulary-preferences-NEL_01.2025-V2-final-1.pdf</a>
<b>ELFT Shared care agreements:</b> Treatment of ADHD in children & young people (6-18 years) – <b>expiry extension to November 2026</b>  Melatonin: insomnia and sleep disorders in children and adolescents – <b>expiry extension to March 2028</b> (For information, already approved at ELFT medicines committee)	<a href="#">Shared Care Guidelines – Mental Health – North East London</a>
<b>NEL Shared care agreement:</b> Azathioprine and mercaptopurine for patients within adult services (non-transplant indications) – <b>expiry extension to February 2028</b>	<a href="#">NEL-wide (non-mental health) – North East London</a>
<b>DOACS (Direct-acting oral anticoagulants):</b> <a href="#">Apixaban</a> , <a href="#">Dabigatran</a> , <a href="#">Etelxilate</a> , <a href="#">Edoxaban</a> , and <a href="#">Rivaroxaban</a> .  Status change from <b>Amber*</b> to <b>Green</b> for <b>prevention of stroke and systemic embolism in adult patients with non-valvular atrial fibrillation (NVAf)</b> .	<b>Green medicines can be initiated in primary and secondary care.</b> They are suitable for non-specialist initiation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Preferred-DOAC-prescribing-position-statement-NEL_11.2025-v2.pdf</a></li> </ul> <b>Generic apixaban or generic rivaroxaban tablets</b> should be considered as the preferred DOAC for patients with NVAf or VTE in NHS North East London. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">DOAC-initiation-and-monitoring-template-NEL_11-2025.pdf</a></li> </ul>


#### Direct Oral Anticoagulant (DOAC) Initiation and Monitoring Guidance Template in NVAF


- [DOAC-Calculating-renal-function-NEL\\_04.2024.pdf](#)
- [Overview | Apixaban for preventing stroke and systemic embolism in people with non-valvular atrial fibrillation | Guidance | NICE](#)

- **Training & Education: Initiating & Monitoring Direct Oral Anticoagulants in Patients with Atrial Fibrillation for Stroke Prevention**

##### Event Details


 Wednesday 22 April 2026

 1:00–2:00pm

 Microsoft Teams Webinar

Registration link: [Part 1 | Meeting Join | Microsoft Teams](#) [click here](#)

 Wednesday 29 April 2026

 1:00–2:00pm

 Microsoft Teams Webinar

Registration link: [Part 2 | Meeting Join | Microsoft Teams](#) [click here](#)

## 5. Guidance on use of antiviral agents for the treatment and prophylaxis of seasonal influenza

The UK Health Security Agency has updated its guidance on the use of [antiviral medicines for the treatment and prophylaxis of seasonal influenza](#) (23 January 2026) on the use of antiviral medicines for both treatment and prophylaxis of seasonal influenza. This follows the October 2025 changes to prescribing regulations and the Selected List Scheme (SLS) in Part XVIII B of the [Drug Tariff](#) which removed the requirement for prescribers to notify of the use of oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (Relenza®). These amendments now permit year-round prescribing of both agents.

Antiviral treatment is recommended for people with confirmed or suspected influenza who are at higher risk of complications, including older adults, pregnant women, young children, individuals with chronic medical conditions, and those who are immunosuppressed. Oseltamivir remains the first line option, with zanamivir or baloxavir considered in defined clinical circumstances. The guidance places strong emphasis on early clinical assessment and prompt initiation of therapy, supported by wider use of point of care testing to aid timely decision making.

Post-exposure prophylaxis is reserved for specific high-risk groups following close contact with a confirmed case. Clinicians are advised to take account of product characteristics and, where appropriate, the implications of off label use when selecting an antiviral agent.

## 6. Prevention of future death reports – Shared Learning

The Pharmacy and Medicines Optimisation team continue to review Prevention of Future Death (PFD) reports relevant to primary care and medicines safety. These reports are issued under [Regulation 28](#) of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 where action is required to prevent similar future deaths in the future. Some

deaths have occurred in North East London, emphasising the local need to strengthen processes underpinning prescribing, counselling, monitoring and medicines supply. Full reports can be found [here](#).

**Action:** Clinicians and staff involved in medicines process are asked to review the learning and apply it locally to support improvements.

Issue	Concern	Learning
<p>Alan Crabtree <a href="#">2026-0103</a></p> <p>Alan was prescribed methotrexate for rheumatoid arthritis. He developed rapid pancytopenia and, despite treatment, died from pneumonia. The medicine was clinically indicated, but rare and severe toxicity occurred.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The signs of toxicity (e.g. sore throat, fever, chills, mouth ulcers) were not recognised, and escalation was not triggered.</li> <li>• Ambiguous wording (“Seek medical attention”) may lead to delays in stopping methotrexate and starting treatment for toxicity if patient seeks advice from a community pharmacist rather than their specialist.</li> <li>• Outdated shared care guidance for oral methotrexate, not reviewed since 2017 and not aligned to current national clinical guidelines.</li> <li>• Lack of clarity within shared care and Pharmacy First pathways on when pharmacists should withhold supply and refer urgently.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General practice and pharmacy teams must recognise red-flag signs of toxicity and act promptly.</li> <li>• Shared care guidance should be updated to reflect current practice and national guidance, with patient information aligned to recognised sources (e.g. Versus Arthritis).</li> <li>• Dosing guidance should be revised to clarify starting dose, titration, escalation timing and monitoring requirements.</li> <li>• Patient-facing advice should clearly state who to contact if toxicity is suspected and when to withhold methotrexate pending clinical review.</li> <li>• Community pharmacist roles under Pharmacy First should be clarified, including limits of responsibility and escalation pathways for suspected toxicity.</li> </ul>
<p>Clive Hyman <a href="#">2026-0034</a></p> <p>Clive died from a traumatic subdural haemorrhage, following a fall. He was prescribed apixaban and was unaware of the risks that the anticoagulant presented in the event of head trauma.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NICE NG232 guidance advises that people who sustain a head injury while taking anticoagulants (including apixaban) should be referred urgently to an emergency department, including when advice is provided remotely.</li> <li>• Patient information leaflets for apixaban do not clearly advise patients what action to take following head trauma.</li> <li>• As head injuries and intracranial bleeding may initially be asymptomatic, patients may continue apixaban and delay seeking medical advice, increasing the risk of ongoing bleeding and severe harm by the time symptoms emerge.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standardise anticoagulant counselling to clearly state that any head injury requires urgent medical assessment, even if symptoms are absent.</li> <li>• Supplement patient information locally to explicitly state that head trauma requires patients to go to A&amp;E even if they have no symptoms.</li> <li>• Reinforce NICE NG232 escalation requirements across primary care, community pharmacy and remote services.</li> <li>• Consider the inclusion of clinical prompts and signposting to advice on the NHS website to support immediate referral to the emergency department.</li> </ul>
<p>Urielle Kuyenga <a href="#">2025-0635</a></p> <p>Urielle died from sepsis secondary to bacterial pneumonia. She had sickle-cell disease, which increased her risk of severe respiratory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urielle’s specialist doctors believed that the GP was monitoring the prescription and dispensing of the penicillin, whilst Urielle’s GP was misled by Urielle’s mother that the hospital were dispensing the medication directly.</li> <li>• The breakdown of communication means that Urielle was left</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify clinical responsibility for prescribing and monitoring long term prophylactic medication.</li> <li>• Actively monitor adherence to critical medications, with escalation if prescriptions are not collected.</li> <li>• Prominently flag high risk conditions (e.g. sickle cell disease) in primary care clinical systems.</li> </ul>

infection, and had been prescribed prophylactic penicillin. The prescription was not collected or administered by her mother.	unprotected from opportunistic infection which caused her avoidable death.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce record review standards for clinicians at every consultation.</li> <li>• Strengthen communication with parents/carers about medication importance and risks of nonadherence.</li> <li>• Improve information sharing between specialist services and GPs.</li> </ul>
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## 7. London-wide medicines waste campaign

From March to May 2026, NHS organisations across London are promoting the “**Only order what you need**” campaign to help reduce unnecessary medicines waste.

Patients are encouraged to:

- Check their existing medicines before reordering and only request what is still needed
- Speak to their GP to request a medication review if medicines are no longer being taken, to ensure their prescription is right for them
- Check their prescription bag before leaving the pharmacy
- Return unwanted or unused medicines to any community pharmacy for safe disposal

### How Pharmacy teams can support this campaign:

- Reinforce these key messages with patients
- Encourage patients to only order items they genuinely need
- Display campaign posters in the pharmacy
- Access and download campaign materials in the link provided [here](#)

In this short video, Bhaveen Patel (Junction Pharmacy) explains the importance of patients checking what medicines they already have before reordering, helping to reduce waste: <https://youtu.be/HMW6utSEaO4>

🔗 Find out more and help share the message: [Only order what you need: Simple steps patients can take to reduce medicines waste - North East London Intranet](#)

## 8. PresQIPP Updates

### Latest Podcast

Episode 38. What is penicillin allergy de-labelling (PADL) and why is it important with Prof Phil Howard, link: [PrescQIPP Podcast: Talking Meds](#)

### Upcoming Webinars:

PCN / practice pharmacists and pharmacy technicians may find the following upcoming webinar useful:

Date	Time	Webinar
21 <sup>st</sup> April 2026	1-2pm	Genomics Informed Medicines Optimisation webinar 1: Background to genomics informed medicines optimisation <a href="#">Login to register</a>
22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2026	1-2pm	Prescribing mastery: Type 2 diabetes 1 Register to join this session <a href="#">here</a>

## 9. Contact Details and Additional Resources

CONTACT DETAILS	
NEL ICB Pharmacy and Medicines Optimisation Team	For prescribing and medicines enquiries: <a href="mailto:nelondonicb.prescribingqueries@nhs.net">nelondonicb.prescribingqueries@nhs.net</a>
Specialist Pharmacy Service (SPS) Medicines Advice	For all patient specific clinical queries please use the following SPS contact: <a href="mailto:asksps.nhs@sps.direct">asksps.nhs@sps.direct</a>
For all enquires, reporting concerns or incidents relating to Controlled Drugs	<a href="mailto:england.londonaccountableoffice@nhs.net">england.londonaccountableoffice@nhs.net</a> <b>Report CD incidents</b> using the national reporting tool <a href="http://www.cdreporting.co.uk">www.cdreporting.co.uk</a>
RESOURCES	
For NEL Joint Formulary	<a href="https://www.nel-jointformulary.nhs.uk">https://www.nel-jointformulary.nhs.uk</a> User guide: <a href="#">NEL netFormulary User Guide FINAL .pdf</a>
For Pharmacy & Medicines Optimisation Team Resources	<a href="https://primarycare.northeastlondon.icb.nhs.uk/home/meds/">https://primarycare.northeastlondon.icb.nhs.uk/home/meds/</a>
For Medicine Supply Shortages	<a href="#">Click here</a> for <b>SPS Medicines Supply Tool</b> which offers up-to-date information on Medicines Shortages, provided by DHSC and NHSE/I.  <a href="#">Register</a> with SPS free-of-charge to access.
For PGD Updates	UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) – <a href="#">click here</a> SPS – <a href="#">click here</a> NHS England (NHSE) – <a href="#">click here</a>
For MHRA information	For all MHRA updates on alerts, recalls and safety information on drugs and medical devices <a href="#">Alerts, recalls and safety information: drugs and medical devices - GOV.UK</a>
Learn from Patient Safety Events Service (LFPSE)	For reporting patient safety incidents and misses <a href="#">NHS England » Learn from patient safety events (LFPSE) service</a>
For Medicines Safety Tools - PrescQIPP	<a href="#">PrescQIPP - Medicines safety</a>
For reporting suspected adverse effects/defects of medicines or devices – Yellow Card Scheme	<a href="#">Yellow Card   Making medicines and medical devices safer</a>

### For your information:

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information included in this newsletter is correct at the time of publication. Throughout the newsletter, external links are provided to other sites. These links are provided to improve access to information and exist only for the convenience of readers of the newsletter; NEL ICB Pharmacy and Medicines Optimisation Team cannot accept responsibility for their content. We cannot guarantee that these links will work all of the time and we have no control over the availability of the linked pages. This newsletter is not to be used for commercial purposes.