

Medicines Shortage Statement

Guidance during periods of sustained medicines shortages

Medicines supply shortages can have significant negative impacts on patients, community pharmacies, general practice, and the wider NHS. It is imperative that all stakeholders work together in the best interest of the patient.

Where a local shortage of a formulary medicine has been identified, prescribers may need to consider alternatives for the duration of the shortage taking into consideration safety and cost effectiveness. For national shortages, see national guidance where applicable. Formulary alternatives should be considered first, however there may be circumstances where prescribing of non-formulary medicines is the most appropriate option following the key principles outlined below.

It is recommended that healthcare professionals register for free with the Specialist Pharmacy Service (SPS) Medicines Supply Tool and subscribe to SPS email notifications to obtain details of medicines supply shortages, further information on alternatives and when shortages have resolved

<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/home/tools/medicines-supply-tool/>.

Key principles

- Effective communication between healthcare professionals in all sectors is paramount.
- Specialists should communicate the rationale for any non-formulary recommendations and state whether the formulary choice medication can be reinstated once the supply issue has resolved.
- Primary care clinicians should seek specialist advice where appropriate.
- Prescribers in all sectors should seek guidance from their local Medicines Optimisation/Medicines Management teams as required.
- Patient safety is paramount, and patients must be kept informed of any changes to their medication and the potential differences with an alternative medication.
- When choosing an alternative medicine, prescribers should always consider the cost-effectiveness of any non-formulary choice.
- Any prescribing of alternative medicines due to a shortage should only be for the duration of the shortage and it is the prescriber's responsibility to ensure that patients are prescribed the most appropriate and cost-effective medicine once the supply issue has resolved.