

Frequently Asked Questions about the Nottinghamshire Area Prescribing Committee and the Nottinghamshire Joint Formulary.

What is the Area Prescribing Committee (APC)?

The APC is a group of representatives of prescribers and funders of medicines for the Nottinghamshire area. APC members include doctors, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals from General Practice, local hospital Trusts, Primary Care Networks (PCNs), the Integrated Care Board (ICB), other healthcare positions and patient representatives.

What does the APC do?

The Area Prescribing Committee (APC) meets each month to make decisions that are based on evidence as to which medicines and healthcare products should be recommended for prescribing in Nottinghamshire. This includes tablets, capsules, injections, creams, eye drops, nutritional products, wound care items, and medical devices. The APC also decides which healthcare professionals are best placed to prescribe these treatments.

APC decisions are guided by national recommendations, such as those from the [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence](#) (NICE), and the guidelines resulting from these apply to both Primary Care (GP practices) and Secondary Care (hospitals). For patients, this ensures that no matter where in Nottinghamshire they receive care, prescribing procedures remain consistent and are based on the same standards.

Most regions have a similar prescribing committee and work closely with neighbouring APCs to support equal access and consistency across the wider geographical area.







What is a medicine formulary?

A medicine formulary is a list of medicines that healthcare professionals are advised to *prescribe* or *not to prescribe*. The list is based on the best available evidence and helps to ensure that patients receive safe, effective, and good value treatments.

In Nottinghamshire, the same formulary, called the Nottinghamshire Joint Formulary, is used both in hospitals (Secondary Care) and GP practices (Primary Care).

The Nottinghamshire Joint Formulary includes a 'traffic light' system for each medicine, which shows which healthcare professional can prescribe it; for example, some medicines can be started only by a hospital specialist, while others can be started by a Primary Care prescriber.

The image below shows the traffic light classifications used locally:

 RED	<p>Medicines which should normally be prescribed by specialists only. eg hospital only.</p> <p>No new patients to receive prescriptions in primary care. Patients already receiving Red Medicines in primary care should be handled on a case by case basis with the support of the Medicines Optimisation team.</p>
 AMB 1	<p>Medicines that should be initiated by a specialist and prescribed by primary care prescribers only under a shared care protocol, once the patient has been stabilised.</p> <p>Prior agreement must be obtained by the specialist from the primary care provider before prescribing responsibility is transferred. The shared care protocol must have been agreed by the relevant secondary care trust Drugs and Therapeutics Committee(s) (DTC) and approved by the Nottinghamshire APC.</p>
 AMB 2	<p>Medicines suitable to be prescribed in primary care after specialist* recommendation or initiation.</p> <p>A supporting prescribing guideline may be requested which must have been agreed by the relevant secondary care trust DTCs and approved by the Nottinghamshire APC.</p> <p>*Specialist is defined by the APC as a clinician who has undertaken an appropriate formal qualification or recognised training programme within the described area of practice and has a working experience and knowledge within a speciality area.</p>
 AMB 3	<p>Primary care/ non specialist may initiate as per APC guideline.</p> <p>The supporting prescribing guideline must have been agreed by the relevant secondary care trust D&TC(s) and approved by the Nottinghamshire APC.</p>
 GREEN	<p>Medicines suitable for routine use within primary care.</p> <p>Can be initiated within primary care within their licensed indication, in accordance with nationally recognised formularies, for example the BNF, BNF for Children, Medicines for Children or Palliative Care Formulary. Primary care prescribers take full responsibility for prescribing.</p>
 GREY	<p>Grey / Non-Formulary: Medicines, which the Nottinghamshire APC has actively reviewed and does not recommend for use at present due to limited clinical and/or cost effective data.</p> <p>Grey / Non-Formulary (undergoing assessment): Work is ongoing and will be reviewed at a future APC meeting.</p> <p>Grey / Non-Formulary (no formal assessment): APC has not formally reviewed this medicine or indication because it had never been requested for formulary inclusion. Often used for drugs new to market.</p>

The table in the image above can also be found at: [Traffic light classifications](#)

Where can I find the APC website and the Nottinghamshire Joint Formulary?

The APC website and the Nottinghamshire Joint Formulary can be found by using the links below. It is worth noting that these websites are designed primarily as a resource for healthcare professionals.

		<p>Website:</p> <p>Home - Nottinghamshire Area Prescribing Committee</p>
		<p>Website:</p> <p>Welcome to the Nottinghamshire Joint Formulary</p>



How does the APC decide whether to include a medicine in the formulary?

When making decisions, the APC follows the [APC Decision Framework](#). This framework uses the NICE Good Practice Guide for Formulary Development and Management and takes into consideration:

- Clinical effectiveness (how good a medicine is at treating a specific condition).
- Benefit to patients.
- Patient safety.
- Cost-effectiveness and value for money.
- The NHS is obliged by law to fund and provide medicines and treatments recommended by a positive NICE Technology Appraisal (TA). When a NICE TA recommends a treatment, the APC must ensure that a traffic light classification is allocated to that treatment within 3 months of the TA publication date (unless otherwise specified).

Where can I find out what decisions the APC has made?

Information on APC decisions can be found on the APC website by using the links in the table above.

What is Shared Care?

Shared Care is a formal agreement between hospital specialists and a patient's GP. It allows the GP to take over the prescribing and overseeing of certain specialist medicines once the patient's condition is stable.

Shared Care only happens when:

- The specialist believes it is safe and appropriate.
- The GP agrees to it and has all the information needed.
- It is in best interest of the patient.

Shared Care helps make the patient's treatment more convenient by allowing them to get prescriptions from the local GP practice instead of needing to go to hospital clinics regularly.

For further information about shared care, visit the [Frequently Asked Questions about Shared Care for Patients and Carers](#).

What is a non-medical prescriber?

Non-medical prescribers are not doctors or dentists but are healthcare professionals such as nurses, pharmacists or optometrists who have received additional training and qualifications that allow them to prescribe certain medicines within their area of skills or knowledge.



Reporting a side effect?

The Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA) oversees medicines and devices to ensure that they are safe and effective, and it uses a Yellow Card reporting scheme for any suspected side effects or negative incidents. Yellow card reporting allows the MHRA to take appropriate action to protect patients. This scheme allows healthcare professionals and the public to voluntarily report any suspected problems with healthcare products such as medicines, vaccines and medical devices.

How to Report a Side Effect:

Online: Go to the official [Yellow Card website](https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk): <https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk>

Mobile App:

Download the Yellow Card app from the App Store (iOS) or Google Play (Android).

Through a Healthcare Professional:

Speak to your GP, pharmacist, or another healthcare provider—they can submit a report on your behalf.

Where do I go for more information?

- You can ask your doctor, nurse or community pharmacist about your medicines.
- For any queries relating to the APC, please email nnicb-nn.nottsapc@nhs.net
- For compliments and complaints, contact the Patient Experience Team by calling: 0115 883 9570, or by emailing: nnicb-nn.patientexperience@nhs.net
- For advice for patients during a medicine shortage, see this Department of Health & Social Care patient information leaflet: [Advice for patients during a medicines shortage](#)