

Antibiotic prescribing improvement scheme – children prescribed antibiotics in primary care.

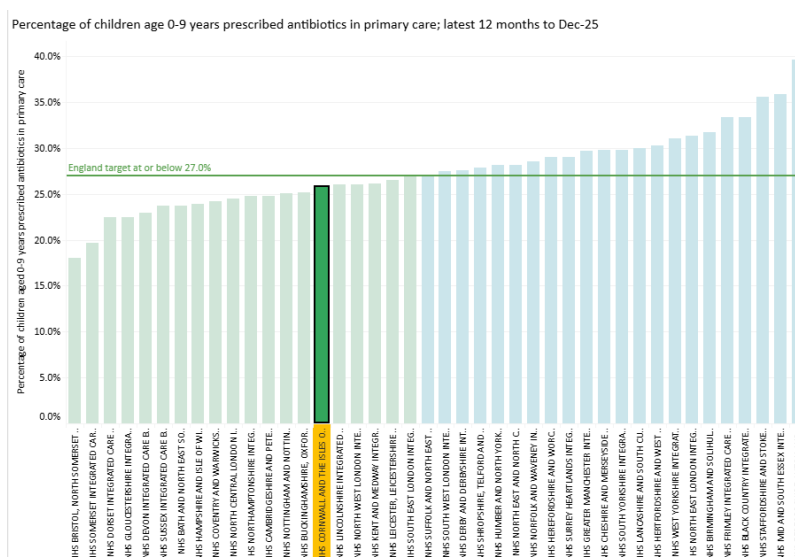
Prescribing and medicines optimisation scheme 2026 to 2027. Version 1.5

Background

This prescribing improvement scheme aims to support the safe reduction of antibiotic prescribing in immunocompetent children aged 3 months-9 years through education, focussing on sore throat, lower respiratory tract infection (LRTI) and acute otitis media. The scheme will also include an audit of prescribing to support best practice.

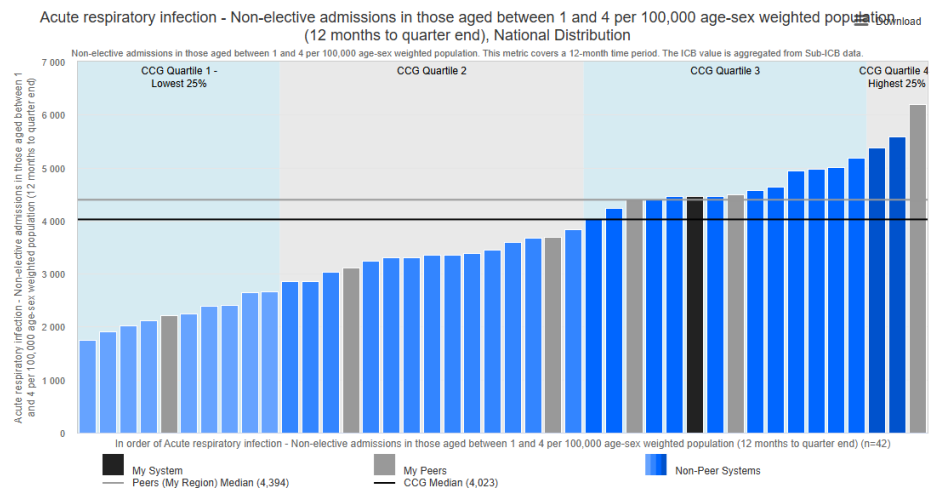
The NHS Oversight Framework 2025/26 sets out updated metrics for assessing integrated care board (ICB) performance. One new patient safety metric measures the percentage of children aged 0–9 who have been prescribed at least one antibiotic in primary care over the previous 12 months. ICBs are currently assessed as Met or Not Met against a fixed national target of 27% or lower, though this is expected to change to 25% or lower.

The figure below from the [PrescQIPP antimicrobial dashboard](#) shows the percentage of children age 0-9 years prescribed antibiotics in primary care; latest 12 months to December 2025. NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly ICB is currently at 25.8%.

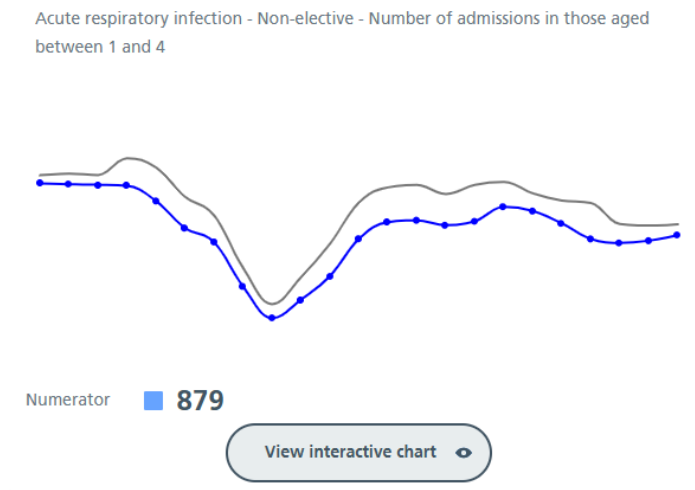


Model Health System (login required)

The Model Health System is a data-driven improvement tool that enables NHS health systems to benchmark quality and productivity. The figure below is a screenshot from the Model Health System ([Model Health System](#) Browse > Population Health > Antimicrobial Resistance). The example below shows hospital admissions for acute respiratory infection in children under 5 years per 100,000 age-sex weighted population by ICB. In the last 12 months to quarter end, there were 4,469 admissions in the ICB.



Data can also be shown as a trend line against peers, to monitor that trends are not changing compared to others in our region. In Q2 of 24/25 there were 879 admissions in our ICB. Peers in the region had an admission rate of 963.



These charts demonstrate how balancing measures (such as hospital admissions) can be monitored for assurance of patient safety, by reviewing whether admissions increase as a consequence of reduced antibiotic prescribing. Data is also available for other age bands.

Clinical guidance

An educational session delivered by Professor Alastair Hay has been provided to GPs as part of the GP leads meeting, including time for Q&As and case-based discussion to consolidate learning. Content covered included:

- Case studies covering sore throat, non-pneumonia lower respiratory tract infections and acute otitis media
- Clinical trial data on the impact of antibiotic prescribing on sore throat, non-pneumonia lower respiratory tract infections and acute otitis media
- Non-antibiotic approaches to managing respiratory symptoms.
- Safety netting
- Leaflets to support education of patients or caregivers, such as the [Caring for Children with Coughs leaflet](#) or the Royal College of General Practitioners [TARGET resources](#).

The session is available as a recorded webinar for all other clinicians in your practice.

Guidance is available from National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in the following areas:

- [Cough \(acute\): antimicrobial prescribing](#)
- [Otitis media \(acute\): antimicrobial prescribing](#)
- [Sore throat \(acute\): antimicrobial prescribing](#)

Local management of infection guidelines for primary and community services can be found on the [formulary](#). These guidelines are adapted following NICE and UK Health Security Agency antimicrobial prescribing guidance - managing common infections, along with recommendations and practical advice from Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust (RCHT).

Recommendations

There are 2 steps to this prescribing incentive scheme, which should be completed **before 15 September 2026**. This will enable training to be completed before winter months, as well as any learning identified from current practice through audit. The steps are:

Step 1: educational session and practice-level training

Prescribing leads are asked to watch the webinar (if not already attended the face-to-face training provided at GP leads) and run a practice-level training session, to share learning with other clinicians in the practice, using case-based discussions featured in the session. The case-based discussion materials will be made available for GP leads to conduct their own training session with their practice teams.

We recommend that all clinicians assessing children and prescribing antimicrobials for children presenting with respiratory tract symptoms watch the recorded webinar to support continued professional development (CPD). The training session from Professor Hay has been recorded, please follow the link below:

- [PMOS AMR training session Alistair Hay 5 Feb 26.mp4](#)

Practices are also asked to ensure that the TARGET [treating your respiratory tract infection leaflet](#) is available to prescribers. There are [guides](#) on the TARGET website on how to add to EMIS and SystmOne, or practices may be able to send using AccuRx. Alternatively, copies may be printed for clinicians to give during consultation.

Step 2: retrospective audit

A retrospective audit of prescribing in immunocompetent children aged 3 months to 9 years will be conducted, looking at antibiotics prescribed in this age group during the last 3 months. Results and any learning should be shared with the wider team at a practice meeting to support creation of an action plan that aims to further optimise antibiotic prescribing in children with respiratory symptoms.

Identify patients for audit

- A sample is needed of consultations with immunocompetent children aged 3 months-9 years who have been prescribed amoxicillin, phenoxymethylpenicillin or clarithromycin.
 - Searches will be available from the prescribing team to identify those prescribed antibiotics.
 - Please note we are unable to only search for immunocompetent children, please ensure during the audit that records are checked for this.
 - Where a diagnosis has been made of community acquired pneumonia (CAP), this is outside the scope of this audit and should be excluded.
- The sample will vary with practice size but a sample of 30 patients (10 patients with one of the three conditions: otitis media, LRTI (excluding CAP) and sore throat) may be sufficient to identify recurring themes
 - This may need to be adjusted dependent on practice size, if a practice finds they do not have 10 prescriptions in each category then the search may be adjusted to look for prescriptions in the last 6 months. The prescribing team can support with amending searches if required.
- Present audit results at practice team meeting.
- Create a practice action plan that details the results and actions required for future prescribing.

Payment

The payment for this protocol is split into 2 parts:

Part 1

5p per listed patient will be paid for the prescribing lead to watch the webinar (if not already attended training at GP leads), and to host an educational session within the practice to share learning with other clinicians. Details can be recorded on the Practice Action Plan.

Part 2

10p per listed patient for returning the Excel spreadsheet titled 'ABX in children data' (located in the [PMOS support documents](#) zip folder on the formulary) and Practice Action Plan in appendix 1 to [the prescribing team](#) by **15 September 2026**.

References

NHS Oversight Framework 2025-2026 - ICB performance dashboard: Children prescribed antibiotics in primary care. PrescQIPP. Available from: [NHS Oversight Framework 2025-2026 - ICB performance dashboard: Children prescribed antibiotics in primary care](#)

Model Health System. NHS England. Available from: [NHS England - Model Hospital](#)
Caring for children with coughs. University of Bristol. Available from: [Caring for Babies and Children with Cough](#)

Cough (acute): antimicrobial prescribing. NICE guideline. Reference number:NG120. Published: 07 February 2019. Available from:

[Overview | Cough \(acute\): antimicrobial prescribing | Guidance | NICE](#)

Otitis media (acute): antimicrobial prescribing. NICE guideline. Reference number:NG91. Published: 28 March 2018 Last updated: 11 March 2022. Available from: [Overview | Otitis media \(acute\): antimicrobial prescribing | Guidance | NICE](#)

Sore throat (acute): antimicrobial prescribing. NICE guideline. Reference number:NG84. Published: 26 January 2018. Available from: [Overview | Sore throat \(acute\): antimicrobial prescribing | Guidance | NICE](#)

Management of infection guidelines for primary and community services. NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly integrated care board. September 2024. Available from: [Antimicrobial guidelines for primary and community services](#)

Prescribing improvement scheme for local adaptation: Children with acute cough with respiratory tract infection (RTI). NHS England 2025. Available from: https://future.nhs.uk/A_M_R/view?objectID=244174725

Appendix 1: Practice action plan

Practice name:

Details of GP lead attending face to face training or watching webinar:	Name:	Date of training: Face to face or via webinar:
Date of practice training session hosted by GP lead:		
Key learning points shared at practice training session:		
Audit conducted by:		
Presented to practice team on date:		
Key findings from audit:		

Action plan: