

NORTHERN IRELAND MEDICINES MANAGEMENT Newsletter

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Vaccine Group Directions (VGDs)

A Vaccine Group Direction (VGD) is a legal mechanism to support administration of licensed vaccines within vaccination programmes across the UK, introduced into legislation in April 2026 in place of National Protocols, used since the pandemic to support the administration of flu and covid-19 vaccines. VGDs can only be used to administer vaccines that provide protection against an infectious disease caused by a virus or bacteria. VGDs allow specified registered healthcare professionals to assess and administer vaccinations to individuals, or delegate certain tasks to trained registered and non-registered healthcare professionals, as detailed within each specific VGD. PGD do **not allow delegation** but require the authorised practitioner to undertake all aspects of care under the PGD.

VGD tasks may be divided into four steps, (1) Clinical assessment, (2) Vaccine preparation, (3) Vaccine administration and (4) Record keeping. Step 1 must be undertaken **only** by registered healthcare professionals listed in the legislation – the same as those who are eligible to [work under a PGD](#). If the lead registered healthcare professional performing step 1 of the process delegates any tasks, they must provide supervision for the whole process, regardless of whether the colleague is registered or not. The individual performing step 1 must remain nearby throughout the whole episode of care.

Production of VGDs is the responsibility of the SPPG and PHA within NI. **Local amendment of SPPG/PHA VGDs is not permitted.** The first VGD has recently been used for delivery of the Spring 2026 Covid-19 vaccination programme within NI. New VGDs relevant to GP practices and community pharmacies are shared by email and available on the [primary care intranet](#). In future, VGDs may be used to administer other vaccines and in some cases may render PGDs unnecessary. Further information on VGDs, including training, authorisation and records management information is available on the [SPS website](#).

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NICE Guidance Recently published:

[NICE TA878](#)
[NICE TA1121](#)
[NICE TA1122](#)
[NICE TA1127](#)
[NICE TA1131](#)
[NICE TA1142](#)
[NICE TA1143](#)
[NICE TA1147](#)
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[NICE TA1150](#)
[NICE TA1155](#)
[NICE TA1156](#)
[NICE TA1158](#)
[NICE TA1159](#)
[NICE TA1160](#)
[NICE TA1161](#)
[NICE TA1164](#)

Capsaicin Cream Availability Update

Capsaicin cream 0.075% is back in stock in wholesalers, after a delay of two years. It is [licensed](#) for post-herpetic neuralgia and painful diabetic peripheral polyneuropathy (the latter **only** under the direct supervision of a hospital consultant who has access to specialist resources). Prescribing for other conditions is off-label. NICE guidance [CG173](#) advises, '**Consider capsaicin cream for people with localised neuropathic pain who wish to avoid, or who cannot tolerate, oral treatments...**'

The Northern Ireland Formulary '[Management of Non-Malignant Neuropathic Pain](#)' also notes 'Capsaicin Cream 0.075% (Axsain[®]) is an option for **localised pain if oral therapy is unsuitable or not tolerated**, with directions "Apply 3-4 times a day, apply sparingly, not more often than every 4 hours".

Prescribers are reminded that lidocaine patches are not recommended by NICE for neuropathic pain nor are they included in the NI Formulary. Therefore Capsaicin cream should be considered as an alternative, where appropriate, if topical treatment for neuropathic pain is being considered.



Managed Entry decisions:

Eszopiclone (Lunivia[®])
 Sodium zirconium cyclosilicate (Lokelma[®])
 Cabozantinib (Cabometyx[®])
 Encorafenib (Braftovi[®])
 Encorafenib (Braftovi[®])
 Belantamab mafodotin (Blenrep[®])
 Rozanolixizumab (Rystiggo[®])

Avoiding Mix-ups with Altraplen Compact Products

Two recent medication incidents reported to SPPG involved dispensing of Altraplen Compact **Daily** (250 ml) against prescriptions for Altraplen Compact (125 ml). In both cases, prescriptions stated only the total volume and did not specify **unit size**, which may have contributed to the selection error.

	Contains	Usual directions	NI Formulary	Advice
Altraplen Compact	300kcal, 12g protein in 125ml	Twice daily	Yes	Usually only prescribe after dietetic assessment
Altraplen Compact Daily	600kcal, 24g protein in 250ml	Once daily	No	

The table outlines product differences. It should be noted that **Altraplen Compact Daily** is **NOT** currently a NI formulary choice of ONS - See [NI Formulary](#) regarding appropriate selection of oral nutritional supplements.

Actions for Prescribers

- Prescribe **Altraplen Compact** (125ml) in line with NI Formulary
- Be alert to similar Altraplen names on EMIS — see snip showing accurate selection of NI Formulary product
- Include clear dosing instructions

EMIS Clinical System

altrapl	
A	Altraplen Compact Daily liquid (Flavour Not Specified)
B	Altraplen Compact Daily liquid banana (Nualtra Ltd)
C	Altraplen Compact Daily liquid hazel chocolate (Nualtra Ltd)
D	Altraplen Compact Daily liquid strawberry (Nualtra Ltd)
E	Altraplen Compact Daily liquid vanilla (Nualtra Ltd)
F	Altraplen Compact Daily Starter Pack liquid (Nualtra Ltd)
G	Altraplen Compact liquid (Flavour Not Specified)

Actions for Community Pharmacies

- Clarify the product name, volume and dosing frequency before dispensing
- Be alert to similar Altraplen names on the dispensing system

Free PrescQIPP resources

Healthcare professionals working in GP practices, or community pharmacists, can register with PrescQIPP* free of charge, using the DoH NI subscription. This allows access to a vast range of evidence-based, quality assured resources such as [Bulletins and webkits](#), [Masterclasses](#), and [Clinical and skills webinars](#).

Are you a healthcare professional working in a practice and looking for free support to help your patients?

Colleagues can register for [Virtual Professional Groups](#) that meet monthly/quarterly to network and share good practice on topics such as Antimicrobial stewardship, Care homes, Medication safety, Nutrition, Pharmacy technicians and Polypharmacy and deprescribing. [‘Talking meds’](#) are fortnightly podcasts of conversations about medicines-related dilemmas.

Healthcare Professionals should:

- Use their health service email address to [register](#), and select NHS area as “National” and “DoH NI” as the employer/work type
- Register for a [‘welcome webinar’](#) to help get the most out of the website



**For information: PrescQIPP is a Community Interest Company, operating on a not-for-profit basis for the benefit of health service patients, commissioners and primary care clinicians. It is funded by the NHS for the NHS and receives no funding from the Pharmaceutical Industry for any of its resources.*

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