

Single National Formulary (SNF) – New Formulary Categorisation System

Norfolk & Suffolk Integrated Care Board is one of the early adopter systems implementing the new [Single National Formulary \(SNF\)](#) categorisation and will be the first system in the East of England to move to the new categories.

Over time, all Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) will be expected to adopt the new national categorisation system, creating greater consistency in how medicines are described and managed within medicines formularies across England.

Existing medicines formularies used across the Norfolk and Suffolk areas will reflect the new categories from 1 September 2026 and, to ensure a robust transfer, **the websites will be unavailable from 1- 3 September (at the latest) to allow for final checking.**

There is no change to the status of any medicines within the medicines formularies as part of this work. This is purely a mapping exercise to reflect the new national categorisation. The current formulary traffic light systems used across the Norfolk and Suffolk areas already align closely with the SNF categorisation framework. **This transition is therefore primarily a change in terminology, supporting national consistency while maintaining established local governance and prescribing arrangements.**

All decisions regarding the status of medicines across Norfolk and Suffolk remain unchanged and will continue to be agreed through the established governance processes, namely TAGIMOC and its associated sub-groups.

Single National Formulary Categories with Category Definitions

Category	Category Definition
All settings	Suitable for initiation, ongoing prescribing, and discontinuation in all settings. These are established therapies without the need for specialist input.
Specialist advice	Medicines usually prescribed in primary care where prior advice or recommendation from a specialist is required before initiation. Following specialist advice, prescribing and monitoring are undertaken in primary care without the need for ongoing specialist involvement.
Specialist initiation	Medicines that must be initiated and stabilised by a specialist. Once stabilised, prescribing and monitoring can be undertaken in primary care, where this can be safely delivered without structured ongoing specialist involvement.
Shared Care	Medicines initiated within specialist care and delivered across settings as part of a Shared Care Protocol. Prescribing and monitoring may occur in primary care; however, safe use depends on: • coordinated care across providers • agreed protocols and roles • ongoing specialist input • and clear shared clinical accountability across the pathway. These medicines are typically associated with complex monitoring, higher-risk profiles and require a Shared Care Protocol.

Category	Category Definition
Specialist only	Medicines that must be initiated, prescribed, and monitored exclusively by a specialist service, regardless of setting. Primary care should not initiate or continue prescribing outside of that specialist service.
Do not prescribe	Not approved for routine prescribing in NHS-funded care. For example, because they are agents classified in the BNF as “not NHS” or “Drugs of Low Clinical Value”, or they are products on NICE’s “do not do” list or NHS England’s “should not routinely prescribe” list.
Self-care	Not routinely prescribed unless as part of care for a long-term condition. People should be supported to manage through self-care, including community pharmacy.

The new national categorisation system removes colour coding and instead uses clear descriptive terminology to indicate prescribing responsibility and any associated requirements. A comparison of the current traffic light classifications and the new SNF national categorisation is provided below. **Importantly, this change relates to terminology only.**

Suffolk and North East Essex netFormulary Category Mapping

Original category	Traffic Light Column Maps to
Blue	All settings/Self-care
Green	Specialist advice/Specialist Initiation
Amber	Shared care
Double red	Do not prescribe
Red-Hospital	Specialist only
Mixed	No column category – categories detailed in the original text will be mapped to national categories as above.

Norfolk and Waveney netFormulary Category Mapping

Original category	Traffic Light Column Maps to
Green	All settings
Double red	Column category will be mapped to national categories as above based on the details in the text column
Amber advice	Specialist advice
Amber initiate	Specialist initiation
Full shared care	Shared care
Red/Red Hospital (legacy)	Specialist only
Black	Do not prescribe
Purple - OTC	Self-care
Mixed	No column category – categories detailed in the original text will be mapped to national categories as above.
Blue	No column category
	No column category
Switch	No column category
DM	No column category

Moving to a Single netFormulary Platform

Once this re-categorisation exercise has been successfully completed, a systemwide plan will be developed to align the current formularies to a single Norfolk and Suffolk platform.

Any queries should be directed to nsicb.medsqueries@nhs.net