

# Medicines Matters

May 2026



## Asthma Safety Updates

### World Asthma Day 2026: Access to anti-inflammatory inhalers for everyone with asthma – still an urgent need

**World Asthma Day - May 5<sup>th</sup> 2026** is led by the Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA). This year's campaign reinforces the message that asthma outcomes improve when inflammation is treated early and reliance on short-acting reliever inhalers e.g. short-acting beta-agonist (SABA) inhalers is reduced.

More information and resources are available at: <https://ginasthma.org/world-asthma-day-2026/>

### Positive progress across Lancashire & South Cumbria ICB

Significant work has taken place across primary care to improve asthma outcomes and medicines safety.

- In the last 12 months, there has been a **7.57% increase in patients with asthma who have been issued 5 or fewer SABA inhalers in a 12-month period**, demonstrating better asthma control and reduced over-reliance on reliever therapy.
- This improvement reflects proactive review of ordering systems, clinical reviews optimising preventer therapy and improved patient education, demonstrating sustained engagement from GPs, nurses, pharmacists and practice teams.

Reducing excessive SABA use remains a key marker of safer quality asthma care and aligns with national guidance.

### Learning from a recent coroner's report

A **Prevention of Future Deaths** report published in March 2026 highlighted the ongoing risks associated with excessive salbutamol inhaler use. The coroner concluded that the clinical significance of high reliever use is not always fully recognised by patients or healthcare teams, despite clear national guidance.

The report followed the death of a young adult with asthma who had been using salbutamol more frequently than recommended, a clear indicator of poor asthma control. The coroner emphasised that:

- Excessive SABA use should never be considered routine.
- Frequent reliever requests must trigger timely clinical review.
- Optimisation of anti-inflammatory therapy is critical to preventing avoidable harm.

This serves as a powerful reminder that high SABA prescribing is a safety signal, not simply a prescribing issue, and that continued vigilance is required across all care settings.

### New OptimiseRx best-practice message – launching May 2026

To support safe, evidence-based asthma prescribing, a new OptimiseRx best-practice message will be launched across the ICB in May 2026. This message will:

- Identify patients using high quantities of SABA, indicating uncontrolled asthma.
- Prompt consideration of Anti-Inflammatory Reliever (AIR) or Maintenance and Reliever Therapy (MART), in line with national and international guidance.
- Support timely clinical review, optimisation of inhaled therapy and reduction in unnecessary SABA prescribing.

The message is designed to reinforce consistent best practice across systems and practices.

#### What You Can Do:

- ✓ Prescribing more than three SABA inhalers per year should prompt a clinical review.
- ✓ Ensure patients receive regular asthma reviews and inhaler technique checks.
- ✓ Optimise preventer therapy and consider AIR or MART where appropriate.
- ✓ Use prescribing and clinical system prompts e.g. Optimise Rx consistently to identify patients at risk.
- ✓ Reinforce patient education on recognising worsening asthma control.