The UK Inhaler Group

Purpose: The UK Inhaler Group (UKIG) is a coalition of not-for-profit organisations and professional societies with a common interest in promoting the correct use of inhaled therapies to improve the outcomes of patients with respiratory conditions.

Our vision: Optimal use of inhaled treatments by patients with respiratory disease, so that they and the NHS derive the greatest possible benefit from their treatments, enabling patients to have as good a quality of life as possible.

Strategy: We seek to achieve our vision by galvanising the collective power of the respiratory community and by raising the importance of correct inhaler technique across the health system and among governmental departments.

Rationale: The impetus behind the foundation of the Group was from common concerns from several leading respiratory clinicians that poor use of inhalers was widespread and that this should not continue to be accepted. Discussions with professional and patient organisations, and the pharmaceutical industry confirmed that this was an area overdue for attention, and the unanimous view was that a concerted effort should be made to improve the use of inhaled treatments through a range of channels.

Membership: Members of UKIG are not-for-profit patient and professional organisations with a primary focus on respiratory health. Current organisations are:
- Association for Respiratory Technology and Physiology
- Association of Respiratory Nurse Specialists
- Asthma UK
- British Lung Foundation
- British Thoracic Society
- Education for Health
- Primary Care Respiratory Society UK
- Respiratory Education UK
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society
- UK Clinical Pharmacy Association Respiratory Group.

Each of these organisations has a nominated representative on the group. Representatives have designated authority to represent the view of their organisation. In addition the Chief Executives or Chairs of all organisations are all committed to the work of the Group and are
responsible for ensuring any required actions are implemented through their governance structures. Member organisations may also undertake or lead on certain tasks/initiatives.

Co-opted members are other individuals who will not represent the views of an organisation, but have skills and expertise that would be useful to the Group. Patient’s views will be represented via Asthma UK and the British Lung Foundation and we will reach out to engage the wider views of patients on work streams as necessary.

Commercial Partners and Supporters: Pharmaceutical companies which manufacture and market inhalers and nasal sprays and other organisations with an interest in inhaled treatments will be approached to work in partnership with the Group, and may contribute with support in kind or in unrestricted grants. We hope to have a number of partners of this kind. We also aim to have a group of supporters - those organisations and expert individuals who are wider stakeholders in our work. We may collaborate with them and involve them in our activities as appropriate.

Workstreams: The group will aim to be influential at a strategic policy level to promote the correct use of inhaled respiratory medicines and will also undertake an implementation function. The activities will involve:

- Lobbying appropriate statutory and governing bodies where necessary to seek support for initiatives that will promote optimal use of inhaled treatments. The promotion of systems across the NHS that enable standardisation of inhaler instruction. This will include sharing examples of best practice, influencing policies, commissioning activities.
- The promotion of simple, consistent, standardised education and training of health care professionals and others such as school teachers
- Patient education and information – best methods to support patients and carers in deriving maximum value from their inhalers
- Increasing public and patient awareness on the importance of inhaled therapies and correct usage

The Group will be reactive and proactive as the need occurs.
(see more detail on next page)

Governance: Education for Health is hosting the Group and will hold any funding for running the Group. This will be clearly ring-fenced in their accounts as restricted funds solely for activity assigned to the Group. Education for Health is a registered charity (Charity number: 1048816) which has extensive experience in managing projects and have a project management team, who will support the project manager as and when required. The CEO of Education for Health will chair the Group.

Operational issues: A project manager has been appointed and will be contracted by Education for Health to work exclusively on the work of the UK Inhaler Group. They are accountable to the Chair of the Group.

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**Workstreams – detail**

1. **Lobbying appropriate statutory and governing bodies**
   Exploring mechanisms, incentives and levers at policy level which would drive better prescribing and use of inhalers in the NHS. Target organisations may include NHS England (NHSE), Health Education England (HEE), Public Health England (PHE), Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), Care Quality Commission (CQC). Initial work may focus on the way that prescriptions are written, and on how easy/difficult it is for clinicians and patients to access information about how to use individual inhalers.

2. **Promoting standardised education for healthcare professionals**
   Information will be gathered on known options for education of healthcare professionals on teaching inhaler technique. Examination of the gaps in availability of training will make it possible to explore what needs to be in place to enable all relevant health professionals to support patients systematically and to a high standard in using their inhalers. The commissioning of such education will also be covered.

3. **Patient education and information**
   There are also ways in which patients can access support and education about inhaler usage directly, and information about these services will be collated as a basis for exploring how this area could be improved. There may be good models in other disease areas to help patients get the best from their medicines.

4. **Increasing public and patient awareness**
   Publicity of some core messages around optimal use of inhalers will help to educate the public and to reduce stigma around inhaler use.