

# New Drug ruling from Scottish Government

New guidance is being issued to health boards which will bring in a uniform national policy on introducing newly-licensed medicines.

The guidance to boards will mean clearer and easier to follow policies for patients wishing to have the benefit of new medicines. All boards will have to follow the same guidance when considering whether to make drugs available on the NHS.

The guidance covers all medicines, including drugs which have either not been approved or not yet considered by the Scottish Medicines Consortium – which approves drugs for general use on the NHS. The guidance will apply wherever a clinician makes an individual request to a board for a drug not approved by the SMC to be used for a patient. Health boards will also be expected to make their policies public and to help patients through the process on request.

It will ensure the same guidance is followed by health boards, regardless of where in Scotland a patient lives, thus abolishing any postcode lottery.

The guidance has been welcomed by the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee. It follows two years of collaboration between the Scottish Government and the Committee, taking forward the Committee's recommendations following a petition from Tina McGeever. Ms McGeever's husband, Mike Gray, lost his life to cancer in 2008.



Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon said:-“We already have a very fair, rigorous and quick system for appraising NHS drugs in

Scotland. The Scottish Medicines Consortium considers whether newly-licensed drugs should be used nationwide and recommends them for use where they are proved to be safe, clinically effective and cost-effective. Even where a medicine isn't recommended by the SMC for general use, patients in Scotland can still get it on the NHS if their clinician believes it is appropriate and obtains permission from their local health board.

"But what was clear from the extensive work we have done with Parliament's Petitions Committee is that navigating the system is not always easy – particularly when patients and their loved ones are dealing with very difficult circumstances.

"Today's new guidance should change that. It not only makes explicit to health boards all that we expect them to do, but makes clear that they must be open and transparent about their processes and decisions. All boards will be expected to follow the same guidance, which will be adapted to meet local circumstances.

"This new guidance follows extensive consultation and takes full account of the issues raised by the Petitions Committee. I hope it will benefit patients and families across Scotland."



Frank McAveety, Convener of the Public Petitions Committee, said:- "Tina McGeever's petition started this whole process. She and her late husband, Michael Gray, set out to improve the processes for accessing cancer treatment drugs and this welcome guidance from the Scottish Government is the latest in a number of improvements she has brought about which will bring benefits to many. It is testament to her commitment to their petition.

"The Public Petitions Committee has, since the petition was first considered, worked collaboratively and productively with the Scottish Government and we will continue to do so.

“We appreciated the openness and commitment to work together shown by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing. It is a true example of what the public petitions process is about and of how people, parliament and government can work closely and effectively to bring in improvements such as this.”