



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
Ministerial Correspondence and Public Enquiries Unit
39 Victoria Street
London
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Our Ref: BC61876

21 July 2025

Dear Wes,

Re: NICE Drug Assessments

I am writing to you following an event I have attended hosted by Breast Cancer Now and to share concerns raised with me by several constituents. Breast Cancer Now have informed me that changes to NICE drug assessments, specifically the introduction of the severity modifier, mean that some life-extending treatments for incurable secondary breast cancer will not be made available for people who need them.

As you know, many new drugs for secondary breast cancer have been approved for use across the UK in the last decade. I am pleased to see that these drugs have transformed lives, allowing people to live longer in better health, giving them more moments with family and friends and doing what matters to them.

Therefore, I am deeply concerned that changes made to the NICE process in 2022 and the introduction of the severity modifier will impact this progress. As I understand, the biggest issues caused by changes to the NICE process are:

- Under the severity modifier, the threshold of severity a condition must reach to get the highest priority has been set too high - reducing how much the NHS can pay for some new drugs compared to the old system.
- Some conditions are not considered very severe despite some people having only months left to live. Only 7 out of 21 end of life treatments assessed under the severity modifier were given the same priority as the old NICE system.
- New and effective drugs may not reach patients. This happened with Enhertu, a new treatment for people with HER2-low secondary breast cancer available in Scotland, which was rejected for use on the NHS in England on cost-effectiveness grounds in 2024. Under the previous system the NHS would have been able to pay more for it, and it could have been approved.
- There is a risk that pharmaceutical companies will be deterred from taking treatments through the process for approval if they are unlikely to achieve cost-effectiveness.
- NICE has set the bar for very severe conditions too high due to the requirement

from the Department of Health and Social Care for the changes to be opportunity cost neutral. This is reducing the amount the NHS can pay for drugs which treat some more severe conditions and creating barriers to the approval of drugs for advanced cancers.

Due to these serious issues, I would be grateful if you could share with me what assessment the Government has made of the requirement for the severity modifier to be opportunity cost neutral and the impact this has on drugs used to treat secondary breast cancer.

Further, I would be grateful if you could share what steps the Government are taking to allow greater investment in treatments for more severe conditions, including secondary breast cancer.

I would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you, alongside Breast Cancer Now, to discuss how we can work together to give everyone living with secondary breast cancer access to treatments that can give them more time to live.

Yours sincerely,

Bambos

Bambos Charalambous MP