

**From the Chief Medical Officer
Professor Sir Michael McBride**



HSS(MD) 32/2023

FOR ACTION

Chief Executives, Public Health Agency/HSC Trusts/NIAS
Deputy Secretary SPPG
GP Medical Advisers, SPPG
All General Practitioners and GP Locums (for onward
distribution to practice staff)
OOHs Medical Managers (for onward distribution to staff)

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ

Tel: 028 9052 0563
Email: Michael.McBride@health-ni.gov.uk

Our Ref: HSS(MD) 32/2023
Date: 29 June 2023

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FULL CIRCULATION LIST

Dear Colleague

**COVID-19 TREATMENTS: AMENDED INDEPENDENT ADVISORY GROUP
REPORT OF HIGHEST RISK GROUPS**

The Independent Advisory Group (IAG) commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to advise on the groups of patients likely to be at highest risk of deterioration, hospitalisation or death from a COVID infection, have made further amendments to their report.

See information in the full updated IAG report at the links below. The changes include:

- In the immune-mediated inflammatory disorders (IMID) category, reinstating the criterion around people having biologic drugs and JAK inhibitors
- In the immune mediated inflammatory disorders (IMID) category, including as a criterion people having treatment with immune modifiers including S1P modulators (fingolimod, ponesimod or siponimod), or alemtuzumab or cladribine
- In the respiratory section, adding people who are tracheostomy ventilated.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) [Technology appraisal guidance \(TA878\)](#) has now been updated with a new [section 5](#) detailing the amended supporting information on the risk factors for progression to severe COVID-19 as provided by the IAG. The treatment recommendations now link to this [section 5](#), rather than to the external IAG report that was previously the case. This

means the **updated IAG report information is now within the NICE TA878 guidance** and may be easier for stakeholders to navigate.

Please note that NICE Technology appraisal guidance [TA878] has been endorsed for implementation within Health and Social Care (HSC) via the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) extant Managed Entry process, as detailed on the SPPG [Managed Entry website](#). SPPG issued the service notification detailing the managed entry decision on 28 June 2023.

In addition, NICE have advised [NICE COVID-19 rapid guideline: managing COVID-19 \(NG191\)](#) will also be amended to reflect the updated IAG report.

Actions required

HSC Trusts are asked to take the following immediate steps to support treatment of patients with COVID-19:

1. Consider prescribing COVID treatment in line with the [NICE Technology appraisal guidance 'Casirivimab plus imdevimab, nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir, sotrovimab and tocilizumab for treating COVID-19' \[TA878\]](#), noting that the groups of patients potentially eligible has been expanded and are defined by the updated IAG report detailed in the guidance document. Please see the SPPG [Managed Entry website](#) that details the decision for acceptance of TA878 under the SPPG extant Managed Entry process. SPPG issued the service notification detailing the managed entry decision on 28 June 2023.
2. Clinicians may wish to refer to [NICE's rapid guideline on managing COVID-19 \(NG191\)](#) for medicines licensed, and currently used, in the management of COVID-19 for which the NICE multiple technology appraisal (MTA) recommendations have not yet been published.

The **Strategic Planning and Performance Group** is asked to:

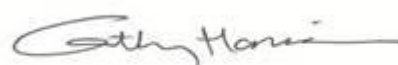
3. Continue to work with HSC Trusts and Primary Care to identify patients eligible for treatment in line with the updated Independent Advisory Group report.

Further enquiries should in the first instance be directed to your hospital pharmacy team.

Yours sincerely



Prof Sir Michael McBride
Chief Medical Officer



Professor Cathy Harrison
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer

Director of Public Health/Medical Director, Public Health Agency (*for onward distribution to all relevant health protection staff*)
Assistant Director Public Health (Health Protection), Public Health Agency
Director of Nursing, Public Health Agency
Assistant Director of Pharmacy and Medicines Management, SPPG (*for onward distribution to Community Pharmacies*)
Directors of Pharmacy HSC Trusts
Director of Social Care and Children, SPPG
Family Practitioner Service Leads, SPPG (*for cascade to GP Out of Hours services*)
Medical Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Consultants, Occupational Health Physicians and School Medical Leads*)
Nursing Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Community Nurses, and Midwives*)
Directors of Children's Services, HSC Trusts
RQIA (*for onward transmission to all independent providers including independent hospitals*)
Joe Brogan, Assistant Director, Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management, Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) (*for onward distribution to SPPG Pharmacy and Medicines Management Team and community pharmacists*)
Regional Medicines Information Service, Belfast HSC Trust
Regional Pharmaceutical Procurement Service, Northern HSC Trust
Professor Donna Fitzsimons, Head of School of Nursing and Midwifery QUB
Professor Neal Cook, Head of School of Nursing, University of Ulster
Heather Finlay, CEC
Donna Gallagher, Open University
Professor Paul McCarron, Head of School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, UU
Professor Colin McCoy, Head of School, School of Pharmacy, QUB
Professor Colin Adair, Postgraduate Pharmacy Dean, NI Centre for Pharmacy Learning and Development, QUB
Michael Donaldson, Head of Dental Services, SPPG (*for distribution to all General Dental Practitioners*)
Raymond Curran, Head of Ophthalmic Services, SPPG (*for distribution to Community Optometrists*)
Trade Union Side
Clinical Advisory Team
Louise McMahon, Director of Integrated Care, SPPG

This letter is available on the Department of Health website at
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/professional-medical-and-environmental-health-advice/hssmd-letters-and-urgent-communications>