

News story: Accelerated access scheme means patients will get new treatments faster

The government has announced a new fast-track route into the NHS for “breakthrough” medicines and technologies. This will speed up the time it takes for patients to benefit from ground-breaking products for conditions such as cancer, dementia and diabetes.

From April 2018, the new ‘accelerated access pathway’ will mean products with the greatest potential to change lives could be available up to 4 years earlier. It will be done by reducing the time it takes to negotiate evaluation and financial approvals before the NHS can purchase the products.

Under the scheme, a number of products each year will receive ‘breakthrough’ designation. This will unlock a package of support allowing firms to accelerate clinical development and gain a fast-track route through the NHS’s approval processes.

Health Minister Lord O’Shaughnessy said:

I want the UK to be the best place in the world to develop new drugs and medical technology – but despite the innovation happening here, our uptake in the NHS can be too slow.

Today’s new measures will not only benefit patients by improving how quickly and easily we can get innovative products from the lab to the bedside, but will guarantee future collaboration between the life sciences sector and the NHS post-Brexit – benefiting the British economy and creating jobs.

Sir Andrew Witty, former chief executive of GlaxoSmithKline, will lead the Accelerated Access Collaborative, to highlight which products should be granted access to the pathway. The collaborative will draw on advice from patients, clinicians and industry.

In return, life sciences firms will be expected to deliver additional value for the taxpayer, with a new Strategic Commercial Unit being created within NHS England to negotiate cost effective deals.

Sir Andrew Witty, Chair of the Accelerated Access Collaborative, said:

Patients, scientists and the UK economy will all benefit from the positive steps outlined by the government today.

The opportunity to ensure the NHS gets rapid access to cost

effective breakthrough technologies is vitally important, and I'm delighted to help lead the effort to deliver this.

The government is also providing an £86 million package to help innovators of all sizes gain access to the NHS market, to get their products to patients.

The package includes:

- support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to help them build a stronger evidence base for their products, with £35 million over 4 years for digital products, and £6 million for medtech, diagnostics and pharmaceutical products
- £6 million to support clinicians to use new treatments and technologies in everyday practice
- £39 million to encourage grassroots adoption and uptake of new medical technologies – driven by 15 Academic Health Science Networks responsible for identifying high potential products, supporting their adoption in the regions, and sharing lessons across the NHS