

**From Director of Hospital Care  
Paul Cavanagh**



**By email**

**Chief Executives of Trusts - for cascade to:**

Medical Directors  
Directors of Nursing  
Directors of Acute Services  
Heads of Pharmacy & Medicines Management  
Clinical & Social Governance Leads

**Director of Primary Care, SPPG - for cascade to:**

Head of Pharmacy & Medicines Management

**Strategic Planning and Performance Group**

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Date: 4 July 2025

Dear Colleague,

**SERVICE NOTIFICATION FOR NICE TECHNOLOGY APPRAISAL TA878 –  
NIRMATRELVIR PLUS RITONAVIR, SOTROVIMAB AND TOCILIZUMAB FOR  
TREATING COVID-19 (UPDATE – MAY 2025)**

**Background**

The Department's Medicines Policy Branch (MPB) in the Chief Medical Officer's Group has recently reviewed the above NICE guidance and has formally endorsed it as applicable in Northern Ireland.

This Technology Appraisal was originally endorsed by the Department in April 2023 and was reviewed following an update to the guidance in March 2024. Following a partial review of the guidance, NICE updated the recommendation for nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir to include additional groups eligible for treatment. The position has been reviewed again by NICE with the following update to the guidance in place from May 2025:

- Nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir (Paxlovid®) is accepted for use as an option for treating COVID-19 in adults, only if they:
  - Do not need supplemental oxygen for COVID-19; and
  - Have an increased risk for progression to severe COVID-19, as defined in section 5 of NICE TA878

**The updated guidance removes the following groups from the recommendation:**

- people aged 70 years and over, or who have a BMI of 35 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or more, diabetes or heart failure.

In line with Circular HSC (SQSD) 12/22, the SPPG is required to issue a Service Notification to HSC Trusts and other relevant providers and stakeholders, including Family Practitioners, setting out the expectations for implementation.

### **Commissioning Arrangements**

This regimen will be formally commissioned by the SPPG in line with the recommendations contained in the updated technology appraisal.

Any further changes to the commissioning arrangements on this treatment will be updated on the SPPG NI Formulary Managed Entry Decisions webpage:

<https://niformulary.hscni.net/managed-entry/managed-entry-decisions/>

### **Resource Implications**

Any resources associated with the introduction of the technology in line with the commissioning arrangements set out above will be incorporated in the Trust financial allocation for the appropriate financial year.

There are simple discount patient access schemes which makes sotrovimab and tocilizumab available with a discount. The size of these discounts are commercial in confidence.

Any additional infrastructure requirements will be subject to agreement with the relevant SPPG Service Team.

### **Legislative/Policy Caveats**

This advice does not override or replace the individual responsibility of health professionals to make appropriate decisions in the circumstances of their individual patients, in consultation with the patient and/or guardian or carer. This would, for example, include situations where individual patients have other conditions or complications that need to be taken into account in determining whether the NICE guidance is fully appropriate in their case.

The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 has been considered and this guidance, which is purely of a technical nature, is not regarded as falling within the scope of the Act.

### **Action required by Health and Social Care Trusts**

Trusts should now take forward the implementation of the TA in accordance with Circular HSC (SQSD) 12/22. The SPPG's expectation is that proportionate implementation arrangements will be established on receipt of this correspondence.

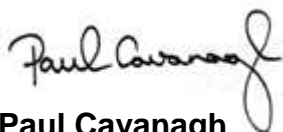
In particular, within three months ensure that: targeted dissemination takes place; a clinical/management change leader has been agreed; and a proportionate implementation plan is in place.

## **SPPG Monitoring and Assurance arrangements**

The SPPG will seek direct assurances from Trusts on an ongoing basis regarding the actions outlined above in advance of the scheduled SPPG/Trust Service Issues and Performance meetings.

Thank you for your attention with this matter. If you have any queries please email SPPG Hospital Care directorate via [SPPG-NICEInbox@hscni.net](mailto:SPPG-NICEInbox@hscni.net) in the first instance.

Yours sincerely



**Paul Cavanagh**  
**Director of Hospital Care**

Cc:

Chief Medical Officer  
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer  
Chief Executive Patient and Client Council  
Chief Executive/Postgraduate Dean, NIMDTA  
Chief Executive, NICPLD  
Chief Executive, NIPEC  
Chief Executive, NIBTS  
Chief Executive, RQIA  
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