



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Karin Smyth MP
Minister of State for Health*

*39 Victoria Street
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Your Ref: MP05178

PO-1630362

Manuela Perteghella MP

By email to: manuela.perteghella.mp@parliament.uk

12 August 2025

Dear Manuela,

Thank you for your correspondence of 5 August about Enhertu to treat breast cancer.

I appreciate your concerns. I understand how important it is that people with breast cancer can benefit from effective treatments on the NHS.

As you may know, decisions on whether new medicines should be routinely funded by the NHS in England are made by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), following an evaluation of their costs and benefits. It is important that we have a system in place to determine whether the prices that companies ask us to pay for medicines represent a clinically and cost-effective use of NHS resources – every pound we spend on new medicines is a pound that is not available for other vital services.

On 29 July 2024, NICE published final guidance on Enhertu for use in the treatment of HER2-low metastatic breast cancer but was unable to recommend it. The only obstacle is the price, and the Secretary of State met the manufacturers, AstraZeneca and Daiichi Sankyo, to encourage them to re-enter discussions with NHS England to try to agree a price at which NICE would be able to recommend Enhertu. However, despite NICE and NHS England offering unprecedented flexibility, the companies were unable to agree such a price. NICE's guidance will therefore remain unchanged. I am truly saddened that an agreement could not be reached, and I am aware of the impact this news will have on people who had hoped to access the treatment on the NHS.

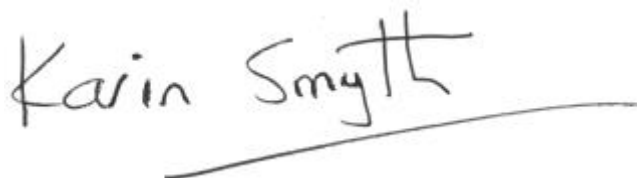
I am also aware of the concerns of charities and patient groups about the severity modifier, which was introduced following NICE's comprehensive review of the methods and processes it uses for health technology evaluation. However, I must stress that the situation with Enhertu is exceptional, and NICE's updated methods have resulted in a higher approval rate for cancer and non-cancer medicines, including treatments for advanced metastatic breast cancer. The severity modifier is therefore working as intended, and it will not be changed or adjusted in the near future. However, NICE is monitoring the impact of the changes made following the review and has committed to considering updates to its methods and processes in the future. NICE has commissioned research to gather further evidence on societal preferences that will inform future reviews.

You may be interested to know that the Secretary of State has announced that a national cancer plan for England, which aims to reduce the number of lives lost to cancer over the next ten years, will be published this year. The plan will have patients at its heart and will cover referral and diagnosis to treatment and aftercare. It will seek to improve every aspect of cancer care.

The national cancer plan will include further details on how we will improve outcomes for cancer patients, speed up diagnosis and treatment, ensure that patients have access to the latest treatments and technology, and ultimately bring this country's cancer survival rates back to the best in the world.

I appreciate that this reply will be disappointing, but I hope it is helpful in setting out the Department's position.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Karin Smyth". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

KARIN SMYTH