

Integrating guidance through a whole lifecycle approach: Wouldn't it be NICE

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Background

The UK's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) aims through its guidance to maximise health gain for every pound spent on healthcare. It produces various types of guidance using different decision-making contexts and methodologies, which includes mandatory Technology Appraisals and advisory HealthTech guidance and Guidelines.

NICE is transforming to deliver more relevant, timely and useable guidance to meet the opportunities and challenges of the changing health and care landscape. NICE is updating and bringing its guidance together through a whole life-cycle approach to improve accessibility and usability while ensuring good value for the taxpayer, which also aligns with the NHS 10 Year Plan¹ to create a new model of care that is fit for the future.

NICE

NICE helps practitioners and commissioners get the best care to people, fast, while ensuring value for the taxpayer.

We do this by:

- Producing useful and usable guidance for health and care practitioners.
- Focusing on what matters most by prioritising topics that are most important to the health and care system or address an unmet need.
- Providing rigorous, independent assessment of complex evidence for new health technologies.
- Encouraging the uptake of best practice to improve outcomes for everyone.

NICE Guidance

NICE guidance includes Technology Appraisals (TAs) (mandatory guidance for the National Health Service [NHS] to make funding available for cost-effective interventions) and advisory HealthTech guidance and Guidelines (advice on choice of effective and cost-effective treatment options).

In many other countries, health technology assessment (HTA) and clinical guidelines are produced by separate agencies; NICE does both these functions for England & Wales.

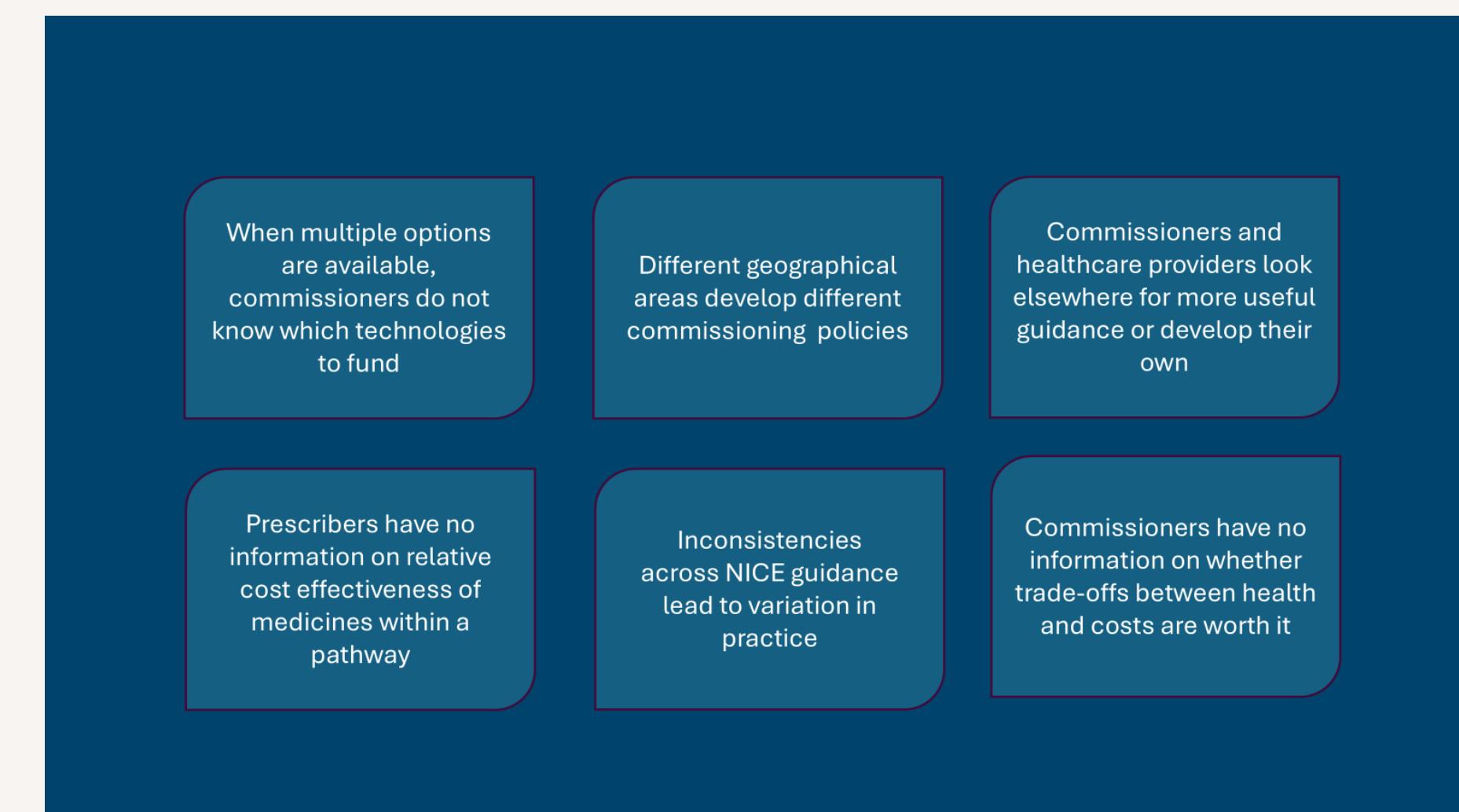
Table 1: TAs compared to Guidelines

	Technology Appraisals	Clinical Guidelines
Primary purpose	Use economic evaluation to inform decision makers/payers about the costs and benefit of adopting a health technology	Systematically appraise and synthesise evidence to inform clinical practice, including the use of economic evaluation
Decision problem	Medicines within their marketing authorisation, for a specific patient group at a particular point in treatment pathway	Broader range of topics for patients with a particular health condition, such as diagnostic and non-medicine interventions. Considers multiple treatment options and treatment pathways.
Consideration of cost-effectiveness	Informed by cost-effectiveness models, cost effectiveness is the key metric	Can be developed with or without economic evaluation, can contain HTAs within, but economic aspects considered
At NICE...	Technology Appraisals (TA) guidance	NICE guidelines
Status of guidance (in UK)	TA recommendations are legally mandated	Recommendations inform best practice but have no legal status and are not formal requirements

Keeping Guidance Up-To-Date

NICE's purpose of getting the best care to patients fast that is good value for the taxpayer means we should strive to maximise health gain for every pound spent on healthcare. But this requires NICE guidance to be kept up-to-date when evidence underpinning recommendations evolves over time to ensure NICE recommendations remain useful and usable.

Figure 1: NICE guidance could be more relevant and easier to use



This need to update guidance was also signalled within the NHS 10-Year Plan to create a new model of care that is fit for the future.

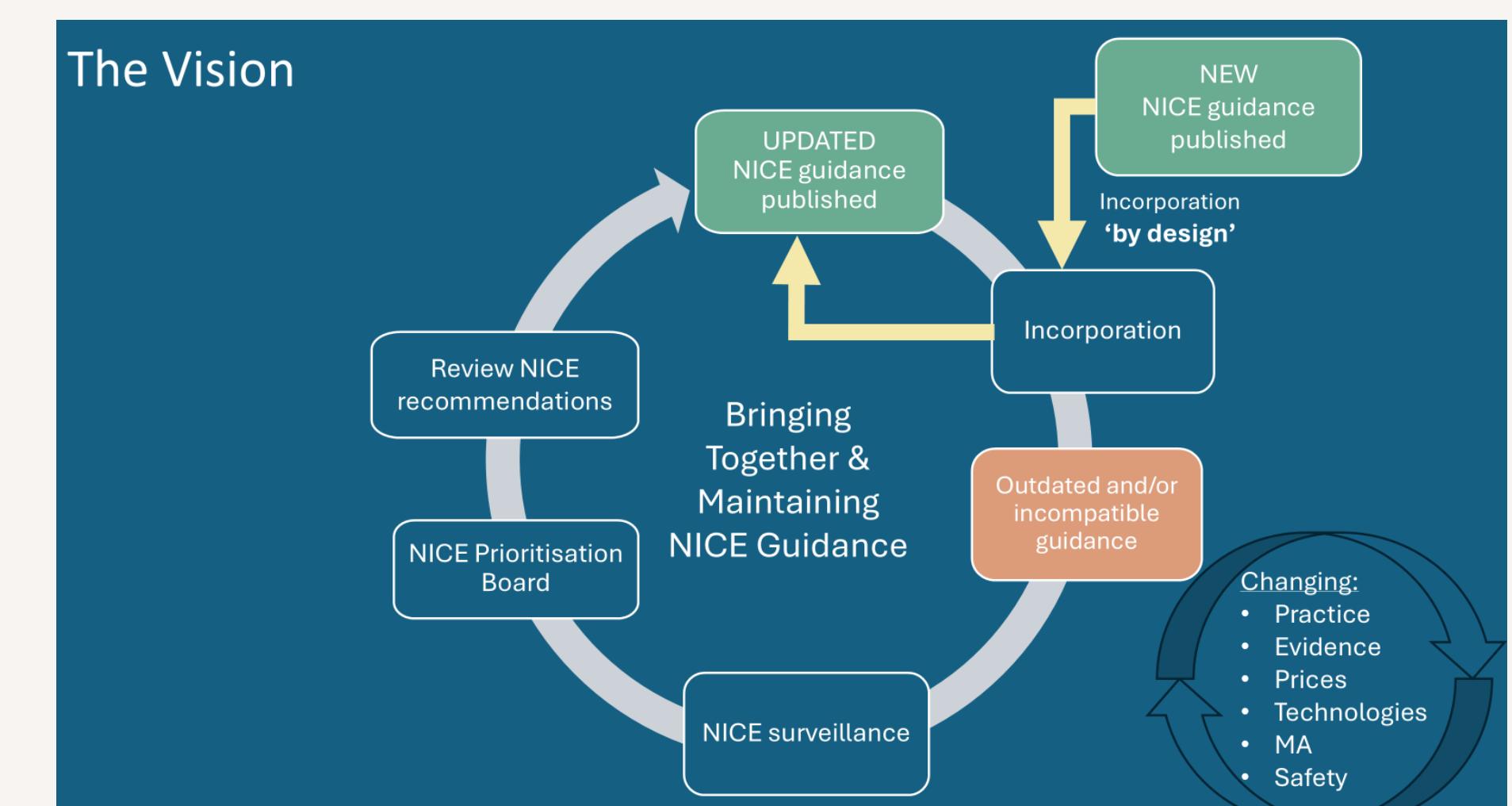
"NICE will re-evaluate priority clinical pathways on a rolling basis, identifying where existing innovation should be retired, as well as instances when one technology should be sequenced after another to improve value"
NHS 10 Year Plan¹

A Whole Life-Cycle Approach

To make our guidance more relevant and usable for clinicians and commissioners, NICE needs to bring its guidance together through a whole lifecycle approach to ensure our recommendations are easy to find, understand and use, and kept up to date with the latest evidence.

The aim is to deliver a shift from fragmented guidance to having everything in one place (the guideline), and from relatively static recommendations to more dynamic resources that evolve over time.

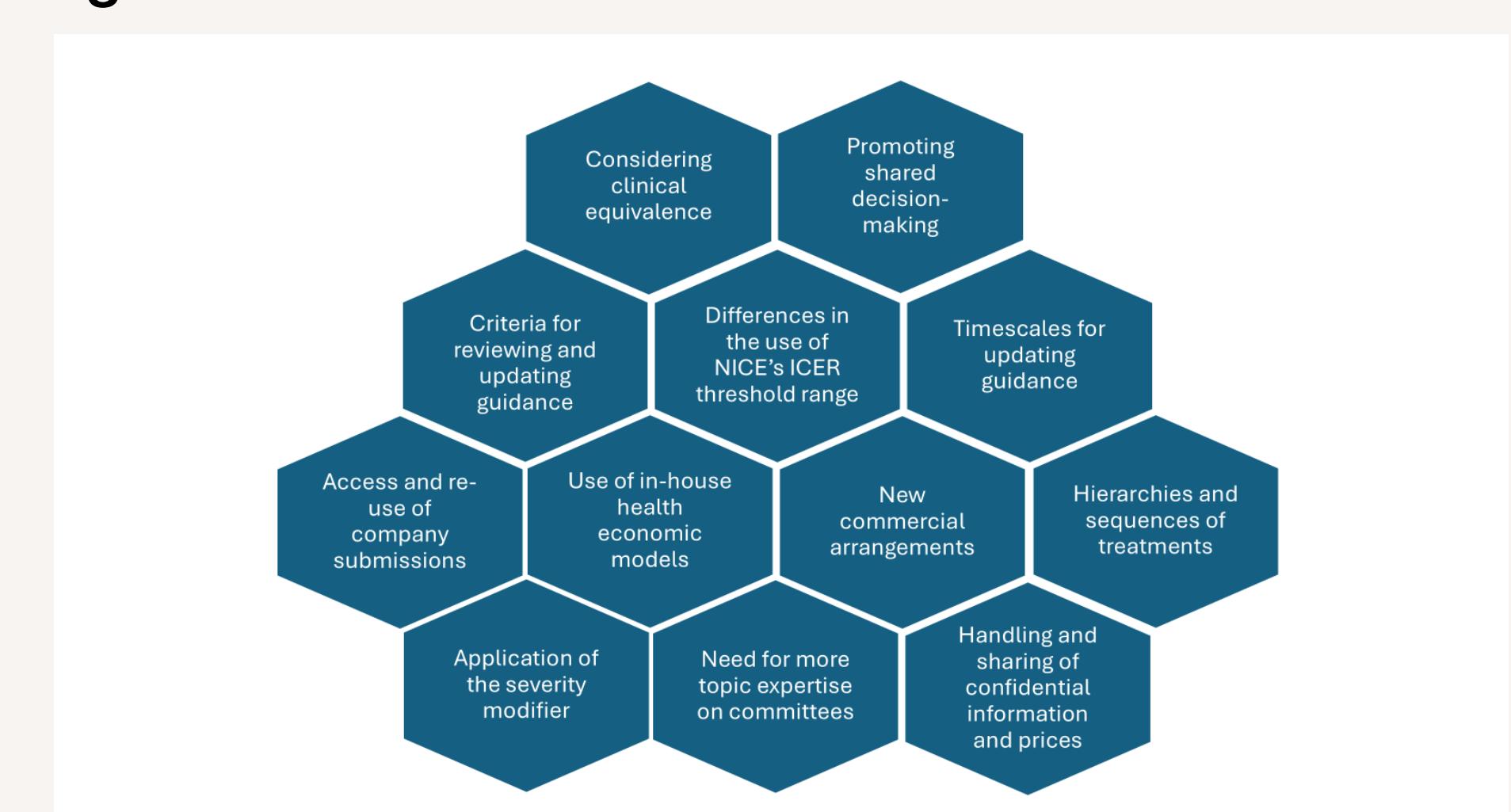
Figure 2: A Whole Life-Cycle Approach



Taking a lifecycle approach to guidance will enable NICE to increase health gains and improve value for the NHS by bringing content together in more useful formats, identifying the best-value interventions, releasing cost savings for reinvestment, and widening access to cost-effective treatments as new evidence emerges.

To achieve this ambition NICE will need to evolve to taking a joined-up approach across all its guidance products, including medicines, healthtech, and clinical guidelines.

Figure 3: Practical constraints



The road ahead...

NICE is working in partnership with stakeholders, including the convening of a stakeholder panel with representatives from the NHS, industry, government, clinicians, patients and academia, to develop pragmatic and proportionate solutions to overcome these constraints and to make the whole life-cycle approach a reality.

This involves bringing the methods and processes used across NICE's guidance producing centres closer together and exploring how to make them more efficient, to enable us to produce useful and usable guidance for clinicians and commissioners.

References

1. Fit for the Future: The 10 Year Health Plan for England – July 2025
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/10-year-health-plan-for-england-fit-for-the-future>

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