

# Focusing on what matters most: A public dialogue on how NICE should prioritise topics for guidance

Alice Murray<sup>1</sup>, Koonal Shah<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Science Policy and Research, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, England

## Background

To better serve people and the health and care system, NICE is evolving to become more relevant, by focusing on what matters most. We are doing this by changing our approach to topic prioritisation. To support this, NICE ran a public dialogue with the aim of gathering informed opinion on how NICE should select topics for guidance, including for some technology evaluation programmes.

The dialogue was undertaken via NICE Listens, our programme of deliberative public engagement that invites members of the public to debate challenging social, ethical and moral issues important to NICE's work.

## What we did

Fifty-six participants from 4 locations across England took part in 2 face-to-face and 3 online deliberative workshops, held over 4 weeks in 2023.

Participants considered 6 proposed criteria in the context of prioritisation: health and care need, evidence availability, system impact, budget impact, health inequalities, and environmental sustainability.

The workshops used deliberative engagement methods and included trade-off exercises, role-play, group discussion, ranking tasks, and interactions with specialist speakers from NICE and the health and care system.

## What we learnt

Participants agreed that NICE should consider all of the proposed criteria when prioritising topics for guidance. However, their deliberations often went beyond these criteria.

Participants felt a strong sense of the health and care system being "in crisis" and expressed a preference for NICE to focus on "fixing the basics".

Eight key principles were derived from participants' deliberations, which in turn were based on their experiences in the health and care system and what matters most to them.

## Conclusions

Deliberative engagement is a meaningful way to involve the public in complex policy decisions with a social value element.

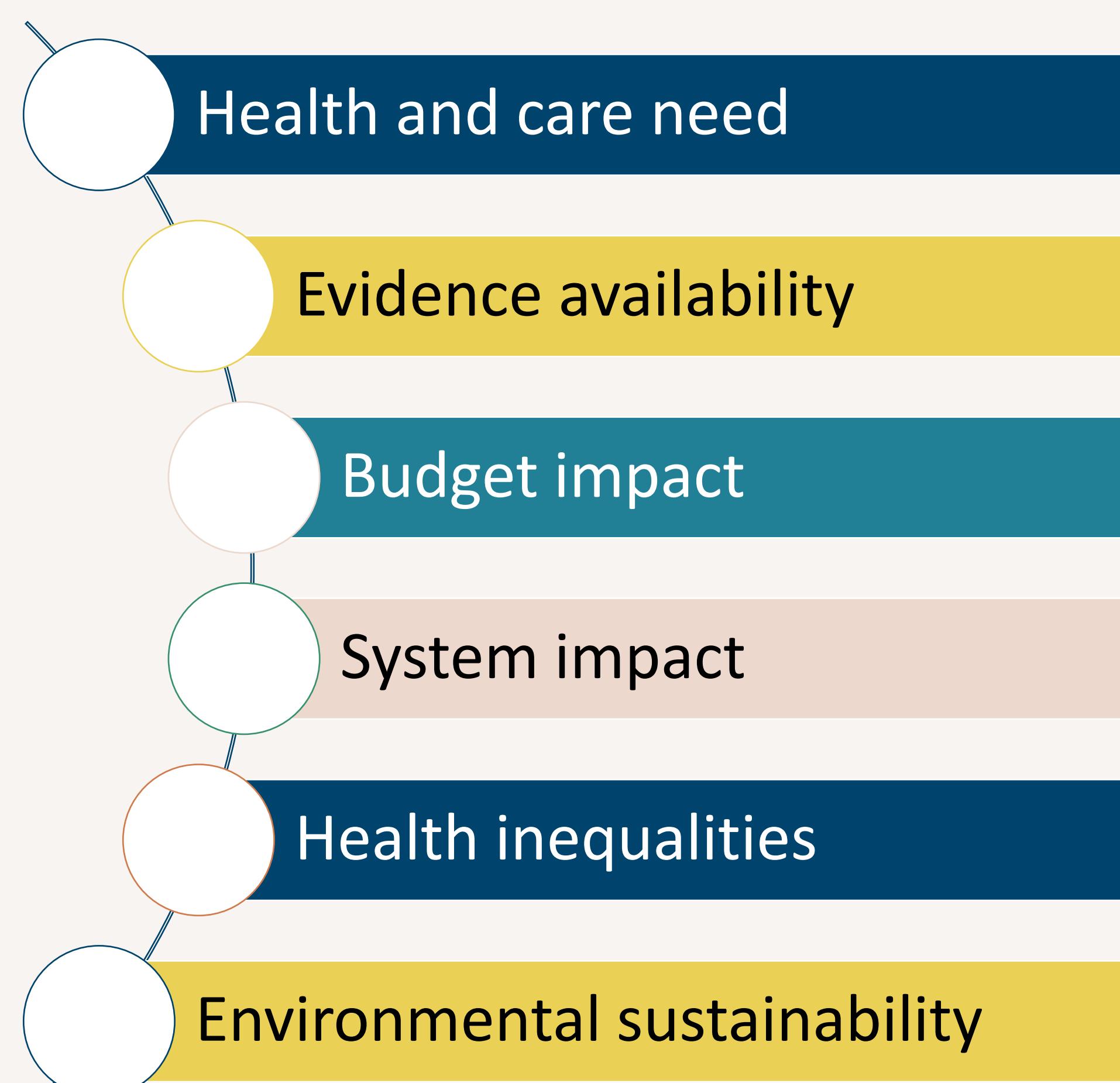
Broad public agreement was found with the criteria NICE proposed to consider when prioritising topics for guidance.

## Impact

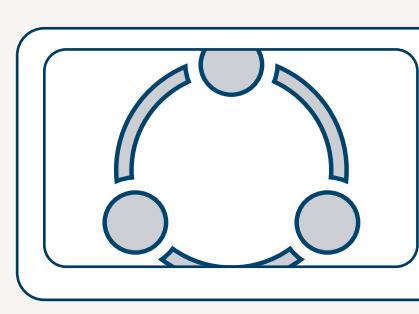
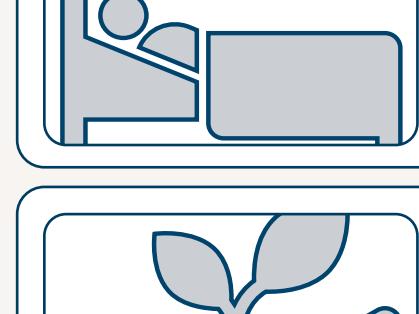
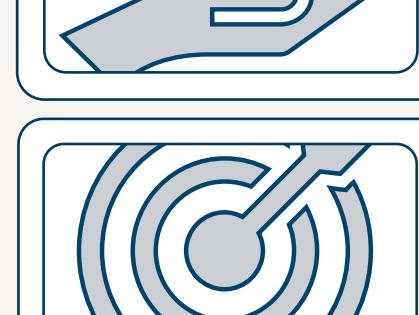
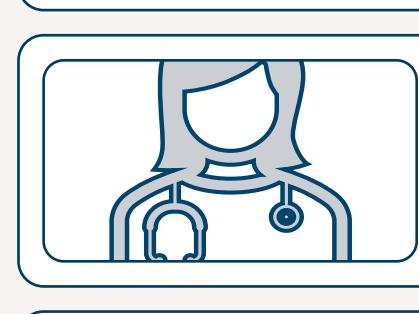
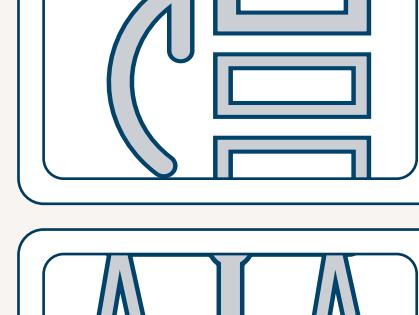
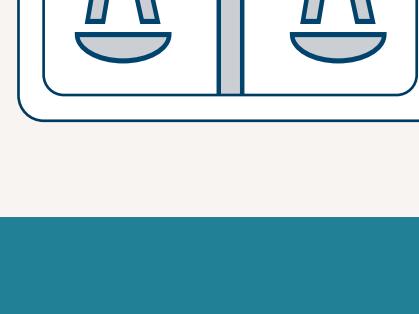
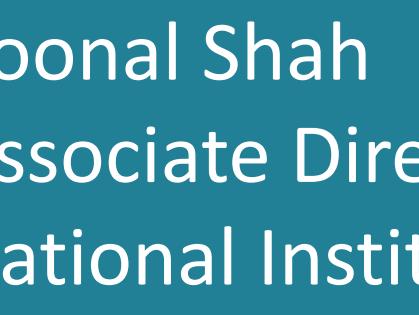
The findings informed NICE's approach to topic prioritisation and the deliberations of NICE's new Prioritisation Board.

Independent evaluation of the dialogue will contribute to the evidence on socially-informed policy making and best practice in deliberative public engagement.

### Criteria proposed as basis for discussions



### Principles derived from participants' deliberations

	Health and care need should have a broad definition
	A broad range of evidence should be considered
	System/budget impact considerations should not lose sight of people
	Address sustainability, without compromising people's care
	Focus on direct routes to impact
	Prevention is important when there are clear pathways to impact
	Allow flexibility for 'quick wins'
	Prioritisation should support fairness in the health and care system

"talking to other people within the country, it's quite **eye opening** to see their point of view. It could be **completely different** to yours"

"My views **have changed over time**. Just the **understanding** of the different areas that NICE try to incorporate into their decisions."

"...when I came into it, I just thought it was about budget, budget, budget, but it's not it. **There's a lot more things that I didn't even consider.**"