

SIGN guidelines

Information for patients, carers and members of the public



Who are we?

The Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) is part of Healthcare Improvement Scotland, a public body that provides advice and guidance to the NHS in Scotland and inspects hospitals in Scotland to ensure they are safe and clean.



What do we do?

We write clinical guidelines for all NHS staff (for example doctors, nurses, dentists and occupational therapists).



These guidelines give advice on the best treatments that are available.

We write them by working with health and social care staff and by consulting with patients, carers and members of the public.

What are SIGN guidelines for?

Our guidelines aim to:

- help health and social care professionals and patients understand medical evidence so they can use it to make decisions about a person's care
- help patients to get the best care available, no matter where they live
- help to improve the quality of health and social care across Scotland.

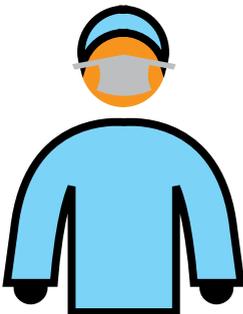


We want to make sure that everyone in Scotland receives the best health care, so our guidelines recommend the best proven treatments.

Who decides which guidelines SIGN should write?

Anyone in Scotland can suggest a topic for a guideline. This includes health and social care staff, voluntary organisations, charities, patients, carers and members of the public.

We choose a topic if we know that hospitals or general practitioners in different areas of Scotland offer different tests and treatments for the same condition. We also select particular topics if there is uncertainty over which treatments work best to reduce levels of disease or death associated with conditions or disabilities.



To suggest a guideline topic please fill in our topic proposal form. Our staff can help you with this.



You can get this from our website at www.sign.ac.uk/propose-a-topic.html, or you can contact us at:

SIGN Executive
Gyle Square
1 South Gyle Crescent
Edinburgh EH12 9EB Telephone
0131 623 4720.

Who is involved in developing guidelines?

To develop a SIGN guideline, we bring together a group of people from across Scotland. Typically, the guideline group will include:

- health and social care professionals, for example, hospital doctors, nurses, general practitioners, pharmacists and social workers
- patient, carer and public representatives.



What is a SIGN guideline based on?

Our guidelines are based on medical and scientific research. We search for evidence for the best ways to diagnose, treat and care for patients. If no research has been done, the guideline group members may use their experience and judgement to suggest best practice.

Patient and carer views and concerns add to the knowledge and experience of professionals. For example, patients and carers can provide knowledge on what it is like to live with a condition.

They can explain the advantages and disadvantages of treatments based on their experience. This allows the group to make an informed decision on whether or not to recommend treatments.

How are the concerns of patients and carers identified?

We always have patient and carer representatives on guideline groups. We also involve the public in our work by:

- writing to patient organisations and charities to ask them what they think our guideline should cover
- looking at the research on patients' and carers' experiences and preferences
- getting direct feedback from patients and carers, for example, we may hold focus groups with service users.



How will SIGN know that the guideline has covered all of the important areas?

We consult on every guideline before it is published. Our consultation processes include the following:

National open meetings



At a one day conference, the guideline group discusses the draft guideline with other health and social care professionals, and asks for feedback. We invite patients and carers to the national open meeting so that they can provide feedback on the draft guideline and make sure that the issues that matter to patients and carers have been included. The guideline is updated based on this feedback.

Open consultation



The draft guideline is posted on the SIGN website for one month.

Any NHS staff or member of the public can read it and send in comments. We put all the comments into a consultation report.

Each point is discussed by the guideline group and we will change the draft guideline if it is appropriate.

If no change is made, we will record the reasons for this.

Peer review

All our guidelines are independently reviewed by an expert panel before they are published. We ask reviewers to comment on the accuracy of the guideline and to suggest improvements. The draft guideline is also sent to lay reviewers to make sure that the guideline has considered issues that are important to patients and carers.

The peer reviewers' comments are included in the consultation report.

You can read more about reviewing a SIGN guideline in our leaflet, **“Peer reviewing a draft SIGN guideline: information for patients, carers and members of the public”** or by visiting our website at www.sign.ac.uk/consultations.html



What happens next?

Before it is published, the guideline and the report summarising consultation comments and the guideline group's responses are reviewed by the SIGN editorial group. This ensures each reviewer's comments have been addressed.

Once the guideline has been checked, it is published and advertised to all relevant health and social care staff in Scotland. The guidelines can be downloaded free of charge from our website at www.sign.ac.uk

Alternative formats



If you would like a copy of this booklet in another format such as large print, phone 0131 623 4720 or email sign@sign.ac.uk

www.sign.ac.uk



www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org

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The Healthcare Environment Inspectorate, the Scottish Health Council, the Scottish Health Technologies Group, the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) and the Scottish Medicines Consortium are key components of our organisation.

