

2015 manifesto: our agenda for change



The biopharmaceutical sector in the UK invests in R&D more than any other sector and provides the greatest Gross Value Added (GVA) per employee of any manufacturing sector, at nearly £150,000. It employs 73,000 people, 23,000 of whom are in highly skilled research and development roles, and contributes £5bn to the balance of trade. The medicines it develops and produces change the lives of millions of patients and are at the forefront of treating the nation's biggest killers, as well as managing the chronic diseases that are one of the NHS's greatest challenges.

As part of the life sciences sector, recent governments have developed an industrial strategy to improve the UK environment for the sector in order to maximise its contribution to the UK's health and wealth. Ahead of the general election, the main Westminster parties agree on the importance of the biopharmaceutical industry to the UK economy and NHS patients.

We have warmly welcomed the continuity of approach between governments and cross-party consensus. For a sector with long investment and product cycles, stability and certainty are both important to encouraging and maintaining investment in the UK within an increasingly competitive global environment.

Measures such as the cross-departmental Office for Life Sciences, reporting to a joint Department of Health and Department for Business, Innovation & Skills Minister for Life Sciences, and recognition at the highest policy levels that the NHS is an integral part of the UK investment environment as our chief customer, have sent a signal to investors and business leaders that the government understands and supports them.

Accelerating the life sciences strategy

We want to see continuation of the life sciences strategy approach, with accelerated success in delivering on the ground the aims that have been set out nationally. This means:

- The Life Sciences Minister working across the Department of Health and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills leading a refreshed life sciences strategy that has health policy as an integral part of the government's approach.
- A joined-up Office for Life Sciences with appropriate resources.
- All government departments and agencies, including the NHS, working together to implement the strategy, with aligned incentives, reporting and accountability.

Evolving the life sciences strategy

The greatest challenge the UK still faces under the life sciences strategy is addressing persistently low levels of patient access to innovative medicines. Modern medicines can play an important role in transforming patients' health and life chances, but a number of factors prevent fast and fair access to them for all patients, wherever they live. Ensuring access to modern medicines, for the right patient, at the right time, presents a major challenge for the NHS.

The new Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) means that the biopharmaceutical industry has committed to keep NHS spending on branded medicines flat for two years and with under 2% growth for a further three years, now is the time to redouble efforts to boost patients' access to innovative medicines. To help achieve this, the ABPI has agreed new partnerships with the NHS in England and with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and is working on a joint programme of roadshows with NHS England to communicate the benefits of the PPRS and medicines optimisation across the NHS.

In addition, we are calling for the government to:

- In light of the pricing deal agreed with pharmaceutical industry, end NHS activities solely focused on cost containment of medicines, with resources redeployed to optimise the use of medicines for patient health.
- Urgently amend NICE's decision-making framework so that it appropriately values new medicines and more NHS patients can benefit, as well as providing better alignment with the changed regulatory environment.
- Give NICE and NHS England a framework so they align with the wider health goals of society, such as the importance of helping those in greatest need and society's willingness to pay more for medicines at the end of life and for rare conditions.
- Develop the NHS Innovation Scorecard to ensure clear, published measures on NHS use of modern medicines, benchmarked against agreed estimates of appropriate clinical use and included in NHS England's performance reporting.
- Make the many medicines that are not referred to NICE available to patients as early as possible by ensuring they are adopted and funded by NHS organisations. This should also be reflected in the NHS Constitution to strengthen patients' rights to new medicines.
- Run a public awareness campaign on the NHS Constitution, give clearer guidance for patients on their rights and provide a single route of redress through Health Watch England if their rights have not been met.

Building on the life sciences strategy

Progress has been made but it's important to build on this success. This means the UK needs to:

- Continue to develop e-health databases that, properly safeguarded, can be used to advance the health of the UK population, including through medical research.
- Review of the operation and funding of the Early Access to Medicines Scheme, to ensure it is achieving its aim of providing patients in need with earlier access to innovative medicines they would benefit from.
- Accelerate progress in improving NHS clinical trial performance and maintaining support for the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Clinical Research Networks to further improve delivery of trials on time and on target.
- Maintain a competitive tax regime, including the corporation tax rate, the patent box and R&D tax credits that recognise process as well as product innovation. This helps ensure the UK is not out of the running for global business investment.
- Continue public investment in science and innovation to help the UK reach OECD targets over the course of the next Parliament, ensuring the UK maintains its world-class science and translational research base.