

Attending a virtual SMC Committee Meeting

Information for participating Patient Group Partners

SMC Committee Meetings

As part of Healthcare Improvement Scotland, SMC's role is to provide robust, carefully considered advice to NHS Boards, to ensure new medicines, which are clinically and cost effective, are available for routine use by the people of Scotland.

The SMC Committee meeting is the final stage of the SMC medicine appraisal process. The committee is made up mainly of clinicians and managers from across NHS Scotland, along with specially trained members of the public (called Public Partners) and the pharmaceutical industry. The Chair of SMC is a practising NHS clinician.

The meeting has a formal tone and occasionally may involve difficult discussions on new medicines and the best allocation of resources for NHS Scotland.

SMC Committee meetings were previously held at The Merchants House in Glasgow, however meetings were suspended in March 2020 due to the need to support NHSScotland in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The meetings resumed in August 2020 and are now being held virtually using Zoom. SMC Committee meetings are open to members of the public to observe. Registration is mandatory and must be completed in advance of the meeting, through the SMC website:

<https://www.scottishmedicines.org.uk/about-us/register-for-a-meeting/>

Patient Group Partner Participation

One representative per submitting patient group is able to participate at the SMC Committee meeting, during discussions for the medicine for which they provided a submission. Their role is to answer questions from committee members, relating to patient and carer issues, and provide points of clarity relating to their Patient Group submission, as required. This must be the named main contact on the Patient Group submission form and this person must have an in-depth understanding of the information provided on the form. For joint Patient Group submissions, one representative

per named registered Patient Group Partner is able to participate. **Other representatives from your patient group will be able to register to attend the meeting as public observers. However, they will not be able to join you when participating in discussions.**

What information is assessed at the meeting?

The assessment process starts several months before the committee meeting, when the pharmaceutical company makes its submission for a new medicine. Each new medicine submission is analysed by pharmacists, health economists and clinical experts before it is discussed by the New Drugs Committee (NDC). The NDC focuses on the clinical and cost effectiveness of new medicine. After the NDC meeting the submitting company is given an opportunity to comment on the preliminary advice. At the SMC Committee meeting you will hear the outcome of the NDC discussions in a presentation from an NDC member. If the medicine is for an end of life or rare condition, you will also hear a statement from the Patient and Clinician Engagement (PACE) meeting. This will be followed by a presentation by a member of the SMC Public Involvement Team, who will present a collated summary of all Patient Group submissions for the medicine.

There are usually between five and seven full medicine submissions considered at each committee meeting.

What is my role as a participating patient group representative?

During the meeting, when the medicine for which you provided a submission is about to be discussed, the Chair will invite you to introduce yourself to the committee. Once introductions have been carried out, you will be placed on mute and the discussion will commence. You should keep your camera on throughout the discussion of the medicine. The Public Involvement Team, with whom you will have been in regular contact with throughout the submission process, will also be present to support you throughout the discussion.

If a committee member has a question regarding patient or carer impact that they would like to ask you, they will use the 'hand up' facility to ask permission from the Chair for the question to be asked. If the question is appropriate, the Chair will invite you to answer. It is very important that you have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of your Patient Group submission to SMC, as questions asked by committee are likely to be directly related to this. If you wish to make any points of clarity throughout the discussion, please use the 'chat' facility to let the Public Involvement Team aware. They will be able to provide you with guidance or information if needed and make the Chair aware.

Please do not speak during discussions, unless invited by the Chair. This is to ensure that business is conducted efficiently. Committee members may not need to ask questions about the information in your Patient Group submission. Some of the discussions may be very technical in nature. You are not expected to have a working knowledge of, for example, the health economics around the medicine for which you have made a submission, or to comment on them.

When consideration of the medicine is coming to an end, the Chair will ask you if you are content with the accuracy of discussions and if you would like to provide any additional points of clarity relating to the medicine. **You are not permitted to add any new information at this point, unless it**

is to provide clarity on a particular point or to answer a specific question. When all discussions about the medicine are finished, the Chair will thank you and you will then be placed back onto mute and your camera will be turned off again.

*** Please note that medicines which are being assessed for the first time using the ultra-orphan pathway follow a different process. SMC is not making a decision at this time, therefore following discussions about the medicine there is no vote. For further information please contact the Public Involvement Team.**

When and how are virtual meetings held?

SMC Committee meetings take place on the first Tuesday of each month. The meetings are held virtually on Zoom - prior registration for meetings is mandatory. The meetings run from 12.30pm to 4.30pm (approximately).

If a meeting is cancelled or the time and/or location of a meeting changes, details of this will be published on the SMC website and we will let you know as quickly as possible.

How do I register for a meeting

To attend a virtual SMC Committee meeting you are required to register via the [SMC website](#). Your request to join an SMC Committee meeting will be confirmed the day prior to the meeting and you should retain your confirmation email containing joining instructions. The joining instructions are unique to each attendee and should not be shared with anyone as only one person can join a meeting per unique URL.

What time should I arrive and do I need to stay for the entire meeting?

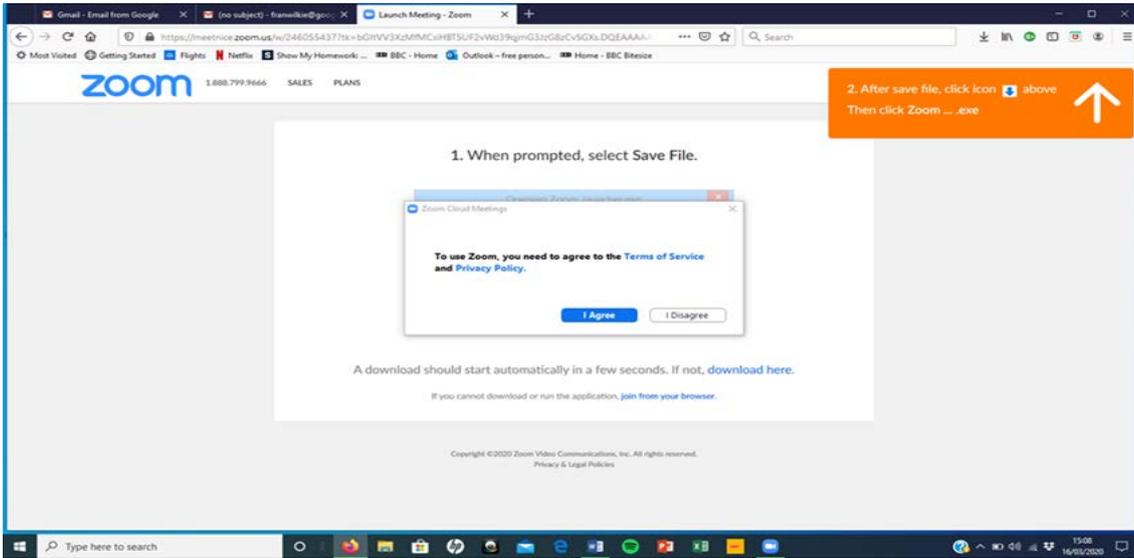
Although the official meeting does not commence until 12.30pm, it is essential to join promptly at 12 noon. There are a series of security checks to run whilst attendees are held in a virtual meeting room followed by a number of briefings. If you would like to leave before the end of the meeting, please use the chat function to advise a member of the Public Involvement Team before leaving.

How do I join the meeting?

Please refer to the email you received containing your unique joining instructions.

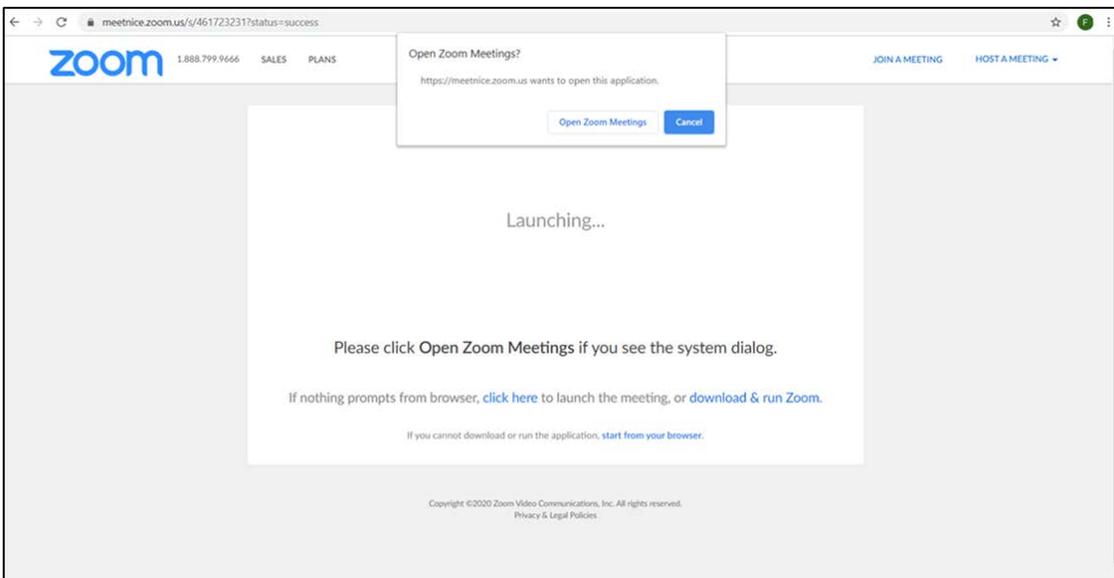
Click on (or copy and paste) the link in your confirmation email into your web browser. If you have not used Zoom before, you will see something similar to image 1. Click to agree to the Terms of Service and Privacy Policy then follow the on-screen instructions to save and run the file.

Image 1:



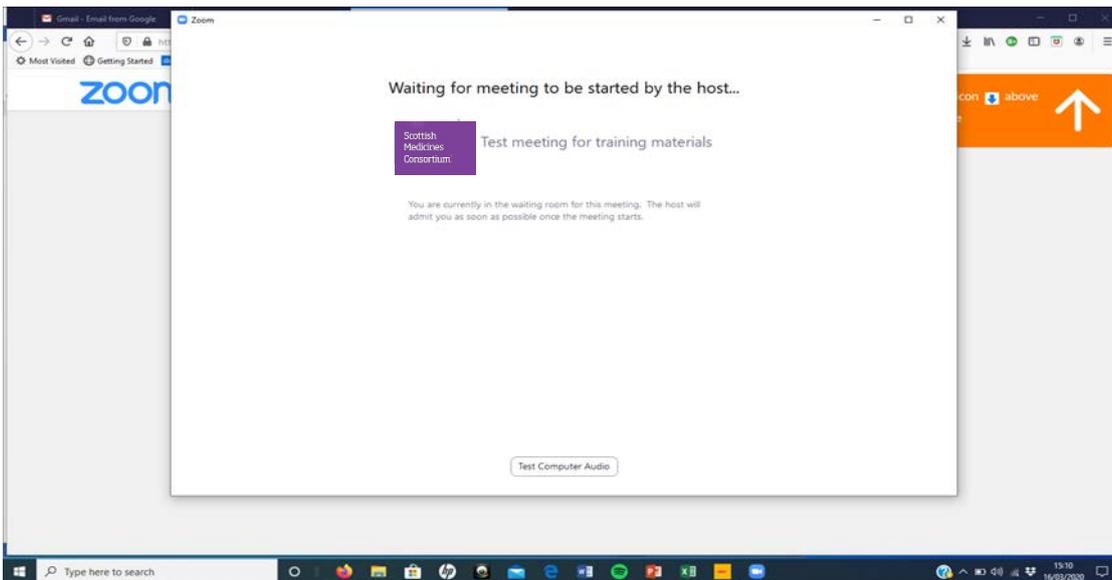
If you have used Zoom before, you should see a screen like image 2. Click on **Open Zoom Meetings**. If you do not see the **Open Zoom Meetings** pop-up box, use the links on your screen to launch the meeting.

Image 2:



Once Zoom opens, you should see a screen like image 3, telling you that you are waiting for the meeting to start. Your host will start the meeting at the appropriate time.

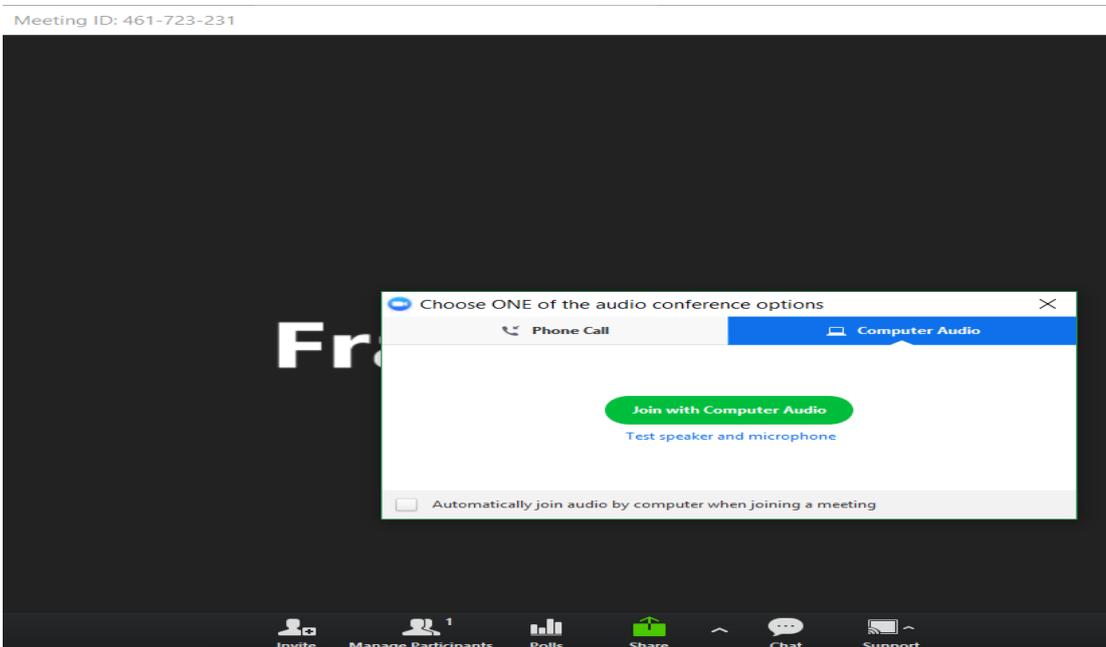
Image 3:



You should now see a screen like image 4. You are in the online meeting, but need to join the audio conference to hear what's being said. The easiest option is to join using your computer's audio. If you have not used Zoom before and want to check if your computer has a microphone and speakers, click **Test speaker and microphone**.

NB: if you know your computer audio works, skip to image 6.

Image 4:

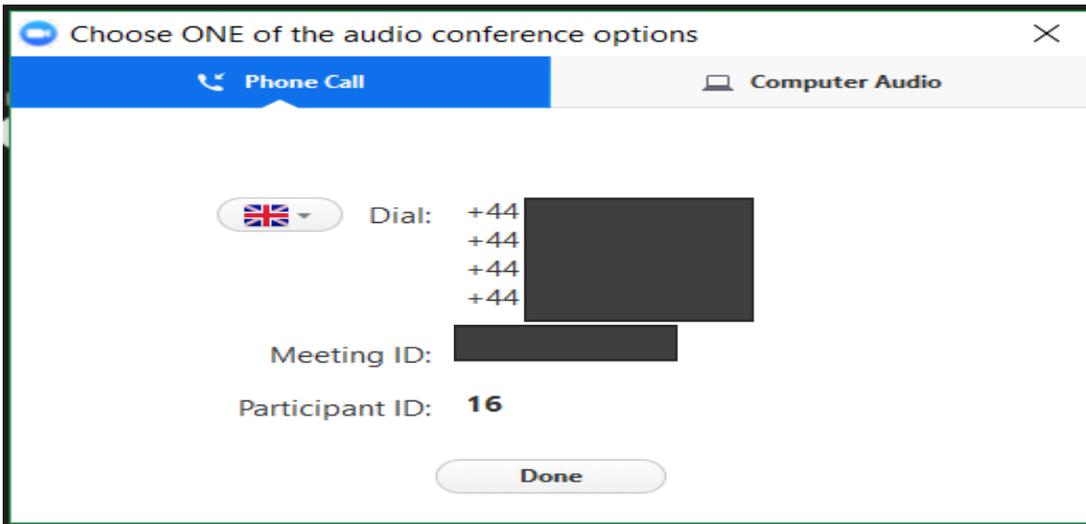


Follow the instructions on screen to test your microphone and speakers. If you hear both a ringtone, and then a replay of you speaking, you'll get a message to say your speaker and microphone 'look

good'. Click on **Join with Computer Audio**. If you answered no to either question, you'll get a message saying they've tested – click on **Join Audio by Phone**.

If you need to join using your phone, click on the Phone Call tab at the top of the box. Dial one of the numbers from your phone (image 5). Follow the prompts to enter the **Meeting ID** and your **Participant ID** on your phone's keypad and click the **Done** button. You can change your audio options at any point by clicking on the arrow next to the Microphone icon in the bottom left hand corner of your screen.

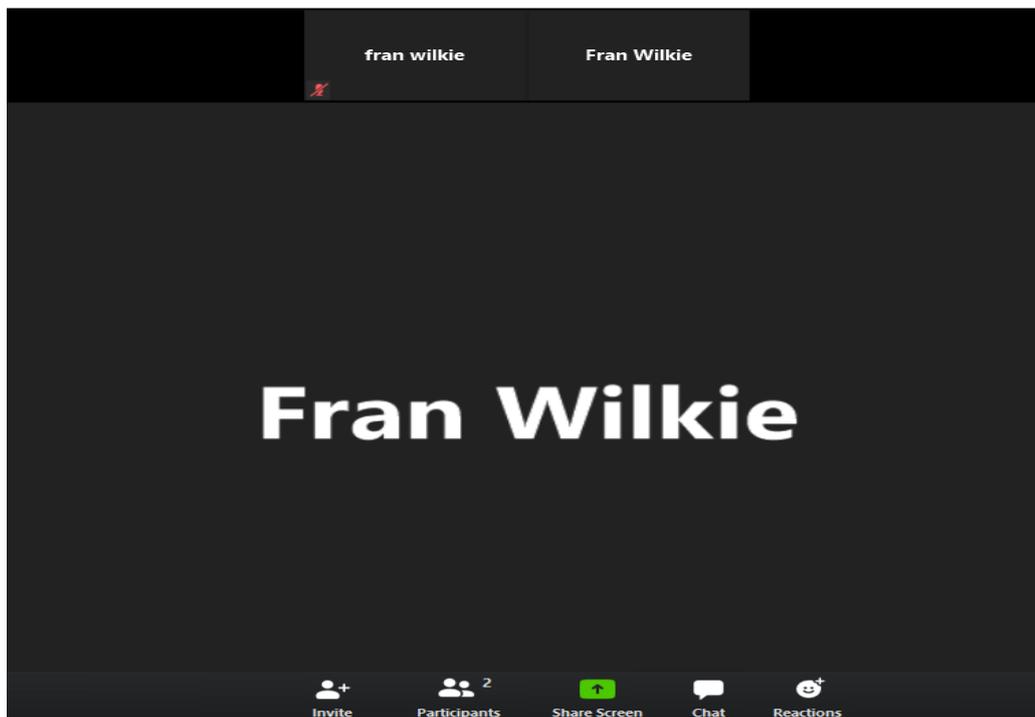
Image 5:



The main part of your screen will display whatever the host chooses to share with you (PowerPoint slide, website, etc). An example is shown in image 6. The names of other participants will show along the top of the screen. There is a toolbar at the bottom, although this isn't always visible – move your mouse to the bottom of the screen to make the toolbar display.

Image 6:

37



Functions available during the meeting

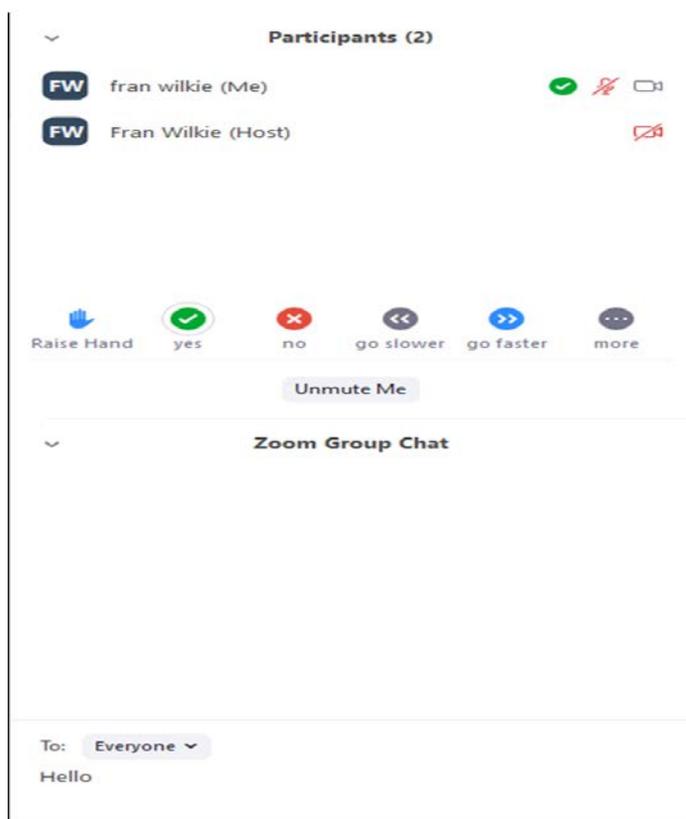
The toolbar is where you can control your interaction with Zoom (image 7). You can change your audio and video settings using the icons on the left hand side. It is important to note however, members of the public cannot speak or ask questions during the meeting. You can click on the relevant buttons to see who else is in the meeting, and to use the chat function (see next slides for more details). You can also leave the meeting.

Image 7:



During the meeting you will only be able to send a direct message to the host or a co-host of the meeting. If you click on the Chat button from the main toolbar, it will open another window (image 8). From here, you can send messages; you type your message at the bottom of the screen. Press return on your keyboard to send the message.

Image 8:



To leave the meeting, hover your mouse at the bottom of the screen to make the toolbar appear. Click on the **Leave Meeting** button.

Please note, audio and video recording, photography and the use of social media during the meeting is not allowed. Anyone seen to be recording/broadcasting during a meeting will be removed from the meeting immediately.

What if I have accessibility requirements?

If you have any accessibility requirements which need to be considered, please let a member of the Public Involvement Team know in advance of the meeting so they can try and make appropriate arrangements for you.

Who should I contact if I require assistance?

There will be a technical host for the meeting who will ensure everything is working and deal with any unexpected technology issues. Their contact number and email address will be given to all participants so they can be contacted during the meeting. You will also be supported by the SMC Public Involvement Team who will be on hand to provide information and guidance when needed.

If you are unsure of any aspect of your role or contribution to the meeting please let a member of the team know and they will assist you.

What will happen when I join the meeting?

When you join the meeting at first, you will be placed in a virtual holding room along with the other invited observers. You will then be welcomed by the SMC team, who will deliver a technical meeting brief explaining how the meeting will work. When the meeting brief is finished, Patient Group participants will then be placed into another holding room, where a member of SMC will deliver a brief to all public observers and participants of the meeting. The member of the SMC team will provide you with contact details, and be your point of contact throughout the afternoon should you have any queries. When the meeting is ready to commence, all participants will be asked to turn off their microphone and video camera functions and moved back to the main meeting. Please be aware that there may be a slight delay in you joining the meeting, please do not leave the designated virtual holding room until you are moved automatically into the main meeting by the technical host.

What should I do if I have technical issues?

If, during the meeting, you are having difficulty with audibility, technology failure or any other technical issues please use that chat facility or send an email to either the technical host or a member of the Public Involvement Team who will assist you. They will advise the meeting host who will ensure the chair is aware.

What if I am unable to attend the meeting?

We understand that it is not always possible for patient groups to attend the SMC Committee meeting. Patient Group information is actively sought and incorporated in advance of the meeting. Therefore, if you are unable to attend, your submission will still be included in the members' meeting papers, presented by the Public Involvement Team, and will form a key part of the decision making process.

What if I am late for the meeting?

We strongly encourage you to join the meeting promptly, however, if you are going to be late joining the meeting, you will be placed into a virtual holding room until you are admitted into the meeting at an appropriate time by the technical host. If possible, please advise a member of the Public Involvement Team if you are going to be late.

Will committee papers be provided for the committee meeting?

Each committee member is issued with extensive supporting paperwork for each submission. This includes a detailed analysis of the clinical and cost effectiveness of the medicine, along with all Patient Group submission forms, Patient Group Partner registration forms, and feedback from expert clinical advisors. It also contains information the submitting pharmaceutical company has identified as confidential, so we are only able to provide it to members of SMC Committee.

Ahead of the meeting you will be sent an agenda which will allow you to follow the order of the committee meeting. SMC Committee meetings will use PowerPoint slides during the presentations which replaces the need to circulate redacted detailed advice documents which was done previously at face to face committee meetings.

Who will be at the meeting?

In addition to the SMC Committee members, members of SMC staff involved in running the meeting and supporting the Chair will also be in attendance. Invited observers may also be present.

The submitting pharmaceutical company is also invited to participate in SMC Committee meetings to respond to specific queries about the clinical and health economic evidence for their submission.

SMC Committee meetings are open for members of the public to register to attend.

How long will the meeting last?

The Chair will outline the agenda for the day at the start of the meeting but is difficult to know how long it will take to discuss each medicine or when a meeting will end. The presentation and discussion of each medicine usually takes around 30 minutes, although this is variable.

Will there be any scheduled breaks?

Yes, the chair will call regular breaks to avoid virtual meeting fatigue. A longer break may be called if the meeting is likely to last several hours. If you have to leave the meeting at any point, please turn off your camera and make sure your microphone is on mute.

Will I be able to listen to all the discussions?

SMC is fully committed to holding its meetings in public and we would like as much of the meeting as possible to take place with the public present. However, on occasion part of the discussions for a specific medicine may require a closed session. This is mainly because we have a legal obligation to maintain the academic and commercial confidentiality of any information identified as such by the submitting company. This is standard practice in all health technology assessment organisations in the UK. Public disclosure of this information could negatively impact a company's commercial interests (e.g. share prices) or the academic interests of a research or professional organisation. The Chair may declare, or be asked by a committee member to declare, a closed session, allowing detailed discussion of this confidential material. Should this happen, you will be placed in a virtual holding room and will re-join the meeting when the confidential discussion has been completed.

Some submissions have a Patient Access Schemes (PAS), where the company makes the medicine available to NHSScotland through a scheme that generally involves a confidential discount on the price of the medicine. We are not allowed to discuss details of the PAS in public, so the Chair may call for a closed session to discuss the specific details of a PAS.

Will the decision about the medicine be announced at the committee meeting?

This is not possible as an announcement of the decision in public could have significant commercial risks. When the discussion for all submissions has ended, and the meeting moves to a closed session, the Chair will ask each committee member to record their vote electronically on whether or not to accept the medicine. The votes will be counted and the decision announced to the SMC Committee in this closed session.

When will the final SMC advice be published?

On the Friday following the SMC Committee meeting, the submitting pharmaceutical company is sent a summary document informing them, in confidence, of SMC's decision. NHS Boards are also informed of the advice, in confidence, at this stage.

Submitting Patient Group Partners can be provided with the SMC decision, under embargo, five days before the information is made public. This is in strict confidence and is to enable you to prepare any advisory services you may provide for patients and carers.

The decision is not made public until approximately four weeks after the SMC meeting when it is published on the SMC website. This period allows NHS Boards to prepare and, where relevant, comparator companies to review statements about their product in the advice.

Can I talk to members of the committee?

The role of SMC members is to make an independent assessment of the evidence. It is very important that no one tries to influence an individual committee member during the meeting. Members of the public are not permitted to talk during the meeting and cannot send messages to committee members. If you have any questions you can message a co-host of the meeting; the name of which will be disclosed in a brief at the start of the meeting.

Can I take notes at the committee meeting?

You may take notes, but the use of recording devices are not allowed during the committee meeting. Committee meeting minutes will be published on the SMC website around four weeks after the meeting.

Can I use social media during the meeting?

Live reporting of committee meeting proceedings is not allowed. Anyone seen to be recording/broadcasting during a meeting will be removed from the meeting immediately.

Can I quote or report what is said at a committee meeting?

This is a public meeting and what members say can be quoted after the meeting. We rely on a full and frank exchange of views to carry out our work and members of the committee will debate the evidence thoroughly. We ask Patient Group Partners to respect that it is important that committee members are able to speak freely without concern that they may be misquoted or that what they have said is taken and reported out of context.

Can children attend committee meetings?

Children under the age of 16 cannot attend committee meetings.

Do I need to let you know if I am no longer able to attend a committee meeting?

Please let the Public Involvement Team know as soon as possible if you are unable to attend the meeting.

Feedback & evaluation

The Public Involvement Team will send you an online survey link following the meeting, asking for your opinions on the experience of participating in the SMC meeting. We encourage you to provide honest feedback to help us review and develop this process.

If you have any questions please contact the Public Involvement Team:

Email: his.smcpublicinvolvement@nhs.scot

You may find it helpful to view this [short video](#) of a Patient Group Partner explaining their experience of participating at an SMC Committee meeting.