

Guide for Meeting Observers of SHTG Council

Introduction

The Scottish Health Technologies Group (SHTG) is the national health technology assessment (HTA) agency for health technologies (excluding medicines) in Scotland.

SHTG is part of the Evidence Directorate of Healthcare Improvement Scotland. You can find out more about the work of SHTG on the [Healthcare Improvement Scotland website](#). SHTG is supported by an advisory body known as SHTG Council.

This guide is for people interested in observing a meeting of SHTG Council ('the council'). Observers are welcome at council meetings. These meetings have been held in public since July 2016, this reflects our commitment to openness and transparency. We hope observing a meeting will improve your understanding of how SHTG works and how we develop evidence-based recommendations on the use of health technologies in Scotland.

SHTG Council

What is SHTG Council?

SHTG provides evidence support and advice to NHSScotland on the use of new and existing health technologies (excluding medicines), which are likely to have significant implications for people's care.

The definition of a health technology is broad. A health technology is an intervention, product or service developed to prevent, diagnose or treat medical conditions; promote health; provide rehabilitation; or organise healthcare delivery. The health technology could be a test, device, procedure or patient pathway.

The council is responsible for agreeing specific recommendations on the use of a technology, reaching decisions by consensus following discussion of the evidence, including hearing from patient groups and the Scottish context.

For more information please [see the SHTG webpage](#).

How does the council meet?

The council meets approximately every two months and meetings may last up to four hours. Meetings currently take place virtually via Microsoft Teams.

Meeting dates are listed [on this SHTG webpage](#).

Who is present at a meeting?

SHTG Council includes representatives from NHSScotland's regional and special boards, clinical and professional networks, academia, industry, Scottish Government and two volunteer public partners. The meeting is supported by presenters and organisers from the SHTG Team. There can also be up to ten observers present.

Members of the council are listed [on this SHTG webpage](#).

What information is considered at meetings?

When the council develops recommendations on health technologies, they consider various aspects such as:

- How well the technology works compared to currently used treatments.
- The number of patients likely to benefit from the technology.
- How safe the technology is.
- How much the technology costs compared to other treatment options.

For each technology appraisal, council members discuss and consider a broad range of evidence. This may include the findings of our evidence review, alongside the views of clinical experts, patient organisations and manufacturers.

The chair will outline the agenda at the start of the meeting. The presentation and discussion usually takes one hour for each technology, this may vary.

Is a recommendation announced at the meeting?

SHTG recommendations are published on the website, approximately four weeks after the council meeting where they were agreed. Until that time, meeting discussions and draft recommendations are confidential.

The council aims to finalise recommendations during the meeting. Sometimes, council members may ask to consider the draft recommendations again. Final recommendations

are made public following publication on our website and are then disseminated across NHSScotland.

SHTG recommendations are published [on this SHTG webpage](#).

Arrangements for Observing a Virtual Council Meeting

How do I register as an observer?

If you would like to observe a council meeting, please [register in advance by email](#).

The maximum number of observers at each meeting is 10, with a maximum of two people per organisation. If a meeting is oversubscribed, priority is given on a first-come basis.

If you are a member of the media, please [notify the meeting organisers](#) in advance by email. A member of the Healthcare Improvement Scotland communications team will attend the meeting with you and provide an appropriate briefing.

If you wish to observe a meeting in order to conduct a study on SHTG processes, please notify the meeting organisers. You will need to provide details about your study so that consent can be sought.

Colleagues from within NHSScotland are welcome to observe meetings.

Will papers be provided in advance of the meeting?

All observers will be sent the meeting agenda and relevant papers by email on the morning of the meeting.

Meeting papers will include the draft recommendations for each technology being reviewed. Some papers may not be included because they contain confidential information (commercial, academic or otherwise), or information of a personal and sensitive nature.

How do I join the virtual meeting?

Please log in to the meeting at the time advised on the agenda, using the MS Teams link provided by email. The link to join the meeting should not be shared with or used by another person.

When you log in, you will be directed to a 'virtual lobby'. The organiser of the meeting will admit you into the meeting from here. If you log in after the start of the meeting, please

wait for the meeting organiser to admit you at an appropriate point.

If you need to leave the meeting early, please feel free to do so by logging out of the meeting.

You can [contact the meeting organiser by email](#) during the meeting for support.

What is the meeting etiquette for observers during the meeting?

Please follow this guidance for observers during the meeting:

- Observers are not permitted to speak or ask questions during the meeting, except in exceptional circumstances when directed by the Chair.
- Please mute your microphone and switch your video off for the duration of the meeting.
- Please do not use the chat box to ask questions.
- Audio and video recording, photography and the use of social media during the meeting is not allowed.

You can [contact the meeting organiser by email](#) during the meeting for support.

Will I be able to listen to all the discussions?

SHTG is fully committed to holding its meetings in a transparent manner and we would like as much of the meeting as possible to take place with observers present.

On occasions, a closed session will be called when the council is required to discuss confidential information. Observers will be required to leave the meeting for the duration of the closed session. You will be advised on the logistics of re-joining the meeting.

Should I let you know if I am no longer able to attend a meeting?

Please [inform the meeting organiser by email](#) as soon as you can if you are unable to attend the meeting. This will make your place available for someone else.

Can I provide feedback on my experience?

We will send you a SmartSurvey link after the meeting, asking for your thoughts about your experience of observing the council meeting. We encourage you to provide honest feedback to help us review and develop this process.

Confidentiality of Council Meetings

Do I need to sign a confidentiality agreement?

Meeting organisers will ask you to sign a confidentiality agreement before sending you any meeting papers. SHTG requests that confidentiality is observed in respect of all information shared in relation to SHTG business.

We ask you to treat all information about council meetings e.g. meeting papers, your notes from meetings, the discussion you hear, the decisions reached etc. in the strictest confidence, to ensure that confidentiality is maintained and these confidential issues are not be disclosed or referred to outside of the meeting. Please delete or destroy your papers after the meeting.

This level of confidentiality is required because of the draft status of documents, and as the detail within them may be subject to revision following the council meeting.

Do I need to declare my interests?

Meeting observers do not need to complete a declaration of interests.

Can I use social media during the meeting?

The use of social media, audio or video recording, live reporting or screen shots to share or publicise meeting proceedings is not allowed as it may carry a significant commercial risk. Anyone found to be broadcasting the proceedings via any media will be asked to leave.

Can I take notes for personal use during the meeting?

You may take notes for personal use if you wish, but we ask that you destroy them at the end of the meeting.

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

We ask observers to respect the ability of council members to speak freely without concern that they may be misquoted or that what they have said may be reported out of context.

You may not directly or indirectly quote what is said by any person or group present at a council meeting unless SHTG provides explicit approval and the relevant person has agreed to be quoted.

Commonly used terms

This glossary includes terms that are commonly used during SHTG meetings, together with an explanation of what they mean:

[HTAi consumer and patient glossary: A beginner's guide to words used in health technology assessment](#)

Contact

If you have any questions regarding observing a council meeting please [contact SHTG by email](#).