



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

2nd November 2023

Dear Contribute,

RE: VPAS CAMPAIGN

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access (VPAS). I have read your comments with interest.

My ministerial colleagues have stressed that affordability to the NHS will continue to be one of the scheme's key objectives.

I note your concerns about the accessibility and affordability of medicines through the NHS and the findings of the report prepared by Global Justice, STOPAIDS and Just Treatment. However, having reviewed the report, I understand the Department of Health and Social Care does not recognise the methodology used to form its conclusions.

As you recognise, the Voluntary Scheme plays an important role in supporting sustainable patient access to the most clinically and cost-effective medicines. The current Voluntary Scheme has enabled the NHS to deliver a record number of access deals for medicines. When VPAS expires at the end of 2023, it is expected to have generated around £7 billion of income for the NHS over nearly five years. At present, 90 percent of companies supplying eligible health service medicines to the NHS are members of the Voluntary Scheme.

Negotiations between the Government and the pharmaceutical industry over a replacement to the Voluntary Scheme are ongoing, with a potential new scheme coming into force in 2024. These negotiations are commercially sensitive, and I cannot provide any detailed comment at this stage. However, I am confident that this deal will strike the right balance between supporting access to medicines, while controlling costs and ensuring value for money for spending on medicines.


There are several other ways in which the Government improves the affordability of medicines for the taxpayer. The Government has a statutory scheme for branded medicine pricing in place for companies that do not opt into VPAS. A consultation on the future of the statutory scheme was published in July 2023. My understanding is that companies must also agree a public "list price" for branded medicines with the department before they can market it in the UK. Furthermore, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence also assesses the cost-effectiveness of medicines before they are delivered through the NHS.

Finally, the Government has made clear that one of the priorities of the VPAS is to ensure affordability of medicines through the NHS. In addition, the Government is taking steps to increase public sector R&D as part of wider targets to ensure that R&D spending forms 3 percent of GDP by 2027.



It is important to note that most UK Government R&D funding derives from the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology through UK Research and Innovation. UKRI then funds R&D through three main routes: Innovation UK (which primarily funds business-led innovation), seven Research Councils (which funds specific programmes and projects) and Research England (which provides funding to higher education providers in England not tied to specific activities).

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes


**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**