

What we think: The Cancer Drugs Fund

What is the Cancer Drugs Fund?

The Cancer Drugs Fund (CDF) gives patients in England access to cancer drugs which would otherwise be unavailable through the NHS. The Fund is managed by NHS England.

These drugs may be unavailable because they have been turned down for routine use in the NHS, or because they have yet to be assessed for routine use.

The list of drugs available through the CDF is published on the [NHS England website](#), along with further details about the Fund.

Currently, Wales and Scotland do not have a similar scheme.

What's the background to the Cancer Drugs Fund?

The CDF was established in 2010, following a series of negative decisions (appraisals) about cancer drugs by the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

The CDF was intended to be a temporary solution to this problem, allowing patients access to expensive cancer drugs while an improved, longer term system for assessing and making decisions about cancer drugs in England was developed.

The current CDF is due to finish at the end of June 2016, coinciding with the introduction of a new system on 1 July 2016. NICE and NHS England have recently consulted on proposals for this new system.

Why are drugs being removed from the Cancer Drugs Fund?

The budget for the CDF has grown since 2010, to meet increasing demand. In October 2014, the CDF reported that it was significantly overspent. While NHS England attributed this, in part, to increasing numbers of patients accessing drugs through the CDF, it also explained that some of this overspend was a result of the high cost of some new cancer drugs.

In November 2014, NHS England made changes to the way decisions are made about which cancer drugs to fund through the CDF. These changes aimed to bring the CDF spending back into budget. As a result of these changes, since January 2015, a number of drugs have been removed (de-listed) from the CDF.

Which drugs have been removed?

The latest secondary breast cancer drug to be removed from the CDF is [bevacizumab \(Avastin\)](#). This was removed on 4 November 2015, following an announcement by NHS England on 4 September.

[Trastuzumab emtansine \(Kadcyla\)](#), also known as T-DM1, remains on the CDF. Kadcyla was due to be removed but Roche, the manufacturer of Kadcyla, entered into negotiations with NHS England to ensure it could remain on the Fund.

You can find our press statement about the de-listing [here](#).

It's important to highlight that anyone currently receiving Avastin will continue to have access to it.

As well as Kadcyla, the following drugs used to treat secondary breast cancer can still be accessed through the CDF:

- [everolimus \(Afinitor\)](#)
- [eribulin \(Halaven\)](#)
- [pertuzumab \(Perjeta\)](#).

Has Breast Cancer Care been involved in decisions about removing drugs from the CDF?

Breast Cancer Care has not been involved in any decisions about the drugs that have been removed from the CDF. These decisions are made by the National Cancer Drugs Fund Panel. The Panel is a subgroup of NHS England's Chemotherapy Clinical Reference Group (CRG).

What does Breast Cancer Care think about the CDF?

The CDF has helped thousands of breast cancer patients in England to access drugs that would otherwise have been unavailable. However, it was only meant as a temporary solution until a more sustainable system was developed.

Breast Cancer Care has for some time called for a more sustainable system for making effective cancer drugs available to patients in England. This call formed part of our recent [Bucket List campaign](#), which aims to improve levels of care and support for people living with secondary breast cancer.

We feel that the proposed changes to the CDF, as set out in NHS England and NICE's consultation, do not offer a sustainable solution to improving access to cancer drugs. This is largely because the consultation does not look at the wider drugs approval system as a whole. We feel that this is a missed opportunity to address the problems which have necessitated the need for a Cancer Drugs Fund in the first place.

Our full response to the proposed changes can be found [here](#).

In the last year, Breast Cancer Care has kept pace with CDF announcements and responded on behalf of people affected by breast cancer via a series of press statements and blogs:

[What we think about the Cancer Drugs Fund changes, and what you need to know, March 2015 \(blog\)](#)

[Consultation on the Cancer Drugs Fund announced, December 2015](#)

[Cancer Drugs Fund: Kadcyra stays but Avastin no longer available, November 2015 \(blog\)](#)

[Life-extending breast cancer treatment axed from Cancer Drugs Fund as another remains, November 2015 \(press statement\)](#)

[Two life-extending drugs to be removed from Fund, September 2015 \(press statement\)](#)

[Two breast cancer drugs removed from the Cancer Drugs Fund, September 2015 \(Blog\)](#)

[Cancer Drugs Fund Panel meeting taking place this week, July 2015](#)

[Eribulin to stay on the Cancer Drugs Fund, July 2015](#)

[Breast cancer drug removed from the Cancer Drugs Fund, May 2015](#)

[Secondary breast cancer treatments to stay on Cancer Drugs Fund, March 2015](#)

[Three breast cancer drugs removed from the Cancer Drugs Fund, January 2015](#)

What does the future look like for the CDF?

NICE and NHS England have recently consulted on proposed changes to the Cancer Drugs Fund. These changes are due to come into effect from 1 July 2016. You can read our response to these proposals [here](#).

Breast Cancer Care will continue to monitor developments with the Cancer Drugs Fund to ensure that the voice of people affected by breast cancer is heard.

Campaign with us

We're keen to hear what you think about the CDF. You can email our Policy and Campaigns team at campaigns@breastcancercare.org.uk or call 0345 092 0800 and ask to speak to a member of the team.

You can also [join our Campaigns Network](#) to get regular updates on all our campaigns and how you can get involved.