8 October 2013

Dear Mr McNeil

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE HEALTH AND SPORT COMMITTEE 8TH REPORT 2013 – ACCESS TO NEW MEDICINES

Thank you for the opportunity to consider the recommendations arising from its inquiry into access to new medicines published on 3 July 2013. We welcome the rigour and systematic methodology applied to the inquiry which is evident in the consensus achieved.

The inquiry dealt with a number of complex and contentious issues and was helpful in addressing a number of fundamental questions about access to medicines. We believe that in responding to these and the issues raised in the independent reviews by Professors Routledge and Swainson, we should grasp the opportunity to elicit consensus across all political parties in Scotland.

Our shared ambition is to improve access, within the NHS in Scotland, to newly licensed medicines that represent the best in therapeutic value and are cost-effective.

I am pleased therefore to submit the Scottish Government’s response which is attached. We have listened carefully to the concerns raised by the Committee and we have taken decisive action in a number of key areas which will increase access to new medicines within the NHS for patients in Scotland.

The Scottish Medicines Consortium has been asked to apply different approaches in the evaluation of medicines to treat patients at end of life and to treat very rare diseases including, as a first step in a wider process to determine Scotland’s requirement to a value-based approach in assessment, a rapid review of the wider aspects of value and QALYs to be considered. The SMC has been asked to report on their findings in this regard before Christmas.

Other important improvements include the creation of a new Peer Approved Clinical System (PACS) to replace the Individual Patient Treatment Request (IPTR) process, improved patient support arrangements through a dedicated and centralised Patient Support Team, extension of the Rare Conditions Medicines Fund until 2016, and the creation of a dynamic Scottish Clinical Trials Register.

I would like to thank the Committee for its work in this area and for producing a report which, through the actions which will be taken forward, help to ensure that NHS patients in Scotland are able to access medicines which will allow them to achieve improved health gain and to lead enriched lives.

ALEX NEIL