



‘Drug misuse and dependence: UK guidelines on clinical management’ – review proposal

‘Drug misuse and dependence: UK guidelines on clinical management’, often called the ‘clinical guidelines’, ‘orange guidelines’ or ‘orange book’, were last published in 2007. They remain the touchstone for clinical practice with drug users in the UK. However, they have remained unaltered since publication. During this time there has been substantial and significant changes in the sector, for example:

- a more recovery-orientated treatment system
- an ageing ‘traditional’ drug population
- changing patterns of drug use, such as:
 - fewer people using heroin
 - fewer people injecting drugs
 - increasing use of new psychoactive substance, legal highs, and image and performance-enhancing drugs
- alcohol, smoking and addiction to medicines gaining in attention

PHE is undertaking a review on behalf of the departments of health in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to decide whether and how ‘Drug misuse and dependence: UK guidelines on clinical management’ should be updated. Stakeholders in the guidelines are invited to comment on the provisional review decision, which is:

Much of the advice given in the 2007 guidelines remains current. However, there are sections that could benefit from being updated following developments in the evidence base since the guidelines were published. The guidelines should therefore be updated.

An update would build upon the content of the current version to reflect new evidence, issues and ways of working, as well as developments in the recovery orientation of drug treatment (while continuing to support the protective elements of treatment). An update would also seek to complement and supplement other key documents, including NICE guidance and ‘Medications in recovery’.

As with previous versions of the clinical guidelines, the update would be conducted by an independent, expert working group. As the guidelines have UK-wide applicability the working group will bring together experts from across the four countries – something that is also important to ensure consistency in clinical practice.

The review process, which will include consultation with the field, reviews of the evidence base, and advice from specialist experts, will be run by PHE. Officials from all four countries will work closely with PHE at all stages of the process, with focus groups conducted in each country.