

## L3

### The NHS Evidence Accreditation Scheme

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**Background:** NHS Evidence, a service provided by NICE, was launched on 30 April 2009 and provides access to a range of information types, including clinical guidelines, primary research literature, practical implementation tools and policy documents. To achieve its aims of providing access to authoritative clinical and non-clinical evidence and best practice, NHS Evidence provides a formal accreditation scheme for defined categories of information such as clinical guidelines.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the scheme is to drive up the quality of information for health professionals. The concept of the accreditation scheme is based on a need to see standards of information being raised so that practitioners can have confidence in using evidence to develop health and social care services, and improve patient care.

**Methods:** An accreditation scheme was developed to meet the NICE core principles of transparency, inclusiveness, independence, timeliness and regular review.

**Results:** The accreditation scheme ensures that:

- Standardised criteria and assessment processes (based on the AGREE instrument) are used
- Decisions are based on the rigorous assessment and analysis of supporting information supplied by the information producer against defined criteria
- The process is overseen by an independent Advisory Committee that makes decisions on behalf of NICE
- Input from external experts and healthcare professionals forms part of all processes
- Patients and carers have the opportunity to be involved
- Sources and not information itself are accredited
- Accreditation decisions and the accreditation process manual are regularly reviewed
- Accreditation lasts for three years and will allow the source to use the NHS Evidence accreditation mark

**Discussion:** Initially, accreditation will cover clinical guidelines, referral guidelines, public health guidelines, policy guidance, clinical summaries and best practice. In the longer term accreditation processes will be developed for other types of information, for example systematic reviews and care pathways.