

INDIVIDUAL FUNDING REQUESTS (Non-Drugs)

A guide for patients in Norfolk & Waveney

NHS North Norfolk CCG
NHS Norwich CCG
NHS South Norfolk CCG
NHS West Norfolk CCG
NHS Great Yarmouth & Waveney CCG

You have received this leaflet as your Health Professional has identified you need a treatment or procedure which is not routinely funded by the NHS and therefore requires approval from your Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). A request for treatment has to be submitted to your CCG and approved by them for NHS funding. This process is called “Individual Funding”.

This leaflet provides you with more information on how the Individual Funding process works.

Introduction

The NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in Norfolk and Waveney have a duty to spend the money they receive from the Government in a fair and efficient way, taking in to account the health needs of their local community.

In some circumstances, your Health Professional may decide you have exceptional clinical circumstances which would justify funding for a treatment which is not routinely available.

Requests must be made through an Individual Funding Request (IFR). The same IFR policy is used across Norfolk & Waveney to ensure patients are treated consistently and fairly. The IFR process is administered by Arden & Greater East Midlands Commissioning Support Unit (AGEM CSU) on behalf of the Norfolk & Waveney CCGs.

What does “exceptional” mean?

In deciding whether your clinical circumstances are “exceptional” the IFR Panel (who consider requests on behalf of the CCGs) will consider the following;

- Is the patient significantly different in clinical terms to the general population of patients with the same diagnosis/condition in question?

and

- Is the patient more likely to benefit from the treatment/intervention than might be expected for the average patient with the same diagnosis/condition?

Some examples of clinical exceptionality could be where, for example;

- A patient requires a breast reduction which is not routinely funded by the NHS. However, if a patient has ongoing spinal issues, for example, scoliosis and the breast size was worsening the condition and the patient required a breast reduction in order to progress on to having successful spinal surgery, the IFR Panel may consider this to be an exceptional case.
- A patient requires an apronectomy (surgical removal of a large excess of skin and fat from the abdomen) which is not routinely funded by the NHS. However, if the patient also has symptomatic varicose veins which are inoperable due to the abdominal apron, the IFR Panel may consider this to be an exceptional case.

Social factors (e.g. gender, ethnicity, age, lifestyle, employment etc.) cannot be considered as part of the IFR process.

Who can make an Individual Funding Request?

If your Health Professional agrees a certain treatment would be of benefit to you and there are no alternative treatments or services available for your condition, they can make a request to the IFR Panel on your behalf but only if they consider your individual clinical circumstances are exceptional.

As part of the IFR application, your Health Professional is asked to describe your personal clinical circumstances, how they believe the treatment will specifically benefit you, the evidence which is both safe and effective, the cost of the treatment and how commonly your condition occurs in the community.

All requests are treated in strict confidence and all personal details are removed from the paperwork before being submitted to the IFR Panel for consideration.

How is a decision made?

The IFR Panel is presided over by a lay chairperson and is made up of health professionals. The Panel meet once a month to consider requests against an agreed set of criteria to ensure the decision making is fair, consistent and transparent. You will not be asked to attend the IFR Panel meeting.

What decision can the IFR Panel make?

The IFR Panel will either;

- Agree to the funding
- Defer the decision until further information has been received (up to three months)
- Decline the request

A letter will be sent to your Health Professional informing them of the IFR Panel's decision within 5 working days of the panel meeting explaining the reasons for the decision. Your Health Professional will contact you to discuss the decision so it can be fully explained. They can then discuss with you what it means for your care and the next steps which may need to be taken.

What can I do if the request is declined?

In the first instance you should speak to your Health Professional. If you or your Health Professional are unhappy with the IFR Panel decision:

- In any case where further relevant information becomes available which has not been considered by the IFR Panel, your Health Professional may ask the IFR Panel to review the case specifically in light of this further information.

Your Health Professional may request a review of the application by the IFR Panel by making a formal request in writing to the IFR Administrator within 30 working days of the date of the IFR Panel's decision. Your Health Professional must clearly outline the reasons as to why a review is requested. The IFR Panel will then review the initial decision based on any additional information received.

Where all the relevant information was available to the IFR Panel when the decision was made, but the referring clinician remains dissatisfied with the decision, they may request it to be reviewed by an IFR Appeals Panel on one of the following grounds only:

- Due process was not followed or;
- The IFR Panel failed to give a clear rationale for its decision.

In the case of failure to follow due process or an inadequate rationale for the IFR Panel decision, your Health Professional may request an IFR Appeals Panel review by making a formal request in writing to the IFR Administrator within 30 working days of the date of the IFR Panel's decision.

The role of the IFR Appeals Panel is to determine whether the IFR Panel has followed its own procedures, has properly considered the evidence presented to it and has come to a reasonable decision upon the evidence. The IFR Appeals Panel shall not have power to authorise funding for the requested treatment but shall have the right to make recommendations to the IFR Panel.

Should you or your Health Professional remain dissatisfied with the IFR Appeals Panel decision, the matter may be pursued through the NHS Complaints Procedure. You can do this by contacting: complaintservice.snccg@nhs.net telephone 01603 595857.

Your Information

All Individual Funding Requests will be reviewed by AGEM CSU on behalf of the CCG as the statutory body responsible for funding decisions. The application form and any other supporting information supplied may therefore be shared with the CCG or other trusted organisations (those that have achieved or can demonstrate a high level of confidentiality with regards to the information you provide) legitimately acting on behalf of the CCG. Personal information may be retained only for the purposes of the Individual Funding Request and, in some cases, may be used for invoicing and payment reconciliation and the patient's medical records may be used for the purposes of quality audit which will be completed by a Health Professional. Anonymised information (information which has the identifiable information removed so it cannot identify you) may also be shared as part of CCG reporting processes.

Your Health Professional will request your consent for information about your case to be used to process the application. They will also explain the funding process to you and will inform you of any funding decision made, including your right of appeal, if appropriate.

How to contact us

If you have any questions about the information contained in this leaflet, please contact the IFR Manager at AGEM Commissioning Support Unit on 01603 257122.

Further Information

More details on how the CSU and the CCG uses information is available on their websites. Each organisation website has information which describes the various purposes for which they collect and use information.

<http://www.greatyarmouthandwaveneyccg.nhs.uk/>

<http://www.southnorfolkccg.nhs.uk/>

<http://www.northnorfolkccg.nhs.uk/>

<http://www.norwichccg.nhs.uk/>

<http://www.westnorfolkccg.nhs.uk/>