

## Will the NHS fund my treatment?

### Information for patients on how Individual Funding Requests (IFRs) are considered by the NHS in the North East of England and Cumbria

#### Funding for health services

Healthcare is changing. In the last 15 years, there have been big advances in medical knowledge and technology, and the development of increasingly sophisticated and specialist treatments and procedures. This has allowed more services to be provided in GP practices and community-settings, while hospitals increasingly focus on the most seriously ill patients.

Health is changing too. People are living longer and have different conditions and health needs: dementia, obesity and alcohol-related disease have become major issues, and more people have long-term health problems that require ongoing support and management.

The need and demand for healthcare exceeds the budget that is available to the NHS every year, so there is an increasing need to use resources effectively and efficiently. The NHS must achieve the very best health outcomes for patients within the available budget.

If the NHS is to ensure the best outcomes for patients, maintain and improve the quality of care, and ensure people receive the latest treatments, it needs to make safe, effective healthcare treatments its priority.

#### Who decides if my request is funded?

Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are the organisations that are responsible for the planning, choosing and buying of the majority of local NHS services for local people. This is known as 'commissioning'.

Led by local GPs, doctors and nurses, it's the CCG's job to ensure that the right local services are in place to meet the health needs of the local population.

Like all public authorities, CCGs have to operate within the budget it receives. As a result, some treatments are not routinely funded, meaning that difficult decisions have to be made for people who request treatment that are an exception to the usual rules that apply,

This leaflet aims to give you a brief summary of the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process.

## Why does my GP or consultant have to apply for IFR for me?

An IFR is a request to fund healthcare that currently falls outside the treatments and care routinely provided by the NHS.

The request may be for a service, a piece of equipment or a specific treatment or medicine. Your GP or consultant might consider that you have a condition that needs treatment where:

- There is no national agreement to routinely provide a type of healthcare; OR
- It has been decided by your CCG that a treatment cannot be routinely funded; OR
- An individual has a specific healthcare problem

## What is the referral process?

- The clinician (usually your GP or consultant) will submit an electronic funding request using an online system
- The online system details the clinical criteria you need to meet for funding to be approved
- If you do not meet the clinical criteria your clinical representative would need to say if you have any exceptional **clinical** circumstances

## How are decisions made?

- All the information and evidence provided by your clinical representative is reviewed against criteria in place for that specific treatment
- This review is carried out by a GP from your local area and sometimes with a consultant in public health to provide specialist clinical advice. This process is supported by the IFR Team.
- Once the review has taken place and a decision has been made, an email is sent to your clinical representative. They can then log on to the online system for the outcome of the request, and the reason for the decision.
- Where funding has been supported, your clinical representative should make the necessary arrangements for you to receive treatment
- If a decision is not reached during the review, and it is considered that there may be exceptional clinical circumstances presented, then the request can be taken to an IFR Panel for consideration

## Panel – first stage

- At the panel meeting the case is presented.
- The panel will consist of a range of GPs representing local areas and clinical advisors.
- The panel is chaired by a lay member of the CCG. A lay member, is a member of the public who sits on a board or panel to act as an advocate for public interests.
- The panel considers if your clinical representative has demonstrated that:
  - you are significantly different to the general population of patients with the condition in question
  - you are likely to gain significantly more benefit from the treatment or care than might be normally expected
- The panel may decide that expert advice or further specific information from clinicians other than your GP or Consultant is needed to be able to make a decision. If this happens, your clinical representative will be notified of this following the panel meeting, and advising that the case will be dealt with once the information has been received
- If the panel agree to support the request, a letter is sent to your clinical representative advising them to make the necessary arrangements for you to receive the treatment.
- If the panel decide not to support the request it will be declined and the reasons for this will be provided to your clinical representative

## Panel – reconsideration

- Sometimes there could be information that has not been provided by your clinical representative, or there is new information not presented to the panel previously which can be submitted for the panel to reconsider.
- Reconsideration of requests will only take place where significant new evidence and/or information can be provided.

## Panel – Appeal

- Your clinical representative can appeal a decision if they feel that the process has not been followed correctly. This will be considered by an Appeals Panel who has not been previously involved in the process
- The Appeals Panel cannot change the decision, but can refer the matter back to the IFR Panel for further consideration if it feels this is appropriate
- If you do not want to appeal, or there is no new information, you could enter a complaint via the Complaints Team by email at [necsu.complaints@nhs.net](mailto:necsu.complaints@nhs.net) or

by calling 0191 374 4218. The only matters that will be addressed within the NHS complaints procedure are whether the process was fair and unbiased and whether the policy was appropriately applied

## Who will be able to see my personal information?

- Throughout the process, only those people who are involved in processing your IFR or making a decision about your application will be able to access your personal information
- The process is governed by the data protection act and NHS standards on how we protect patient confidentiality
- When the request is considered by a panel they only have the relevant clinical information; they do not have any of your personal information – this is removed before the panel process starts

## Where can I get further information?

- If you have a query regarding your treatment or the information provided by your clinical representative, you will need to contact them directly
- In all cases, it is always best to discuss your clinical condition and the options that are available with your doctor.

### On behalf of:

- NHS Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgfield Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS Hartlepool & Stockton-on-Tees Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS North Durham Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS North Tyne Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS South Tees Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS South Tyne Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group