

Will the NHS fund your treatment?

This leaflet explains how your local NHS considers requests for treatments that may not generally be available

Berkshire East Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) receive money from the Government to pay for healthcare for everyone registered with a GP in the Slough, Bracknell, Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead areas. Their job is to get best value for this money by spending it wisely on your behalf.

Demand for healthcare is growing, but there is only a set amount of money available to spend so difficult decisions may have to be made.

The priority is paying for those medicines and treatments that are proven to work well, can demonstrate they improve peoples' health and offer good value for money. As a result there are some treatments we do not normally pay for.

This leaflet explains how your GP or consultant can ask, on your behalf, for treatments that are not normally funded on the NHS. This is called an Individual Funding Request (IFR).

The process is managed on behalf of Berkshire East CCGs by the IFR team within the Central Southern Commissioning Support Unit.

How do we decide what treatments to fund?

We endeavour to make these difficult choices in a way which is fair and consistent.

Decision making is based on guidance from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) www.nice.co.uk and other professional groups, and the process based on our IFR policy.

What happens if a treatment is not normally available?

Your GP or consultant may approach your CCG to request funding for a treatment that is not routinely available for one of three reasons:

1. You have a medical condition that is rare and for that reason it is not covered by your CCGs policies **or**
2. Your CCG has a threshold for treatment of your medical condition and you do not meet the criteria, but your GP feels there are exceptional clinical circumstances **or**
3. Your CCG does not normally fund the treatment but your GP feels there are exceptional clinical circumstances (i.e. something that makes you significantly clinically different to other patients and likely to gain significantly more benefit than other patients who would not be approved for funding; the fact that a treatment is likely to be effective is not, in itself, a basis for exceptionality).

Your GP would need to demonstrate that any of the above apply in order to submit an Individual Funding Request (IFR). When an IFR application is received, the IFR team check that there is enough information included on which to come to a decision. If more information is needed, it will be requested from your GP by the IFR team.

The request is then 'triaged' to check whether it is appropriate for consideration by the Clinical Triage Panel or Case Review Committee – whichever is deemed appropriate. Through triage most cases can be assessed against existing criteria or pathways.

Only where exceptionality or rarity is demonstrated and no 'similar patients' could be envisaged in the year, would a request be appropriate for consideration by the Case Review Committee.

The Clinical Triage Panel meets weekly or bi-weekly depending on the number of cases being considered. The Case Review Committee meets monthly, where necessary, and includes medical specialists trained in the evaluation of clinical evidence. To ensure a fair process, all cases are confidential and anonymous.

Patient Engagement

If you wish, you can provide a written quality of life statement relating to your Individual Funding Request (IFR) application. This will be added to your case file and reviewed by the Panel and/or Committee.

Social and personal circumstances unfortunately cannot be presented to the Panel and/or Committee as they can only make decisions based on health needs.

How does the IFR Panel and Committee make individual decisions?

IFR Panel and Committee members have the skills and knowledge to assess the clinical information and evidence that your GP has provided. They make sure that decisions are fair, consistent and equitable. The Case Review Committee consists of a mix of clinically qualified members and managers as well as a lay member (non-staff).

The Committee is able to approve funding for the treatment only if all four conditions below are met:

1. Rarity or exceptionality is demonstrated;
2. There is sufficient evidence that the treatment is likely to be clinically effective for the patient;
3. The cost is justified in the light of the benefits to the named patient;
4. It is not a request for a service development.

What happens if the IFR Panel and/or Case Review Committee does not agree to fund the request?

If you or your GP or thinks the decision was not made according to the proper process, the IFR team should be notified in writing, giving a clear reason for the appeal, within one calendar month of the date of the letter giving you the decision. This will be acknowledged, and together you and your GP will have 20 days to provide further information.

Appeals must be on the basis of procedure and if you feel one of the following applies:

- The decision was illegal - the refusal of the request was not an option that could be lawfully taken;
- There were substantial and/or serious errors in procedure in the way in which the process was conducted;
- The decision to refuse funding for the requested treatment was a decision which no reasonable Committee could have reached on the evidence before them.

To ensure a fair process, all appeals will be considered by a separate Appeal Panel consisting of a mix of clinically qualified members and managers as well as a lay member (non-staff) who have not considered the case previously.

If the Appeal Panel decides that one of these principles has been breached, the funding request is passed back to the Committee to be reconsidered.

The Appeal Panel will not consider new evidence. If new clinical evidence becomes available your GP should send in the additional clinical information to the IFR team in order for the case to be reconsidered by the Case Review Committee.

If you wish to discuss the outcome of your funding request, please speak with your GP who will discuss with you other possible treatment options.