INDIVIDUAL FUNDING REQUESTS

Information for patients registered with
NHS Mansfield & Ashfield Clinical Commissioning Group
NHS Newark & Sherwood Clinical Commissioning Group
NHS Nottingham North & East Clinical Commissioning Group
NHS Nottingham West Clinical Commissioning Group
NHS Rushcliffe Clinical Commissioning Group

This leaflet tells you what happens when you and your GP or Consultant think that you might benefit from a treatment that is not usually available on the NHS.
The five Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG’s) within Nottinghamshire County have a duty to spend the money they receive from the Government in a fair and efficient way, taking into account the health needs of their local community.

As there is only a set amount of money available to spend we sometimes have to make difficult decisions about which treatments are routinely provided.

In some circumstances, your clinician (usually a GP or consultant) may think you have exceptional clinical circumstances and may benefit from a treatment which is not routinely provided.

Requests for such treatments must be made through an Individual Funding Request (IFR). The same IFR policy is used across Nottinghamshire to ensure we treat patients consistently and fairly no matter where they live.

**When can an Individual Funding Request (IFR) be made?**

There are two situations when it is possible to make an IFR:

- When the CCG does not have a policy stating who is eligible for the treatment that is being requested
- When the CCG has a policy - but your clinical circumstances do not meet the policy’s definition of who is eligible for the treatment.

In either circumstance, your GP or consultant will need to demonstrate that your clinical circumstances are ‘exceptional’ and justify treating you when others would not get the treatment.

**What does ‘exceptional’ mean?**

In deciding whether your clinical circumstances are ‘exceptional’ the IFR Team on behalf of the CCG’s will consider two questions:

- Are there any clinical features that make you significantly different from others who have the same clinical condition?
- Are you likely to obtain significantly more clinical benefit from receiving the desired treatment when compared to other patients with the same condition?

Social factors are not usually considered as part of the IFR process.

**Who can make an Individual Funding Request?**

If your GP or Consultant agrees that a treatment would be of benefit to you, and that there are no alternative treatments or services available for your condition, they can then make a request to the IFR Team on your behalf but only if they consider your individual circumstances are exceptional.
Requests are made on a form which asks questions that allow your GP or Consultant to describe your personal clinical circumstances, how they think the treatment will specifically benefit you, the evidence that it is both safe and effective, the cost of the treatment and how commonly your condition occurs in the community.

How is an IFR managed?
On behalf of your CCG the IFR Team follows the same procedure for every IFR to ensure we act fairly. All requests are treated in strict confidence and we remove your personal details from all paperwork.

When we receive a request, a check is made to ensure no service or treatment exists locally which your GP or Consultant is not aware of. If treatment is available then we will inform your GP or Consultant so they can discuss it with you.

If there is no service or treatment then the request is screened by a Consultant in Public Health (or their deputy) and the IFR Manager to decide whether the conditions for being considered ‘exceptional’ have been met. A decision will normally be sent to your GP or consultant within ten working days (copied to you and your GP) unless the form is incomplete or more information is needed.

What can I do if my request does not get past the screening stage?
If your clinical circumstances are not considered to be exceptional you have the right to lodge a complaint. The complaints process will not review whether the screening decision was correct, but will check that the IFR policy was correctly followed.

How does the IFR Panel work?
If the screening team agrees that there are grounds to consider your request as exceptional, your case will be considered by the IFR Panel on behalf of your CCG within 20 working days of the screening decision, unless the clinical circumstances indicate that a quicker decision is needed.
The panel is made up of health professionals, lay members and CCG managers who consider the request against an agreed set of criteria to ensure the decision making is fair, consistent and transparent.

The panel reviews whether the treatment is likely to be beneficial and is safe (known as ‘clinical effectiveness’), how much it will cost to achieve the health benefit that is predicted (known as ‘cost effectiveness’) and the cost of the treatment in relation to the total CCG budget for providing health care (known as ‘affordability’).

How will I find out the outcome of my request?
The panel will write to your GP or Consultant informing them of the panel’s decision within five working days of the panel meeting giving the reasons for the decision that was reached. You will also be sent a copy of the letter.

What can I do if the request is not funded?
In the first instance you should speak to your GP or consultant. You and your GP or Consultant can ask for a review of the IFR Panel’s decision on the following grounds:

- The IFR Panel failed to follow due process and, as a result, the decision reached by the panel was different from the one that would be reached if due process had been followed.
- The IFR Panel did not take into account, or weigh appropriately, all the relevant evidence when making its decision.

The request for a review must be made in writing to the Chief Officer of the CCG within 20 working days of the date of the IFR Panel’s decision letter. The CCG may accept requests outside this time limit if there are good reasons for the delay.

If the CCG does accept the grounds put forward then a Review Panel will be convened. To ensure a fair process, all reviews are considered by different people from those who made the original IFR decision.

If the CCG does not accept the grounds put forward for a review, a letter will be sent to the referring GP or Consultant explaining the reasons. The Review Panel will not consider new clinical evidence. If new evidence becomes available your GP or Consultant should make a new Individual Funding Request submission.

The Review Panel cannot overturn the IFR Panel decision. However, if the Review Panel decides that the decision was not reached correctly then it can instruct the IFR Review Panel to reconsider your case.
Can I, or a clinician, attend the IFR or Review Panel in person?
No. Only IFR Panel or Review Panel members may be present. However, all written evidence will be carefully considered before decisions are made.

What if the Review supports the original decision?
You have no further right of appeal through the IFR procedure but you may make a complaint about the handling of your request by the IFR Team on behalf of your respective CCG at any time. Details of where to submit your complaint can be found on the back page of this leaflet.

What if there is new information I think the IFR panel should have been aware of?
Your GP or consultant, in discussion with you, can submit new information regarding your medical condition or the treatment you are requesting at any time. If the Consultant in Public Health (or their deputy) and the IFR Manager consider that this information might have changed the decision that was previously reached by the IFR Panel then the case will be reconsidered following the process outlined above.

Do I have to pay a fee to make an Individual Funding Request or an appeal against a decision?
There are no fees payable for any part of the Individual Funding Request process.

To whom should I address my complaint?
If you live in the North of the County (Mansfield & Ashfield or Newark & Sherwood), your complaint should be submitted in writing to:

Complaints Manager
NHS Mansfield & Ashfield, NHS Newark and Sherwood NHS Clinical Commissioning Group
Freepost RSST-SCJJ-SRB
Balderton Primary Care Centre
Lowfield Lane
Balderton
Nottinghamshire
NG24 3HJ

Tel: 01636 594838
Email: Complaints.north@newarkandsherwoodccg.nhs.uk
If you live in the **South of the County** (Nottingham North & East, Nottingham West, & Rushcliffe), your complaint should be submitted in writing to:

Complaints Team  
NHS Nottingham North & East, NHS Nottingham West and NHS Rushcliffe  
Clinical Commissioning Group  
FREEPOST RTCH-KZJE-JULT  
Patient Advice and Liaison Service  
NHS Nottinghamshire County  
Civic Centre  
Arnot Hill Park  
Arnold  
Nottingham  
NG5 6LU  
Tel: 0800 0283693 – Option 2  
Email: Complaints.south@nottspct.nhs.uk

**Where can I get further advice and support?**  
The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can offer help and support and can also provide you with a copy of the IFR Policy. Please see the contact details for PALS below. If you wish to find out about the progress of an IFR request which is already being processed by the IFR Team please contact the IFR Manager on 01623 673209.

**Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**  
If you are a relative or carer and would like to get help on the spot, PALS provides a confidential advice and support service that will help you sort out any concerns you may have about the care provided by the NHS and guide you through the different services available.

PALS North of the County  
0800 0283693 – Option 1  
PALS South of the County  
0800 0283693 – Option 2
A copy of the IFR Policy can be downloaded from:

NHS Mansfield & Ashfield CCG - North
www.mansfieldandashfieldccg.nhs.uk

NHS Newark & Sherwood CCG - North
www.newarkandsherwood.nhs.uk

NHS Nottingham North & East CCG - South
www.nottinghamnortheastccg.nhs.uk

NHS Nottingham West CCG - South
www.nottinghamwestccg.nhs.uk

NHS Rushcliffe CCG – South
www.rushcliffeccg.nhs.uk