

Individual Funding Requests (IFR) A Patient's Guide

Your doctor thinks that you would benefit from a treatment that is not usually funded for others and has asked that a special request is made to fund this treatment for you. This is called an Individual Funding Request (IFR).

Why is this treatment not funded for everyone?

Your healthcare is paid for by the National Health Service (NHS). The budget for healthcare is given to various organisations to pay for your treatment. Locally, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is responsible for funding healthcare treatments for the population for which it is responsible.

CCGs are allocated sums of money and have to make decisions to use the money for the healthcare needs of the population that they provide healthcare for. Unfortunately, there is not enough money to fund every possible type of operation and procedure so decisions have to be made as to what will be available for everyone (an example of this is funding treatment in Accident and Emergency) and what has to be restricted; an example of this is breast reduction surgery where not everyone who wants a breast reduction will be able to have this surgery.

Why would special funding be considered for me?

This could be for two reasons:

1. Because you have a rare medical condition and for that reason it is not covered by your CCG
2. Because your CCG does not normally fund the treatment but your doctor feels there are 'exceptional clinical circumstances' i.e.:
 - You are significantly different from the population of patients with the same condition at the same stage of the condition;

And

- You are likely to gain significantly more benefit than might be normally expected for similar patients at the same stage of the condition.

THE PROCESS

The application form

- Your doctor will complete an application form for you. (He/she may do this with you present or may do it after you have left. If you want to see the form before it is sent off ask him/her).

- The form has some details about you, such as your name, age, gender, address and NHS number. It also has details of the clinical condition that you have seen your doctor about and the request that he/she is asking for funding for.

Discussing the form with you

- It is important that your doctor makes you aware that in order for your funding decision to be made that some NHS staff and public health consultants may have access to your personal details and that in order to make a decision about your funding that they may need to contact other health professionals (for example your GP or hospital consultant).
- The application form has a box for you to sign to confirm that you are aware that some people may have access to your details and that you agree to this. If you are unable to sign the form your doctor must confirm that he/she has discussed this with you and you understand what this means.
- Your doctor should also make it clear that the application is for an individual request and that whilst your request might be approved it might also be declined.

Administration of the process

Once the form has been completed it is sent to South London Commissioning Support Unit IFR Team who manage the IFR process on behalf of the South London CCGs.

South West London	South East London
Covers Croydon, Kingston, Merton, Sutton, Richmond, Wandsworth CCGs	Covers Bexley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark CCGs
Email: slcsu.ifrswlondon@nhs.net	Email: slcsu.selifr@nhs.net
Telephone: 020 3668 1222	Telephone: 020 3049 4154

Considering your application

- Your application will be considered by a panel of professionals including: a GP, a pharmacist, a public health consultant and a commissioner. The panel may also include a lay person who is not an NHS employee.
- Panel members have the skills and knowledge to assess the information and evidence that your doctor has provided and must make sure that decisions that they make are fair, consistent and equitable.
- When the panel has made a decision on your application a letter will be sent to the doctor who submitted the application for you. Unless you have said that you don't want to receive correspondence we will also send a copy of the decision to you.
- The decision letter should usually be received by your doctor within six weeks of the application being sent off

What happens if the panel does not agree to fund the request?

- If your application was declined and you or your doctor still think that the CCG should fund your treatment and that the panel did not make the decision properly, your doctor can make an appeal on your behalf.

- He/she needs to advise the IFR team in writing, giving a clear reason, within one calendar month of the date on the letter giving the decision. The request must clearly state the grounds for appeal.
- This will be acknowledged and reviewed by the service.
- If your doctor appeals on your behalf he/she is asking another panel to look at your case. The appeal panel cannot change the outcome of the decision, but if they don't think that the panel considered all the evidence that they were provided with then they can ask the panel to review your application again.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Can I apply for funding myself?

No, sorry, this is not possible. All funding applications have to be submitted by either your GP or hospital consultant.

I want a new treatment, can I have it?

If you have found out about a new treatment for your condition and think it would be suitable for you, you must discuss it with the person treating you. This may be your GP or hospital consultant. If he/she agrees that it would benefit you and it is currently not funded by the CCG then he/she can apply for funding for you.

Can I provide any evidence to support the application for my funding?

Yes, you can. You are able to provide a written statement of your clinical circumstances if you wish. Please let your doctor know that you would like a letter from you to be sent with the application form. This will be added to your case file and reviewed by the panel.

Will I have to pay anything if the funding is agreed for my treatment?

If the panel agree to fund your treatment the NHS will pay for it. You will not need to pay anything.

Could I pay for some of my treatment so the NHS doesn't have to pay for it all?

No. This is known as 'co-funding' and is not allowed as people may pay for some of their treatment in order to gain an advantage over people who are unable to pay and this would not be fair.

How long do I have to wait after the funding is agreed?

Once funding is agreed your GP or consultant will make arrangements for you to have the treatment. How long you have to wait after the decision may depend on a number of factors including waiting lists, but your GP or consultant will be able to advise you.

I have just moved from another part of the country to south London and have to have a funding request sent for the drugs that I am currently on. Why is this?

Some drugs are not approved for all conditions which they are used for. If the CCG where you have moved from funded your drugs, but they are not funded in south London then your doctor would have to send in an application to the CCG you have moved to in order to allow you to continue with the same drugs.

My young son's doctor has asked for a funding request for him he is too young to understand. Will the doctor let me know what happens and involve me in the application?

If you are a parent or guardian of a child whose doctor has requested a funding decision on his behalf you must give consent for his information to be seen and the letter will be copied to you

I have been asked to provide photographs of the skin on my tummy for a tummy tuck application, but I am too embarrassed. Does this mean my application will not be agreed?

When an IFR Panel asks for photographs they always state if the patient is willing to send them. If you really feel that you can't send any then the panel will take that into consideration, but if you are able to send some then that makes it much easier for the panel to be able to make a decision.