
Individual Funding Requests (IFR)

A brief guide for patients and clinicians



Information for patients and clinicians making applications for treatments not routinely funded by Bedfordshire CCG

Like all NHS organisations, Bedfordshire CCG (BCCG) has limited resources and is responsible for using these in the most effective way. The treatments it routinely funds are those which are the safest and most effective, and which give the best value in terms of health gains for the available funding.

Treatments which BCCG doesn't routinely fund are those likely to bring little or no health benefits - sometimes known as 'procedures of low clinical value'. Examples might be breast augmentation, or skin tag removal, since these procedures would usually address cosmetic rather than medical concerns. Treatments initiated within the private sector are not routinely funded or extended.

Sometimes a drug might be known to be of some benefit but be prohibitively expensive. Sometimes BCCG will fund a treatment for a particular 'patient group' - that is, patients with similar conditions and symptoms - but not for another patient group with less advanced symptoms, or a different condition.

Why does BCCG have an Individual Funding Request (IFR) policy?

Patients' medical and other circumstances vary widely, and sometimes patients want to apply for a treatment which BCCG does not routinely fund, or does not routinely fund for their patient group. In addition, sometimes a condition will be so rare, or a treatment so new, that BCCG does not have a commissioning policy on it. For these reasons, BCCG has an Individual Funding Request (IFR) Policy, under which these applications can be made.

[This leaflet gives just a brief summary of the IFR process: sources of further key information, including the Policy itself, are listed on the back page.](#)

How does someone make an Individual Funding Request?

Patients should first discuss this with their GP or other clinician, such as a hospital consultant. The GP or other clinician will then apply, in confidence, to BCCG, setting out the grounds for the request.

The application should set out clearly and concisely (such as by use of bullet points) the problems the patient faces arising from their medical problem and why they should receive treatment which is not available to others in their patient group. Patients can, if they wish, write a letter in support of the application. Similarly, consultants not making the applications themselves might wish to contribute a supporting letter.

The key point for anyone making an application to remember is the need to demonstrate the *exceptionality* of the case - ie, why this patient should receive treatment which is outside BCCG's current funding arrangements.

Where the request is for a drug or medication it must be submitted on the IFR Application Form (found annexed to the IFR Policy). Other requests can be on that form or by letter. The application should be sent to BCCG's IFR team (see back page of this leaflet for contact details). It is the responsibility of the requestor to demonstrate adherence to BCCG criteria and to submit all appropriate evidence - letters of support, copies of case studies, research papers, correspondence between clinicians, etc - with the application.

The requesting clinician should also state the level of urgency of the case.

What about confidentiality and impartiality?

The application will need to contain the patient's initials, NHS number and date of birth in order to ensure safe and accurate identification. The IFR team will make sure that the documentation is anonymised when presented to the panel, to ensure impartiality and patient confidentiality. The requestor should facilitate this by ensuring that the patient's name and other identifiable details are not repeated throughout the supporting documentation.

What happens when a request is received by the CCG?

It goes through an initial screening stage. This checks that the application has been correctly identified as an IFR, and that all essential information has been included. If it doesn't, the IFR team will contact the clinician who submitted it, and if it does, the application will go to the next stage. Any urgent requests will be expedited.

The Individual Funding Panel stage

The Individual Funding panel is chaired by GP Commissioners and meets at least twice a month. It can accept or reject a request, or defer it while it gathers further information. The IFR team informs the clinician who made the application of the panel's decision and of the reasons for the decision. It is the clinician's responsibility to inform the patient of the outcome.

If the request is refused, it is possible to appeal?

Yes. The key point for anyone making an appeal to remember is that it is not simply a 'second chance' to submit the same request: the clinician needs to demonstrate - for example, with new information - why the decision should be overturned and, where an appeal is relying on grounds of exceptionality, these must be clearly stated and evidenced. Again, please bear in mind that all documentation will need to be anonymised. As with the initial request, the patient can add a supporting letter.

The Individual Funding Appeal Panel stage

The Appeal Panel meets at least every two months, is chaired by a member of the CCG's governing body (or designated deputy), and reports to the governing body. The Appeals Panel can confirm the decision, reject it, or defer it pending further information. The IFR team will inform the person making the request of the panel's decision, within twenty working days, and include the reasons for the decision.

After the Individual Funding Appeal Panel stage

If, when the Appeal Panel stage has been completed, the requestor feels that their request was not administered correctly or in a timely manner, they have the right to complain to BCCG. Where a requestor has no such concerns but is simply dissatisfied with the Appeal Panel decision, they can complain direct to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (www.ombudsman.org.uk).

Sources of further information

The following can all be viewed via the IFR page of the CCG's website at:
www.bedfordshireccg.nhs.uk

Individual Funding Request Policy
Individual Funding Request Application Form
Guidance on Procedures of Low Clinical Value