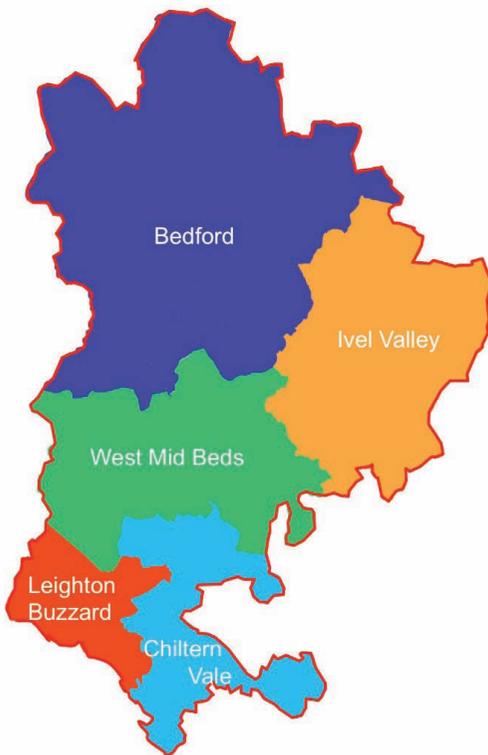


Individual Funding Requests (IFR)

A brief guide for patients and clinicians



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

Introduction

The NHS receives a fixed budget to buy and provide health services for the entire population. The treatments it routinely funds are those regarded as safe and effective, and give the best value in terms of health improvements for the available funding.

Treatments which BCCG does not routinely fund are those likely to bring little or no health benefit, sometimes known as 'procedures of low clinical value'. Examples might be breast augmentation, or skin tag removal, since these typically address cosmetic rather than medical concerns. Treatments initiated in 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 doctors want to apply for a treatment which BCCG does not routinely fund, or does not routinely fund for their patient group. Some conditions are so rare, or a treatment so new, that BCCG does not have a commissioning policy on it.

How does someone make an Individual Funding Request?

Patients should first discuss this with their GP or other clinician, such as a hospital consultant to confirm whether the request meets guidance. If appropriate, the clinician will then apply, in confidence, to the IFR Service setting out the grounds for the request.

The application should set out clearly and concisely (such as by use of bullet points) the health needs the patient has arising from their medical problem and why they should receive treatment which is not available to others with a similar condition. Patients can, if they wish, write a letter in support of the application. Any clinician not making the application themselves might wish to contribute a supporting letter.

All applications must demonstrate why the case is exceptional for 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 available from www.fundingrequests.ccsu.nhs.uk/policies-bedfordshire/. All other requests are to be provided either on the appropriate form or by letter.

It is the responsibility of the requestor to show that it meets BCCG criteria and to submit all appropriate evidence - letters of support, case studies, research papers, correspondence between clinicians - with the application. The requesting clinician should also state the level of urgency.

What about confidentiality and impartiality?

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

What happens when a request is received by the IFR Service?

It goes through an initial screening stage by the IFR Service to check that the application has been correctly identified as an IFR, and that all essential information has been included. If it doesn't, the IFR Service will contact the clinician who submitted it. If appropriate, the application will go to the next stage which is Clinical Triage for review by GP commissioner, Pharmaceutical Advisor (drugs cases) and an IFR Service representative. If the case is complex it would then go on to the Case Review Panel.

The Case Review Panel

The Case Review Panel is chaired by a member of the CCG's Governing Body. It can accept or decline a request, or defer while further information is requested. The IFR Service informs the clinician who made the application of the reasons and outcome of the panel's decision. It is the clinician's responsibility to inform the patient of the outcome.

If the request is approved, what happens next?

Applications are usually received from either a GP or consultant who will be informed in writing. The patient will then be sent an appointment, either to see a consultant or for treatment.

The GP is always informed of the decision and the patient can speak with the GP at any time to understand the process further or discuss options.

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

Appeals can be made for two reasons:

1. The clinician can present new information for consideration. Where the appeal relies on being an exception, this must be clearly stated and evidenced. All documentation must be anonymised and the patient may add a supporting letter.
2. The clinician feels that the CCG has not followed its own process properly and would like the way in which the decision has been made to be independently reviewed. Appeals must be lodged with the CSU IFR Service, in writing, within six weeks from notification of the decision.

How appeals will be considered

The Case Review Panel will consider appeals on the grounds of new information being made available.

NHS East and North Hertfordshire's IFR team independently reviews appeals which claim due process was not followed. If a review finds in favour of such a claim, it will be referred to the Case Review Panel, but this does not necessarily mean the outcome will be any different.

After the appeals stage

If the person who submitted the IFR feels that it was not administered correctly or in a timely manner, they have the right to complain to BCCG Complaints Service. If the requestor is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they can put it in writing to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman www.ombudsman.org.uk.

Contact information

Policies, applications and process can be viewed at:

www.fundingrequests.ccsu.nhs.uk/policies-bedfordshire/

IFR requests or appeals should be sent by email to:

Beds.IFRrequests@nhs.net

Complaints

bccg.complaints@nhs.net

Tel: 01525 864430 ext. 5947 *or*

Complaints Department
Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
Suite 1, Capability House
Silsoe, BEDFORD
Beds. MK45 4HR