

Individual Funding Requests

A guide for patients

The NHS has a duty to spend the money it receives from the Government in a fair way, taking into account the health needs of the whole community.

The local healthcare commissioners have a legal duty to provide health services for patients registered with NHS GPs within their geographical area with the fixed amount of money they have received from the Government. This means that some hard choices have to be made and not all treatments can be provided by the NHS. Treatments that are limited are shown in local Clinical Commissioning Policies.

However, the local healthcare commissioners know that there will always be times when a patient would benefit from a particular treatment not usually funded by the NHS.

To apply for this treatment, an Individual Funding Request can be made.

What is an individual funding request?

An individual funding request (or IFR for short) can be made by the clinician treating you if they believe that because your clinical circumstances are exceptional, you may receive benefit from a treatment or service that isn't routinely offered by the NHS.

Why are some treatments not routinely offered by the NHS?

There may be some cases where a treatment is not available because there is limited evidence for how well it works or because it is very high cost and doesn't offer good value for money for taxpayers and the NHS.

Who can make an individual funding request?

An individual funding request can only be made by a clinician. An application cannot be accepted directly from a patient.

Your clinician will need to explain why your clinical circumstances are exceptional and show all available clinical evidence for why they believe you would benefit more from the treatment than other patients with the same condition. Please note: Non-medical or social factors are not considered as a basis for exceptionality.

Who considers the application?

Your application with the clinical evidence will be considered by independent clinicians who have not been involved in your treatment. If your case is particularly complex it may be discussed at a local commissioner's IFR Panel. The local IFR Panel is made up of locally appointed doctors and is led by an independent chair. It is responsible for assessing each application in detail and making a decision.

All panel members carry out regular continuous professional development to help maintain their skills in assessing individual funding requests fairly and thoroughly. These decisions are difficult to make but the aim is to make these in a fair, consistent and equitable way for the local population they serve.

How long will an application take?

When all the required information is submitted, it can take up to 40 working days from receiving an application to a decision, but it can often be sooner.

Your referring clinician will be advised of the outcome of the funding request and you will then have an opportunity to speak with them to discuss next steps.

What do I do if I disagree with the decision?

If the IFR panel hasn't supported funding for a requested treatment, or if it has approved a treatment subject to conditions and you don't agree, you should speak to your clinician who may be able to request a review of the decision.

What happens if my situation changes?

If your situation changes or more clinical evidence becomes available about the effectiveness of your treatment your clinician may also be able to submit additional information which will be considered.

If you have any queries regarding this process, please contact your treating clinician.