



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

Individual funding request (IFR) Draft guide for patients and service users

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What is an individual funding request?

An individual funding request, or IFR, can be made by your hospital consultant if they believe that a particular treatment or service that is licensed but is not routinely offered by the health service is the best treatment for you, given your individual clinical circumstances.

Why are some treatments not routinely offered by the health service?

The vast majority of treatments and services that patients need are offered routinely by the health service. However there may be some cases where a decision has been taken not to offer the treatment to groups of patients with a particular clinical need. This may be because there is limited evidence for how well the treatment works in those patients or because the treatment is very expensive and doesn't offer good value for money for the health service.

There will also be some circumstances where a treatment is still very new and a decision hasn't been taken yet on whether it should be offered routinely by the health service.

When can an individual funding request be made?

An IFR can be made for a treatment that is not routinely offered by the health service when a hospital consultant believes that their patient is clearly different to other patients with the same condition or where their patient might benefit from the treatment in a different way to other patients. This is known as "exceptional clinical circumstances".

As an example, dental implants are not routinely offered by the health service, however if a patient could not use their arms due to a disability and needed dental implants to hold a pen so they could write, this might be considered an exceptional case.

Hospital consultants can also make a request for funding where a decision hasn't yet been taken on whether a treatment should be offered in the health service and where their patient's condition is likely to get a lot worse very quickly and without any prospect of recovery, unless they receive the treatment. This is known as "critical clinical urgency".

Where a request is made on grounds of critical clinical urgency, the hospital consultant will need to show that the evidence for use of the treatment is strong and that the treatment is likely to represent good value for money compared with other treatments provided routinely by the health service.

Your hospital consultant should explain to you why they believe that a treatment that is not routinely offered by the health service is the best treatment option for you.

Who can make an individual funding request?

Your hospital consultant will make the funding request on your behalf and will discuss the outcome with you. Individual funding requests cannot be accepted directly from patients.

Who considers the application?

Applications will firstly be checked to make sure the right information has been submitted. Your hospital consultant will be contacted if further information is needed. In most cases the application will then be considered by a regional scrutiny committee made up of clinicians who will not have been involved in your treatment. The committee also contains an independent lay (public) representative. All committee members have received training to enable them to assess IFRs fairly and thoroughly. Your personal details will be kept confidential. The committee will let your hospital consultant know the outcome of the funding request and you will also be sent a copy of the letter, usually via the clinician, who will discuss the outcome with you. If the application is unsuccessful then the letter will explain the reasons. When you next see your hospital consultant, they will discuss with you what other treatment options might be available.

How long will an application take?

In urgent cases, the committee will try to consider applications within 24 – 48 hours. In other cases, applications will usually be considered within one week.

How can I find out how my application is progressing?

The committee's administrators will keep in contact with your hospital consultant during the application process and let them know how the application is progressing and if there are any delays. You should therefore speak to your hospital consultant in the first instance.

You can also contact committee administrators directly for an update on your application. You can do this through the contact centre in a number of ways:

By telephone on: XXX

By email: XXX

By post: XXX

Please ensure you provide your full name, address and date of birth.

Where can I find more information?

Further information on IFR can be found on our website at www.XXX and NI Direct www.XXX.

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