

IFR Policy-Reference 2:

INDIVIDUAL FUNDING REQUEST (IFR) POLICY- GUIDANCE NOTES FOR CLINICIANS

1. How should I decide whether to make an Individual Funding Request (IFR)?

The criteria on who is eligible to be considered for an Individual Funding Request is consistent with national policy and supported by NHS Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (the ICB). The IFR Policy and process is available at: www.bedfordshirelutonandmiltonkeynes.icb.nhs.uk/what-we-do/individual-funding-requests/individual-funding-request-ifr-policy-process-and-resources/

The key consideration is whether the treatment that you wish to request for your individual patient meets the definitions of ‘exceptional’, ‘individual’ and ‘clinical exceptionality’ as defined in the IFR Policy.

2. What is meant by ‘clinical exceptionality’?

The ICB cannot fund requests that should be fairly applied to other patients who have similar clinical circumstances and who should rightly also be offered the treatment if your patient was to be approved. This would require the ICB to agree a new commissioning policy (or amend an existing one) setting out that the treatment was now available for a new group of patients and setting out how this group had been identified. Therefore, to meet the definition of ‘clinical exceptionality’ your patient must demonstrate that they are both:

- Significantly different clinically to the group of patients with the condition in question and at the same stage of progression of the condition

AND

- Likely to gain significantly more clinical benefit than others in the group of patients with the condition in question and at the same stage of progression of the condition

You must show that your patient is very different from others in a group of patients with the same condition/stage of the disease and has **clinical** features that mean that they will derive much more benefit from the treatment you are requesting.

2. Why are only clinical features taken into account?

As a central principle, the NHS does not make judgements about the worth of different individuals and seeks to treat everyone fairly and equitably. Consideration of non-clinical factors would bring in the concept of worth into clinical decision making. It is a core value of the NHS that treatments are equally available, or unavailable to all.

The ICB must make decisions fairly about funding treatments and not on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, or on social factors for example educational level, employment, social or personal circumstances, unless these directly affect the expected clinical benefit that an individual will derive from a treatment (for example the effect of the increasing age of a woman on fertility).

4. How do I apply for an IFR?

Only NHS clinicians can make an IFR application for treatment. The clinician requesting the IFR should be the clinician providing the care to the patient in connection with the IFR application. All requests must be made on the IFR application form which can be obtained electronically from the clinical system and is available on BLMK ICB's website at: www.bedfordshirelutonandmiltonkeynes.icb.nhs.uk/what-we-do/individual-funding-requests/individual-funding-request-ifr-policy-process-and-resources/ (Reference 3) and also from the IFR Service at: blmkicb.ifrservice@nhs.net

The IFR application form helps to ensure that all the necessary information is obtained to avoid delays in reaching a decision. It is the responsibility of the requesting clinician making the IFR to ensure that the application is completed accurately by seeking specialist information from other clinicians as required. The form should be returned electronically with all relevant information to the IFR Service secure mailbox blmkicb.ifrservice@nhs.net or uploaded onto the Blueteq system (if you have access).

5. How can I get advice on what to include when completing an IFR application form?

You can contact the IFR Service at blmkicb.ifrservice@nhs.net

6. Who will make the decision on whether the IFR is approved?

All new IFRs are administratively screened. If appropriate, the application will be Clinically Triaged by the IFR Service and a decision made as to whether 'clinical exceptionalality' has been demonstrated. If there is no evidence of exceptional circumstances (often because the patient is clearly part of a definable cohort) then the request is declined at this stage. You will be notified of the outcome of the decision and the reasons why the IFR application has not met the ICB's IFR Policy criteria. The IFR Service will ensure the patient's GP is provided with a copy. The requesting clinician is required to share the outcome of the decision with their patient.

If evidence of clinical exceptionality is presented, or if at Clinical Triage the clinicians are undecided whether the case is exceptional or not, then the case will progress to the ICB's Exceptional Cases Panel (the Panel) for consideration. The Panel will consist of a quorate membership to include members of the Board of the ICB, BLMK ICB GP Clinical Leads, Public Health representation and relevant commissioners. The Panel will determine whether there is a case for exceptionality and whether the intervention/treatment requested is safe and clinically and cost-effective.

7. How will I be informed of the ICB's Exceptional Cases Panel's decision?

If your request meets criteria and is being presented to the Panel, you will be informed of the date of the next Panel meeting. Following the Panel, the Chair will write to you outlining the decision of the Panel within five working days after the Panel meeting.

8. How will my patient be informed of whether the request has been approved?

As all correspondence presented to the Panel is anonymised, the requesting clinician is requested to share the decision with their patient. The IFR Service will ensure the patient's GP is provided with a copy of the decision.

9. Can either the patient, or a clinician involved in their care, attend the Exceptional Cases Panel?

No. The Exceptional Cases Panel will only consider the written evidence submitted so it is very important that all the evidence is presented on the IFR application form.

10. Can I or my patient appeal, against the decision?

There is no right to a formal appeal against the decision at the Clinical Triage stage of the process. However, the requesting clinician can submit additional information which may be considered as part of the Clinical Triage process.

Patients have the right to complain to the ICB if they remain dissatisfied with a policy or decision affecting their NHS healthcare or the process of the decision itself. The following link provides further information www.bedfordshirelutonandmiltonkeynes.icb.nhs.uk/contact-us/complaints-and-concerns/

A complaint will not overturn the decision at the Clinical Triage stage but will examine whether the IFR Policy was properly followed.

If the IFR has progressed to the Exceptional Cases Panel and is declined, you can appeal the decision. The IFR Service will arrange for the Appeal to be Clinically Triaged to ensure that no new information has been submitted at this stage which would need to be reconsidered in line with the IFR Process.

If grounds for an Appeal have been established, the Appeal will be considered by an external ICB's IFR Panel who will decide if the ICB followed the correct procedures and therefore reached a decision that was rational and based on all the evidence that was presented initially. BLMK ICB's Exceptional Cases Panel will consider any recommendations and a final decision will be made. You will be advised of the outcome and again, requested to share this with your patient.

11. What can I do if my patient is not exceptional e.g. represents a group of patients in similar clinical circumstances

If you disagree with an existing ICB policy, then you can try to change it but this cannot be achieved through the IFR process. Service Development requests should be considered in line with the ICB's IFR Policy Appendix 4 - Guidance on Service Development and cohorts of similar patients which can be found at

www.bedfordshirelutonandmiltonkeynes.icb.nhs.uk/what-we-do/individual-funding-requests/individual-funding-request-ifr-policy-process-and-resources/

Please note that it would be unusual to introduce a new development in year as each year resources are already committed through an annual round of prioritisation. Hence new developments will usually require reallocation of resources from existing services.

12. Is there information available for patients on IFRs?

Yes, a patient information leaflet '*IFR- a brief guide for patients*' is available at www.bedfordshirelutonandmiltonkeynes.icb.nhs.uk/what-we-do/individual-funding-requests/individual-funding-request-ifr-policy-process-and-resources/