

Prior Approval Process - Information for GPs

Prior approval should never delay clinically necessary treatment.

This process applies regardless of which hospital the patient may be referred to and only applies to referrals to secondary care.

When you identify a patient whose condition may suggest treatment which is on the prior approval list;

1. Check the procedure is on the list on the CCG website. A list of all procedures can be found here;

<http://www.gp.brightonandhoveccg.nhs.uk/prior-approval-procedures-information-clinicians>

2. Is the procedure on the list?

No – refer to secondary care through the usual route

Yes – check the policy for this procedure and assess the patient against the policy criteria.

3. Does the patient meet the criteria within the policy?

Yes, the patient meets the prior approval criteria – download and complete the application form for the procedure. Most procedures have a specific application form with a list of the criteria a patient needs to meet for a decision to be made. If there is no application form, it is because the procedure is not normally funded. Please check the policy for details. You may be able to make an application to the IFR Panel.

PLEASE NOTE: At this stage **this is not a referral**, it is a pre-referral decision process. Please explain this to the patient so that expectations about treatment are not raised.

4. Send the application form to the CCG's referral management service, provided by OPTUM using the address on the form. You can do this by email (only via nhs.net email addresses) or as a last resort, by post.
5. You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt of the application as soon as it is received by the Prior Approval team at OPTUM. This acknowledgement will be by email. When OPTUM receive the application the 18 weeks clock will starting 'ticking'.

6. OPTUM will review the application and will make a decision. You will be notified within 3 working days.
7. If the application is approved you will receive a copy of the application with the approval number. You can then refer to secondary care in the normal way, but please attach a copy of the application form with your referral letter. If you do not attach this approved application form, secondary care will not be able to carry out the procedure.
8. If the application is not approved, OPTUM will send you and the patient a letter explaining the decision.

If you would like an opinion on a patient's condition (that may necessitate a prior approval procedure) you can refer in the usual way asking for an opinion. However, if the secondary care clinician suggests a treatment or procedure or the prior approval list, you will still have to apply to OPTUM for approval. If the patient does not meet the criteria, you may be able to apply to the IFR Panel. Please note that going through this process is likely to raise expectations of treatment, necessitate a secondary care appointment and potentially add time to the 18 weeks target.

No, the patient does not meet the criteria – please do not refer. If the patient does not meet the criteria in the policy, the CCG will not fund the procedure. Please explain the criteria and evidence base for this policy to the patient.

You may also want to download the Patient Brochure to help patients understand why the CCG makes evidence based and prioritising decisions.

If you think the patient has exceptional or rare clinical circumstances, you may wish to apply to the Individual Funding Requests (IFR) Panel. You can find the IFR Policy and information about this process, including the patient brochure, on the CCG website, here;

<http://www.gp.brightonandhoveccg.nhs.uk/individual-funding-requests-information-clinicians>

There is no absolute definition of what counts as exceptional or rare, as each case is decided on its own merits. However, the following may be a useful guide for GPs when considering whether an IFR application is likely to be helpful;

Exceptional - Where a patient has a presenting medical condition for which there is a CCG policy but where the requested treatment has not been agreed to be funded under the policy (an "exceptional" request). A patient could be described as being exceptional where the individual clinical circumstances are outside the range of clinical circumstances presented by at least 95% of patients with the same medical condition at the same stage of progression as the named patient.



Clinical circumstances - The clinical features of the named patient's medical condition or the progression of the name patient's condition as opposed to their social or personal circumstances.

Rare - Having an estimated prevalence of fewer than 1 in 50,000 in the national population.

If you have any questions about this process or the policies please contact our referral management service, provided by OPTUM.

Call: 0203 824 2001

Email: BHCCG.Brightonreferrals@nhs.net - Please ensure that you put 'Prior Approval Request' in the subject line.

