Post: GP member of the Individual Funding Request (IFR) Panel for East and North Herts CCG and Herts Valleys CCG

Time commitment:

4 hours per month, to cover preparation for and attendance at the meeting (currently 2nd Thursday of month, 1-3pm at Charter House) and working outside the meeting to comment on priorities forum decisions and improve the prior approval/IFR process.

Job Description

The IFR Panel makes decisions about whether NHS funding is provided for treatment that is not generally funded in Hertfordshire considering cases that are brought to us by the prior approval team because:

because they are unsure whether to approve or decline funding

an appeal has been made following a decision by the prior approval’s team to refuse funding

The panel consider the application using the documents held on a secure website as the basis for debate. Clinicians and patients do not attend in person.

Why do we need an IFR Panel?

The Priorities Forum and HMMC advise the CCGs in making decisions about what treatments will not be funded by the NHS, or the specific circumstances when funding will be approved if there are restrictions to funding. These decisions are based on the evidence of benefit and cost effectiveness for specific treatments and the opportunity cost if they were to be funded. These decisions apply at population level, but it is likely that there are individuals who are exceptional: their medical needs are so different from, and their chance of benefiting from the treatment so much greater than the general population that the decision not to fund a treatment should not apply in their case. It is the IFR panel’s role to decide whether individuals are exceptional.

The majority of the panel’s decisions are to refuse funding as exceptionality is, by definition, rare.

Sometimes the refusal is made because the patient is clearly part of a cohort with similar characteristics. Making a decision to approve funding in such a case would amount to making policy, which is the remit of the Priorities Forum or HMMC and outside the terms of reference for the IFR panel. In such circumstances the IFR panel advises the clinician making the application to submit a business case to the priorities forum or HMMC for them to consider the evidence and decide whether to change the guidance.

The panel also works to improve the whole process by providing guidance for clinicians who are making an application on their patient’s behalf, and by commenting on the priorities forum guidance.

The work is thought provoking, and underpinned by the need to support the principles of equity, justice, beneficence and non-maleficence.