**Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board**

**Clinical Policy Development Group**

**Psychological exceptionality and cosmetic/aesthetic surgery**

**Position Statement**

**Introduction**

Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board (Norfolk &Waveney ICB) aim to commit NHS resources where there is a clear need in terms of health symptoms. Proposed interventions should be effective in relieving symptoms and should be funded fairly for all patients with the same condition. Aesthetic (cosmetic) surgery is not routinely funded.

This statement regarding ‘psychological exceptionality’ and aesthetic surgery has been produced to make clear the position of Norfolk and Waveney ICB on the funding of aesthetic surgery when patients are suffering psychological distress due to their body image. This statement also aims to support primary and secondary care clinicians in managing the expectations of these patients and in sourcing the most appropriate care pathway for them.

An individual funding request (IFR) can be made for a treatment that is not routinely offered by the NHS when a patient is clearly different to other patients with the same condition or where a patient might benefit from the treatment in a different way to other patients. This is known as “clinical exceptionality”

**Clinical Exceptionality**

There can be no exhaustive description of the situations which are likely to come within the definition of exceptional clinical circumstances. The onus is on the clinician making the request to set out the grounds for clinical exceptionality clearly for the IFR Panel.

‘Exceptional’ in IFR terms means a person to whom the general rule should not apply.

This implies that there is likely to be something about their clinical situation which was not considered when formulating the general rule.

Very few patients have clinical circumstances which are genuinely exceptional.

To justify funding for treatment for a patient which is not available to other patients, and is not part of the established care pathway, the IFR Panel needs to be satisfied that the clinician has demonstrated that a patient’s individual clinical circumstances are clearly different from those of other patients, and that because of this difference, the general policies should not be applied.

**Psychological exceptionality and aesthetic treatment**

Patients experiencing psychological distress or social impairment as a result of their condition cannot be considered to be ‘clinically’ different from other patients with the same condition. Normal psychological and social experiences of illness, impairment or deformity may cause distress, but are not likely to render the patient ‘exceptional’ according to the definition used by NHS England[[1]](#footnote-1). This is because the definition explicitly states that only clinical factors may be considered.

A diagnosed mental health condition may be considered to be a relevant clinical factor.

Patients experiencing psychological distress as a result of their condition will not normally be considered to be ‘significantly different clinically to the group of patients with the condition in question and at the same stage of progression of the condition’, unless they have a diagnosed mental health condition. Patients with a mental health condition will be considered according to the standard criteria stated above.

1. NHS England Commissioning Policy: Individual Funding Requests 2023

   <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/commissioning-policy-individual-funding-requests/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)