

Seeking healthcare abroad (the 'Article 56' route) – a guide for NHS Cambridgeshire patients (DRAFT)

This guide explains what to do if you want to seek treatment in another European Economic Area (EEA) Member State under the article' 56 route' and wish to seek reimbursement for the cost.

This guide pertains to the National Health Service (Reimbursement of the Cost of EEA Treatment) Regulations 2010 which come into force from 1 June 2010.

Under the 'Article 56' route, patients have the right to seek any health care service (including private care) in another EEA Member State that is the same or equivalent to a service that would have been provided to the patient under the NHS. However, a patient only has the right to reimbursement if the treatment:

- is necessary to treat or diagnose a medical condition of the patient
- is the same as a service that would **normally** have been provided by NHS Cambridgeshire (see below) and
- is not classified as a **"special service"** (see below)

Healthcare services that would **normally** be provided by NHS Cambridgeshire are explained in the 'Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Lower Clinical Priority Policies'. These policies can be accessed on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Public Health Network website at www.cambsphn.nhs.uk.

"Special Services" are:

- services that involve a stay in hospital accommodation for at least one night;
- medical treatment that involves general anaesthesia, epidural anaesthesia or intravenously administered sedation;
- dental treatment that involves general anaesthesia or intravenously administered sedation; or
- rare and/or high cost services

Patients seeking treatments that are normally available to NHS Cambridgeshire patients, and that do not fall within the scope of "special services", do not need prior authorisation before travelling. However, they are strongly advised to discuss their plans with NHS Cambridgeshire in advance.

NHS Cambridgeshire will not reimburse a patient who should have applied for prior authorisation but did not do so.

Prior Authorisation for Treatment Abroad

If the treatment would not normally provided to NHS Cambridgeshire patients, or is classified a "special service", prior authorisation from NHS Cambridgeshire will be required.

The prior authorisation process enables NHS Cambridgeshire to establish that the patient needs the proposed treatment and that the proposed provider is suitable. The process allows

the patient to get advice about a range of matters including confirmation that the treatment is one that the NHS offers, (i.e. that they can get reimbursement and how much they will be reimbursed) what elements of the care pathway will be funded, what the aftercare arrangements will be and what the patient should do if there is a problem with the care they receive abroad.

Application Process for Prior Authorisation for Treatment Abroad

There are two different application procedures for 'Prior Authorisation'.

If the treatment is one that is not normally provided to NHS Cambridgeshire patients, the clinician responsible for the patient's treatment (a GP, Dentist or Consultant) should complete a Request Form for the Exceptional Cases Panel. This form is available at www.cambsphn.nhs.uk under "Clinical Effectiveness Documentation".

The decision making process for these applications follows the Exceptional Cases Panel's policies and appeal process.

If the treatment is classified as a 'special service', the patient should make their request in writing to:

Cross Border Healthcare Requests
NHS Cambridgeshire
Lockton House
Clarendon Road
Cambridge
CB2 8FH

NHS Cambridgeshire will require the following details:

- Patient's name, date of birth, NHS number, address, and registered GP
- What kind of treatment they propose to access overseas;
- Whether or not an NHS or overseas health professional (and what type of professional) has confirmed their need for this treatment (and copies of relevant correspondence);
- Where they propose to access treatment and at what facility;
- How much the treatment is likely to cost as estimated by the overseas provider

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The Decision Making Process for 'Special Services'

NHS Cambridgeshire will proceed the application within 21 working days unless further information is required.

When making the decision whether or not to grant prior authorisation' NHS Cambridgeshire will take into account:

- Whether the patient is entitled to receive treatment funded by NHS Cambridgeshire
- Whether the proposed treatment would normally be provided by NHS Cambridgeshire in the circumstances of the patient's case
- A clinical assessment of the patient's specific needs
- Whether the proposed treatment is experimental
- Any clinical risks to the patient or to the wider public health if the patient travels abroad
- What aftercare or follow-up arrangements are required
- Suitability of the proposed provider

NHS Cambridgeshire will write to the patient with the decision. We will also advise what the patient can do if they are unhappy with the decision and wants to appeal.

Reimbursement of Treatment Costs

The patient has the right to claim reimbursement for the treatment cost up to the amount that the same treatment would have cost under the NHS - or the actual amount if it is lower.

Patients have to pay the overseas provider directly for the treatment. They can then seek reimbursement from NHS Cambridgeshire.

Patients will need to provide proof of treatment (and payment) in order to get reimbursement. If the treatment normally attracts a patient charge under the NHS (such as prescription fees or dental charges), NHS Cambridgeshire may deduct this charge from the reimbursed amount.

Summary Flowchart

