



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

## Health Service Executive Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme: Prior Notification Application Form

### (FOR INPATIENT CARE ONLY - Outpatient and Daycase care do not require prior Notification)

The HSE operates a Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme (NIPHS), for persons entitled to public patient treatment in Ireland seeking to avail of that treatment in the private healthcare sector of Northern Ireland under the Operational Guidance on NI Planned Healthcare Scheme for HSE as issued by the Department of Health.

A copy of the Guidelines are available on the HSE's Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme webpage. Patients must familiarize themselves with the administration requirements of the HSE prior to availing of healthcare under the Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme (NIPHS) in order to confirm entitlement or otherwise to reimbursement of treatment costs. The HSE has established a National Contact Point (NCP) office and this office provides information on the NIPHS. Contact details for the NCP are: Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme, National Contact Point, St Canice's Hospital Complex, Dublin Road, Kilkenny, Ireland. Tel: 056 7784547 or 056 7784546, Email: [crossborderdirective@hse.ie](mailto:crossborderdirective@hse.ie) Website: <https://www2.hse.ie/services/schemes-allowances/niphs/>

In general the NIPHS allows for patients ordinarily resident in Ireland who require and are entitled to public healthcare services, to access that healthcare in the private healthcare sector of Northern Ireland (NI) and to seek reimbursement for that care at cost of the treatment in Ireland as a maximum. It will be a matter for the patient and/or his/her referring doctor to identify the clinician abroad and satisfy him/herself in relation to the qualifications, quality and safety of the services being availed of in the other jurisdiction. Funding will only be reimbursed for healthcare that is available and/or publicly funded in Ireland and which is not contrary to Irish legislation. Reimbursement will be made in line with published reimbursement rates available from the NIPHS website. Payments will only be made to the patient or in the case of a child his/her parent or guardian. No payments will be made to third parties except in the case of patient's death and this will be subject to the executor of the estate providing evidence of the outstanding liability.

#### Private Patients

Patients/applicants who are private patients in Ireland should be advised that all claims for prior notification and reimbursement in respect of treatment availed of in another jurisdiction should be made to the patient's private health insurance provider and not to the HSE. Private patients are not eligible for reimbursement under the NIPHS. There is nothing preventing a private patient becoming a public patient if he/she so wishes, a public attendance in Ireland is required to demonstrate the patient has established as a public patient. Placement on a public waiting list via referral from a private consultation is not sufficient as the provisions of circulars 1/91 and 1/95 apply.

#### Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme where Prior Notification is not required:

Prior notification is not required for outpatient services accessed under the provisions of the NIPHS. However, if you are in any doubt as to the need to seek prior notification before you avail of a consultation/treatment abroad please contact the NCP who will advise you. The NCP will also be happy at that stage to advise you of the reimbursement rate that will apply to the assessment you are accessing on an outpatient basis.

#### Prior Notification is optional but recommended:

The application for prior notification may be assessed and a determination given prior to the patient availing of the treatment abroad. Valid applications will be processed within 15 - 20 working days and a decision will be issued via letter. Appointments that are made prior to the decision will have no bearing on the review process or its expedition.

The referral process and assessments that are required to avail of any element of public health care in Ireland will apply to any and all applications for notification and subsequent reimbursement under the NIPHS e.g. if there is eligibility criteria (medical, or financial, or etc.) applicable in Ireland, that same criteria will be applied under the NIPHS for example GP referral, outpatient consultation on a date prior to inpatient/day case treatment, etc. Inpatient episodes of care require an in-person consultation on a date prior to the admission date. Telemedicine consultations may be used for day case treatment. Evidence of the telemedicine consultation for the patient's medical record is required to be submitted.

It is expected that prior to submitting the application form in conjunction with the treating consultant abroad, that the patient can demonstrate referral by either a GP or other relevant clinician and an outpatient assessment either by the treating consultant abroad or by a consultant in Ireland treating the patient in a public capacity. (When submitting a claim for the reimbursement of the outpatient appointment at which the assessment for further treatment was made the patient will be required to submit a copy of the original referral letter and/or the letter of confirmation of your place on the public waiting list in Ireland.) The HSE accepts no liability for healthcare costs availed of abroad which fail to meet the guidelines, criteria and the HSE's administration requirements.

### **Completion of Application Form: Applicant/Patient**

No liability shall attach to the Health Service Executive, its servants or agents in respect of any costs or expenses incurred by the Patient or Applicant prior to a determination by the Health Service Executive on this application and the results of such determination being communicated to the Applicant. Any arrangements made by the Applicant or Patient prior to such determination may not subsequently be ratified by the Health Service Executive and may invalidate the application. A decision on an application will be issued via letter to the applicant, telephone confirmation of a decision will only be provided when the decision letter has been issued. A decision can be expected within 15 - 20 working days following the receipt of a completed application and any other information/clarification requested.

The patient/applicant must submit a fully completed application form accompanied by the appropriate referral letter and confirmation of the outpatient consultation which will be the basis of demonstrating necessary care for the purposes of this application in sufficient time to allow the HSE assess and make a decision on same. The onus is on the patient to submit a fully completed application form and to provide the necessary information from the referring and treating clinicians. Incomplete applications will be returned to the patient/applicant for provision of the appropriate information prior to re-submitting to the NIPHS office.

### **Section A**

#### **This part of the application is to be fully completed by the patient/applicant.**

This part of the application is to be fully completed by the patient/applicant. All parts of the section must be completed, if a question is not relevant to you please mark same N/A e.g. if you do not hold a medical card mark that section N/A (not applicable).

Where a patient is under 18 years of age or is incapacitated, the application may be submitted on their behalf by a Parent/Guardian/Spouse/Partner.

Upon completion of Section A, the applicant should present the application to his/her treating consultant to complete Section B. A copy of the original referral letter by which the patient accessed the assessment from the consultant should be submitted with this application form. To clarify, to access an assessment with a consultant, a patient must first have a referral letter from his/her GP or other treating clinician with referral rights in Ireland or abroad. Therefore to demonstrate that this pathway has been followed the patient will be required to provide a copy of this letter.

### **Section B**

#### **This part of the application is to be fully completed by the patient/applicant's treating consultant.**

When the application form has been fully completed, please return it complete with the referring clinician's letter of referral to the above mentioned NIPHS office. The application will be assessed and a decision will be issued within 15 - 20 working days or as soon as possible thereafter. In completing this application form, you must ensure the information you provide is accurate and true. The inclusion of false, misleading or inaccurate information or the omission of relevant information will mean the NIPHS Office will reserve the right to refer the matter to the appropriate authority and repayment of any funding drawn down will be required without exception. The NIPHS office reserves the right to review a patient's medical chart to clarify any information as appropriate. Consultants referring paediatric patients abroad must be satisfied as to the compliance of the service abroad with Children First guidelines and legislation.

### **CODE OF ETHICS FOR CLINICAL CODERS**

It is expected that all clinicians identifying a DRG code for the purpose of reimbursement under the provisions of the Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme would be familiar with and adhere to the Code of Ethics for Clinical Coders.

The identification of a DRG code for the purpose of reimbursement requires the clinician to be ethical and transparent in his/her selection. The selection of an incorrect code may lead to a patient being reimbursed an amount less than that applied for and confirmed at prior notification stage. Any such occurrence will be a matter for the patient to pursue with the clinician who identified the incorrect code and not for the HSE. The HSE reserves the right to have any DRG code identified, independently assessed to confirm its appropriateness, this may include our accessing the patient's medical record for this purpose.

Therefore in line with the Code of Ethics for Clinical Coders, a clinician identifying a code for the purpose of reimbursement will ensure that clinical record content justifies selected DRG code.

### **Decisions**

During the processing of an application, NIPHS staff will only be able to confirm the estimated date for issue of a decision. When an application has been processed, the decision on same will be issued by letter and it is only after the decision letter has been issued that NIPHS staff are permitted to inform the applicant (and only the applicant) of the decision by phone.

Please note that the Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme does not provide for reimbursement of travel or subsistence costs incurred by patients.

**APPLICATION FORM FOR ASSISTANCE TOWARDS THE COST OF MEDICAL TREATMENT  
UNDER THE NORTHERN IRELAND PLANNED HEALTHCARE SCHEME**

**SECTION A- To be completed in full by Patient/Applicant**

**Patient Details**

NAME:	<input type="text"/>	ADDRESS:	<input type="text"/>
DATE OF BIRTH:	<input type="text"/>		
TEL NO:	<input type="text"/>	MOBILE NO:	<input type="text"/>
PPS NO:	<input type="text"/>	MEDICAL CARD NO:	<input type="text"/>
		*Submit Photocopy also	
How long have you been ordinarily resident in Ireland?	<input type="text"/>		
NAME PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANY	<input type="text"/>	MEMBERSHIP NO.	<input type="text"/>
HAVE YOU APPLIED TO YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANY FOR FUNDING?	<input type="text"/>		
IF YES, HAS FUNDING BEEN APPROVED BY YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANY? Please submit a copy of the decision letter with your application.	<input type="text"/>		

**Clinician's Details**

The details of the referring clinician below are required or you may attach a copy of the referral letter as an alternative.

Name of Patient's GP	<input type="text"/>
GP's Address	<input type="text"/>
GP's Telephone Number	<input type="text"/>

**Parent/Guardian Details**

\*Only complete the next section if you are making an application on behalf of a patient under 18 years of age or over 18 years of age and dependant.

RELATIONSHIP TO PATIENT:	<input type="text"/>	ADDRESS:	<input type="text"/>
NAME	<input type="text"/>		
TEL NO:	<input type="text"/>	MOBILE NO:	<input type="text"/>
NAME PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANY	<input type="text"/>	MEMBERSHIP NO.	<input type="text"/>
HAVE YOU APPLIED TO YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANY FOR FUNDING?	<input type="text"/>		
IF YES, HAS FUNDING BEEN APPROVED BY YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANY? Please submit a copy of the decision letter with your application.	<input type="text"/>		

Please confirm the reason why you are/the patient is opting to travel abroad?

(This information has no bearing on the application decision, it is just for the purposes of information on the reasons why patients are opting for care under the NIPHS)

Length of wait for the treatment in Ireland: <input type="checkbox"/>	Quality of the service abroad: <input type="checkbox"/>
Proximity to my place of residence: <input type="checkbox"/>	Other: <input type="checkbox"/>

If Other please provide details

No liability shall attach to the Health Service Executive, its servants or agents in respect of any costs or expenses incurred by the Patient or Applicant on this application and the results of such determination being communicated to the Applicant. Any arrangements made by the Applicant or Patient prior to such determination may not subsequently be ratified by the Health Service Executive and may invalidate the application.

In submitting this application form (complete or incomplete), I as the applicant give my permission for my medical records or other clinical information to be accessed and copied for the purposes of processing the application. I understand and accept my clinical information can and may be provided to other hospitals, health care facilities or clinical advisors in the assessment of the application form. In signing my name hereunder, I acknowledge and accept this position and give my consent for same.

- I declare that the above particulars are, to the best of my knowledge true and correct. I am aware that my application will be based on this information and that any new information coming to light may impact on the decision in this case.
- I acknowledge that the decision given will be based on the request for the particular treatment specified on the application and any additional or future treatment will require additional application to the HSE Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme.
- I understand that this is merely an application for prior notification under the NIPHS and that at this stage no commitment has been entered into by the Health Service Executive.
- I also agree to notify or to arrange to notify the HSE immediately should there be any change in the information provided in this application or if I or my dependants change address or becomes resident outside Ireland.
- I also agree to notify and arrange to refund the HSE immediately should I receive any refund from the provider **or any other party** eg insurance provider in respect of the treatments for which the costs were reimbursed to me by the HSE

**Applicant's signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Is the patient a victim of a road traffic incident or other accidental injury? Yes  No

If yes, is there a claim for compensation against a third party? Yes  No

If yes, please provide the details of your solicitor:

Solicitors Name(acting for the patient):

Solicitors Address:

*Please note that solicitors who are making a legal claim for compensation on behalf of victims of road traffic accidents or other accidental injuries are required to include in the claim the cost of treatment received outside the state, as provided by the HSE Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme, resulting from the road traffic accident or accidental injury.*

*However, please note that it is the patient who is obliged to make sure that the treatment costs provided by the HSE under the Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme are reimbursed to the HSE. Unsuccessful claims must be brought to the attention of the HSE Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme.*

I agree to repay to the HSE the gross amount of the money spent by the HSE when the claim I am pursuing against a third party has been finalised.

**Applicant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Signature is required where the patient has been a victim of a road traffic accident or other accidental injury and a claim for compensation against third party is/will occur.

## SECTION B

### Completion of Application Form: Treating Consultant:

The treating consultant should fully complete the application form and provide sufficient information giving details of the patient's medical condition, the type of treatment envisaged and the provider of treatment abroad. In compliance with his/her duty of care, the application must be completed by the treating consultant pursuant to his/her clinical assessment of the patient thus confirming it is the consultant's recommendation based on this clinical review that the patient requires the treatment.

Referrals and treatment must be on the basis of medical necessity.

Applications must be accompanied by a copy of the detailed clinical referral letter from the referring clinician to the accepting clinician outlining details and history of the patient's condition and the type of treatment envisaged. A clinician referring a paediatric patient to NI must satisfy himself/herself as to the compliance of the service abroad with Children First guidelines and legislation.

The onus is on the treating consultant to seek, provide and certify the answer to each question in Section B.

Applications should be made and a decision given in advance of the patient travelling abroad. Decisions on applications will be based on the medical information provided in line with the provisions of the scheme and public healthcare eligibility and pathways in Ireland. Appointments made in advance of submission of an application will not be used as a deciding factor in applications. The Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme office will aim to provide a decision within 15 - 20 working days of receipt of a completed application.

### SECTION B- To be completed in full by the treating consultant

#### Details of Healthcare provider abroad

Name of Treating Consultant:

Name of Treating Hospital:

Patient Name

Patient Address

Date of Birth

Is the patient attending you in a public or private capacity?

Date when the patient was assessed at an outpatient consultation to determine necessary care (outpatient consultation must have occurred on a date prior to any inpatient treatment either in the public healthcare sector in Ireland or in the private healthcare sector in Northern Ireland)

In person:

Telephone:

Video:

PROPOSED TREATMENT:

DRG CODE OF PROPOSED PROVIDED (the relevant ABF price list is available on the HSE website by following the link below).

Inpatient: [https://assets.hse.ie/media/documents/Admitted-Patient-Price-List-Inpatient\\_2022.pdf](https://assets.hse.ie/media/documents/Admitted-Patient-Price-List-Inpatient_2022.pdf)

How was the DRG Code arrived at: ICD 10 SYSTEM OPERATED BY TRAINED CODERS  BEST GUESS

CONSULTATION

OUTPATIENT APPOINTMENT

DAYCASE PROCEDURE

INPATIENT TREATMENT

PROPOSED TREATMENT (SECONDARY):

DRG CODE OF PROPOSED PROVIDED (the relevant ABF price list is available on the HSE website by following the link below).

Inpatient: [https://assets.hse.ie/media/documents/Admitted-Patient-Price-List-Inpatient\\_2022.pdf](https://assets.hse.ie/media/documents/Admitted-Patient-Price-List-Inpatient_2022.pdf)

CONSULTATION

OUTPATIENT APPOINTMENT

DAYCASE PROCEDURE

INPATIENT TREATMENT

**Section B-continued**

Please set out hereunder a summary of the condition from which the patient suffers:

Please certify the specific treatment that the patient requires outside the state:

- |   |     |                          |    |                          |
|---|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| Is this treatment available within the State?<br>(Only treatments that are available within the State qualify for reimbursement under the NIPHS.) | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Is the patient currently receiving this treatment in Ireland?   | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Is the treatment medically necessary?   | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Will the treatment meet the patient's needs?  | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Is this treatment contrary to the Irish Constitution or any legislation to your knowledge?  | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Is the treatment regarded as a proven form of medical attention and not experimental or test treatment?   | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Is the treatment required as a result of injuries received in a road traffic accident or other accidental injury?                                 | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does the proposed healthcare pose any public health risks for the patient and/or the public in general?   | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If yes, please give details:

**Section B-continued**

NAME OF ACCEPTING CONSULTANT (outside the State if different from the treating consultant):

NAME OF ACCEPTING HOSPITAL (outside the State if different from the treating consultant):

Is the treatment abroad being provided in a recognized hospital or other institution which is under the control of a Registered Medical Practitioner?

Yes

No

Is that hospital a private hospital in Northern Ireland?

Yes

No

Confirmed cost of treatment:

Date of Admission (if known):

Probable duration of stay:

Probable date(s) of Out-Patient Department visit(s):

THE ONGOING CARE OF A PATIENT WHO HAS AVAILED OF TREATMENT ABROAD REVERTS TO THE REFERRING PHYSICIAN IMMEDIATELY UPON THE PATIENT'S RETURN TO IRELAND.

I declare that the above particulars are to the best of my knowledge true and correct. I am aware that the application will be based on this information and that any new information coming to light may impact on the decision in this case and/or negate any prior notification given without such relevant information.

It is policy of the HSE to ensure that therapeutic and medical facilities abroad where children are placed are fully compliant with their local child protection laws and policies and that they are signatories to the Hague Convention. In signing this application form, I the treating consultant am confirming that I am satisfied the facility to which I am treating this child meets the requirements of the policy.

**Signature of treating consultant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT – CHECK LIST**

Required documents for Prior notification

Prior notification is optional but recommended for all inpatient healthcare abroad under the NIPHS. Prior notification was introduced so that:

- A patient can ensure he/she is compliant with public patient pathways and the necessary care requirement prior to incurring costs and thus make sure he/she will be eligible for reimbursement.
- A patient can ensure he/she knows the costs and reimbursement of proposed healthcare prior to committing to expensive inpatient healthcare abroad.
- A patient can consider the information provided at the outpatient consultation prior to the date of admission, in the interest of informed consent.
- A patient will have a cooling off period between his/her outpatient consultation and proceeding with inpatient care abroad.

An application for Prior notification should include the following documentation:

- A valid referral letter\* issued prior to and for the purpose of accessing the healthcare in question or a copy of waiting list letter for a public hospital in Ireland. \*See below for clarification on a valid referral letter.
- Evidence of the in-person outpatient consultation with the consultant abroad or a consultant treating the patient in a public capacity in Ireland at which the recommendation of inpatient care was determined.
- A fully completed Application form
- Proof of travel abroad e.g. train tickets, accommodation in patients/applicants name, toll/parking charges or a till receipt from a shop in the locality where the outpatient consultation has been accessed abroad.

**Checklist**

Have you included?

**A. Path of referral:**

A valid GP/consultant (public) letter of referral which:

- |  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Pre-dates your consultation abroad  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. To a named consultant abroad (recommended)                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Addressed to a specific hospital  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Is signed by your GP/consultant (public) (not a member of the practice staff) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Or

A waiting list letter from a public hospital in Ireland:

- |  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. A waiting list letter confirming that you are on the public waiting list in Ireland at the time of your consultation abroad | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**B. Prior Notification Application Form**

- |   | Yes                      | No                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Section A completed in full by applicant                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Section B completed in full by your treating consultant/clinician abroad. ** | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

\*\*Please ensure that your treating consultant/clinician abroad provides a valid HSE DRG code. This can be accessed on the HSE ABF price list, please follow this link (<https://www2.hse.ie/file-library/cross-border-directive/admitted-patient-price-list-summary-inpatient.pdf>). The rate of reimbursement will be up to the maximum of the DRG code applicable in your case or the cost of your treatment abroad, whichever is the lesser.

**C. Proof of Travel**

- |   | Yes                      | No                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Accommodation receipts in patients/applicants name, toll/parking charges or a till receipt from a shop | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



**D. Evidence of your initial outpatient consultation with your treating clinician abroad on a date prior to your to your admission.**

- |  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. An invoice and receipt from your initial consultation                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>OR</b>  |                          |                          |
| 2. A medical report which includes the date of your initial consultation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**IMPORTANT – CHECK LIST**

Required documents for Prior Notification

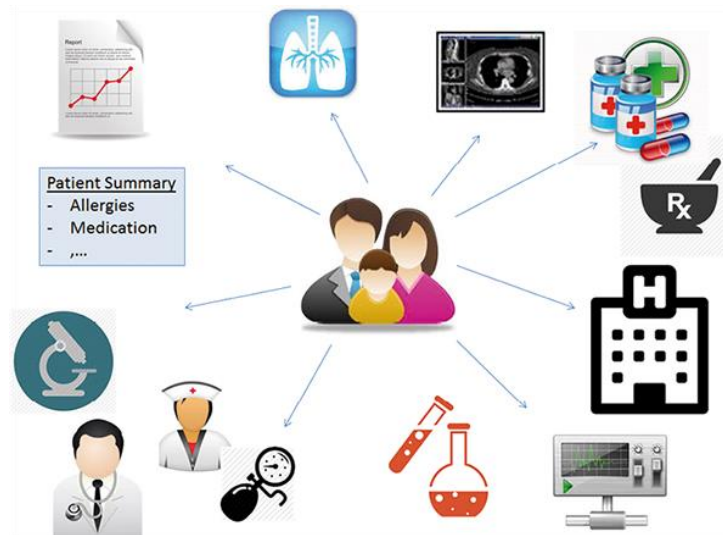
Proof of an initial consultation is not required where a person has already attended their public consultant in Ireland and subsequently been placed on an inpatient/day case treatment waiting list and where this waiting list letter is being submitted as your path of referral for your treatment abroad.

If you are claiming reimbursement for your initial consultation as part of this application, you will be required to submit proof of your payment of your healthcare costs: To achieve reimbursement you (the patient) must be able to provide evidence that you have incurred (paid) the cost of the treatment directly to the hospital abroad. Proof of payment can take many forms for example: e.g. Bank transfer, Credit Card Payment (Statement)

# The Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme

## Typical Public Patient Pathway

**How do I access Hospital Care Abroad under the provisions of the Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme (NIPHS)?  
(A typical patient pathway to hospital care – A guide)**



This page is designed to guide a patient through a typical patient pathway for accessing healthcare under the provisions of the Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme (NIPHS) generally accessed in an acute hospital setting. Please bear in mind that this is only a guide on the most common pathway and access to certain types of care will require a different pathway so if in doubt – ask!! Also please read the other pages of this webpage in conjunction with this guide. Any queries should be made to the National Contact Point (NCP) as per the contact details.

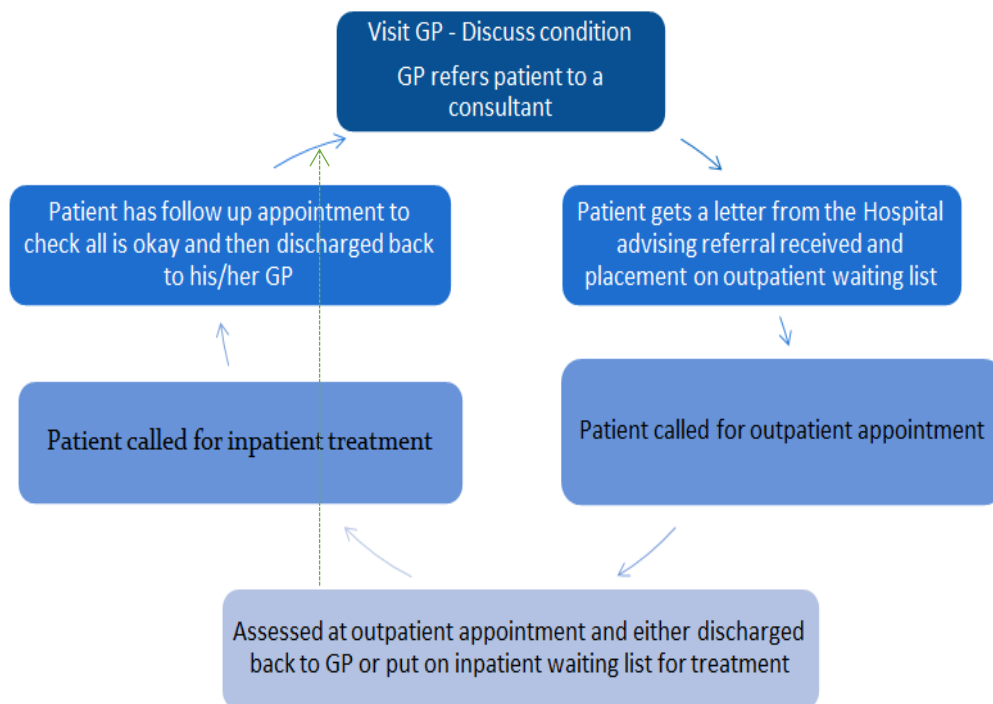


First things first:

1. The NIPHS allows a public patient to access healthcare which he/she is entitled to access in Ireland. Therefore:
  - A patient may not use a private appointment in Ireland to circumvent any part of the patient journey. For example you cannot use a private outpatient appointment in Ireland for the purposes of accessing healthcare under the NIPHS.
2. The NIPHS does not give a patient additional rights – it simply gives the patient an option to access necessary care in the private sector in Northern Ireland. The same requirements of that access apply as apply in Ireland. For example, a patient cannot simply present at an outpatient clinic in a hospital in Ireland and expect to be seen: the patient must have a referral from his/her GP in the first instance.

**A typical Public Patient Pathway**  
**A patient is not classified public or private at GP stage**

At any stage during the process represented below the patient may opt to use the provisions of the NIPHS. Please note an outpatient consultation may not take place on the date of admission it must take place on a date prior to admission for an inpatient or day case treatment.



For the purposes of this webpage the following will describe how a patient can access hospital care in the private healthcare sector in Northern Ireland under the NIPHS.



#### Step 1: Establishing necessary care – referral.

Visit your GP/primary care clinician and discuss your condition. The GP/primary care clinician will evaluate the information and based on same may decide to refer you to a (public or private consultant in Northern Ireland) hospital consultant. Alternatively remember the GP/primary care clinician may decide that your condition is such that a more conservative approach is appropriate at this time and seek to manage same without referral to a hospital consultant.

If your GP/primary care clinician deems it appropriate he/she will write what is known as a referral letter which is a letter to a hospital consultant. A referral letter must contain the following information (ICGP Guidelines):

- Name and address of a hospital consultant (while the referral letter must be to a named doctor at an identified hospital/facility that is not to say that that is the specific doctor and hospital the patient must attend).
- Personal details of the patient, name, address, date of birth, etc.
- Outline of the patient's current health and any other relevant information.
- Outline of the issue for which the patient is being referred.
- Clinician's signature and date.

#### Things to note:

- The NCP will not accept a referral letter which is not signed by the clinician (e.g. it cannot be signed by his/her secretary or nurse).
- The NCP will not accept a referral letter which is not dated. Remember the referral letter must be issued and thus dated before accessing the healthcare abroad under the NIPHS.
- The referral letter must be properly addressed to a named doctor, an identified specialty and an identified facility.

Other things to note:

- Just as a GP may refer a patient, likewise a consultant that the patient is attending in a public capacity may also refer the patient.
- A GP may not be comfortable referring a patient to a doctor and/or facility abroad that he/she does not know. In this scenario the GP may address the referral to a hospital consultant he/she is familiar with and the patient may then choose to use that referral to access healthcare abroad. In doing so the patient accepts all clinical liability for his/her choice of provider abroad.



Step 2: Arrange an outpatient appointment.

Now that the patient has a referral letter he/she may decide to access that healthcare in Northern Ireland.

The NIPHS allows the patient to access the healthcare in the private sector in NI. Remember the healthcare must be accessed in NI and not in Ireland – the patient must travel.

When the patient has identified a provider in NI he/she makes contact with that provider to arrange an outpatient appointment.

The outpatient appointment takes place on a date prior to any inpatient or day case treatment. The reasons for this are:

- Only after assessing the patient can a consultant make a decision as to future care needs and if inpatient or day case treatment is warranted the consultant can discuss same with the patient prior to scheduling such treatment.
- It ensures the patient leaves the consultant's rooms and has time away from the healthcare facility to consider:
  - Whether he/she wishes to proceed with the treatment/with the consultant (informed consent),
  - Any further questions he/she may wish to explore prior to making a decision to proceed with the treatment as proposed.

The hospital in NI will likely seek a copy of the referral and may ask for your medical records. Access to medical records from a hospital should be requested directly from the specific hospital.

The patient receives an appointment for an outpatient consultation with the consultant in the hospital abroad.



Step 3: Outpatient consultation/assessment – necessary care.

The patient has now received an appointment for an outpatient consultation with the consultant in Northern Ireland.

The patient travels to NI. Travel expenses incurred etc. are not eligible for reimbursement under the scheme and are therefore a cost the patient will incur.

Most private hospitals will seek payment upfront from the patient for the outpatient attendance and likely for all other attendances. The maximum reimbursement rate for the outpatient attendance is €178.

There are many variations of an outpatient attendance for example:

- Meeting and examination by a consultant.
- Examination by a consultant with x-rays, lab tests, bloods, etc.
- Examination by a consultant with a minor procedure e.g. removal of a lump or bump for biopsy or otherwise, etc.
- MRI or CT.

At the outpatient attendance the consultant may decide the patient requires an inpatient or day case procedure. If so we recommend the patient considers applying for prior notification from the NCP.



**Prior notification is optional** but the NCP introduced it for the following reasons:

- It requires the consultant in NI to fill in section B of the prior notification form thus identifying the proposed treatment and the cost of same.
- It requires the consultant in NI to identify the DRG code for the treatment from the HSE's ready reckoner (on the webpage) which identifies the maximum reimbursement rate.
- It allows the patient time to leave the consulting rooms and by submitting the prior notification application form to the NCP, the patient then has what is effectively a cooling off period in which to decide whether or not:
  - a. He/she can afford the treatment upfront or can secure the funding.
  - b. Whether or not he/she is comfortable with the consultant and the facility abroad.
  - c. Consider any shortfall between the cost abroad and the reimbursement rate from the HSE and if in the event there is a shortfall that he/she is happy/willing to proceed.

Please be aware that prior notification and the proposed treatment identified is just that, "proposed treatment". At the time of the treatment the consultant may change the treatment or may require to provide additional treatment. Therefore the actual treatment may differ from the proposed treatment. It is the actual treatment which will be eligible for reimbursement. Remember a patient is entitled to be reimbursed for the treatment actually provided not for the treatment which was indicated at prior notification but not provided.

The hospital in Northern Ireland will schedule your inpatient or day case treatment.



### **Warning!**

It is our experience that consultant abroad often identify the incorrect code at Prior Notification and reimbursement stages. At reimbursement stage the HSE reserves the right to have a DRG code identified by a consultant abroad independently reviewed and it is the outcome of that independent review which will be used.

A patient may submit the invoice, receipt and proof of travel for the outpatient consultation at this stage or hold same and submit at the conclusion of all the treatment to be provided.



### **Step 4: Inpatient Care**

Inpatient or day case treatment in NI. The patient will be given a date for the inpatient or day case treatment. The patient will likely be asked to attend the hospital early or even the night before for what is known as a pre-op assessment. Most hospitals abroad will require payment upfront before the patient is admitted for the treatment.

The patient is admitted, has the treatment and is then discharged.

The hospital will provide the patient with a discharge letter which will be addressed to the GP that referred the patient. Or the hospital may post the discharge letter directly to the GP.



# What is a proforma invoice? How does it work?



Before leaving the hospital ask the consultant to fill in part B of the pro-forma invoice. The use of the pro-forma invoice form is optional but if it is fully completed, the NCP should have all the information required to process a reimbursement for the patient. For example the pro-forma invoice requires the consultant abroad to identify the DRG code for the treatment he/she has provide.

## Step 5: Discharged

Upon discharge the patient should submit any and all invoices for the treatment he/she received. The following are the documents that should be submitted:

- Original invoice(s) from the NI hospital.
- Original receipt(s) from the NI hospital.
- Proof of travel.
- Pro-forma invoice (optional but in the absence of same the patient will be required to provide documentation from the hospital abroad as to the DRG code of the treatment provided).
- Vendor form. The vendor form provides the details the HSE requires to transfer the reimbursement to the patient's bank account. The reimbursement will only be made to the patient except in certain circumstances e.g. parent of a child where the child is the patient.



## Step 6: Reimbursement

Reimbursement is made as soon as possible upon receipt of all the necessary documentation but we aim to ensure it is received by the patient within 20 working days.

To achieve reimbursement the patient must be able to provide evidence that he/she has incurred the cost of the treatment and paid for that treatment to the hospital abroad directly. Proof of payment can take many forms for example:

- Cash register receipt.
- Credit/debit card receipt.
- Copy of the electronic fund transfer (EFT) from the patient's account to the account of the hospital abroad.
- Copy of bank draft in favour of the hospital abroad.

Patients should be careful to ensure they can demonstrate that they i.e. the patients, can demonstrate they incurred the cost. For example the HSE cannot accept any representation that someone else made the payment on the patient's behalf e.g. a relative, a friend, a charity, a medical tourism company etc.

Patients should ensure they make the payment to the hospital abroad directly. Payments made to a third party e.g. a medical tourism company, are not evidence of payment for treatment and will result in the application for reimbursement being declined.

# Orthodontics

There are specific requirements for accessing orthodontics in the public healthcare system in Ireland. Patients may use the NIPHS to access orthodontics. The rules as they apply to accessing orthodontics in the public healthcare system in Ireland equally apply to accessing orthodontics under the NIPHS.

## Orthodontic Assessment

In line with normal procedures in the HSE dental service, access to orthodontics under the NIPHS will be via an assessment by a primary care clinician. In general this service is provided by the HSE dental service to school going children. This is generally provided between the ages of 11-13 years of age (coincident with 6<sup>th</sup> class or first year in secondary school) but can be provided anytime up to 16 years of age in accordance with the legislation.

## Reimbursement

Patients requiring primary care non-surgical orthodontic care are eligible to apply for reimbursement of orthodontic fees in line with the provisions of the NIPHS.

The HSE will reimburse orthodontic fees up to a maximum of €2,200, or the cost of the treatment abroad, whichever is the lesser.

Patients who are referred for orthodontic assessment are assessed to see if they meet the criteria for treatment by the HSE. Assessment for eligibility for orthodontic treatment (categorisation) as per the HSE Orthodontic Assessment Tool (please see link below). The orthodontic consultant abroad must assess a patient against the HSE Orthodontic Assessment Tool to determine eligibility for publicly funded orthodontic treatment. **Please note if a patient attends any orthodontic appointment in Ireland the entire programme of care will be ineligible for reimbursement.**

Reimbursement in respect of orthodontic treatment is as follows:

€100 maximum reimbursement for Orthodontic assessment.

€2,100 maximum reimbursement for Orthodontic Treatment

Total reimbursement = €2,200 maximum. The reimbursements are payable only at the completion of these episodes of care i.e. the €100 for the assessment may be claimed when the assessment has been accessed. The €2,100 for the treatment will be reimbursable only upon completion of the entire treatment at the conclusion of the retainer phase.

Please note that evidence of travel to the jurisdiction of treatment is required for each episode of care during the course of the entire treatment. Accessing any orthodontic appointment in the private sector within Ireland will immediately preclude the patient from being eligible for reimbursement. It is recommended that proof of travel for each appointment is retained to be submitted with the claim for reimbursement.

## Assessment

If your child has been referred by a HSE Primary Care Dentist for Orthodontic Assessment with a view to Orthodontic Treatment, the maximum reimbursement amount for that assessment under the Northern Ireland Planned Healthcare Scheme is €100. The assessment abroad must be done in line with the HSE Orthodontic Assessment Tool.

## Treatment

The maximum amount payable for Orthodontic Treatment is €2,100 including retainer phase.

Total: €2,200.00

Details are available from the National Contract Point via telephone 056 778 4547 or 056 778 4546 or 056 7720551