

Private Provider requests for investigations under the NHS

Background

NHS GP practices can receive requests from private providers relating to investigation and/or treatment of one of the practice's registered patients. The practice may be asked to do certain investigations or to prescribe specific medication for the patient. It is important to note that complying with such requests regardless of the GP's management and treatment of the patient is outside the scope of NHS primary medical services.

The NHS General Medical Services Regulations which govern the contract between the NHS and GPs, define essential services as services *which are delivered in the manner determined by the GP in discussion with the patient*. Therefore a GP provider should only carry out investigations and prescribe medication for a patient where it is necessary for the GP's care of the patient and the GP is the responsible doctor. If the GP considers the proposed investigations to be clinically appropriate and would require them in the ordinary course of treating their patient, and is competent to both interpret them and manage the care of the patient accordingly, then the clinician may proceed with arranging the investigations for the patient as per the provision of NHS primary medical services. Patients are of course entitled to access their medical records so GPs can provide access to the results of any such investigations to the patient for them to take them back to the private provider.

If the GP is asked by a private provider to arrange investigations or tests, the results of which the GP would not be able to interpret and/or the GP does not feel clinically competent to manage the patient accordingly, then they should advise the patient and the provider that the services do not fall within NHS Primary medical services and to make alternative arrangements. In some cases, where shared care arrangements are in place, GP providers can arrange the investigations and the results are fully dealt with by clinicians with the necessary competence under the shared care arrangement. The purpose of shared care arrangements is to provide a framework within which appropriate clinical oversight is in place and patient safety is protected, and shared care arrangements should be drafted accordingly. Where no such arrangements are in place and where the treatment is not being delivered in a manner determined by the GP in discussion with the patient, NHS GPs should not arrange investigations that are requested by private providers.



Template letter to respond to private providers

Dear

We have received your request to arrange investigations for <Patient Name>. As providers of NHS primary medical services, these requests fall outside of our contractual scope and as such we are not commissioned by the NHS to deliver this, we will therefore not be able to undertake them.

We would therefore request that you make alternative arrangements as soon as possible so that this patient can receive the investigations and treatment that you are recommending.

Your sincerely,