

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board Priorities Committee

Policy title	Policy 70: Complementary and Alternative Therapy (2002)
Policy position	Not Normally Funded
Date of issue	April 2023
Update	This policy will be updated in light of a substantial body of new evidence or new national guidance.

Complementary and alternative therapies are treatments that fall outside of mainstream healthcare¹.

Complementary and alternative therapies are **not normally funded**, unless as an adjunct to core treatments. For example, acupuncture or manual therapy can be considered within physiotherapy or pain management services in line with relevant national guidance but are not funded as separate procedures.

In circumstances where acupuncture is considered for management chronic primary pain; the following NICE Clinical Guideline³ recommendations apply:

A single course of acupuncture or dry needling (within a traditional Chinese or Western acupuncture system) if the course:

- is delivered in a community setting **and**
- is delivered by a band 7 (equivalent or lower) healthcare professional with appropriate training **and**
- is made up of no more than 5 hours of healthcare professional time (the number and length of sessions can be adapted within these boundaries) **or**
- is delivered by another healthcare professional with appropriate training and/or in another setting for equivalent or lower cost.

NHS England guidance on 'Items which should not be routinely prescribed in primary care'² notes that prescribers in primary care should not initiate homeopathic or herbal items for any new patient and that prescribers should be supported in de-prescribing herbal and homeopathic items in all patients and where appropriate, ensure the availability of relevant services to facilitate this change. This recommendation is made on the basis of lack of robust evidence of clinical effectiveness or there are significant safety concerns.

Exceptional circumstances may be considered where there is evidence of significant health impairment and there is also evidence of the intervention improving health status

References

1. NHS Choices <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/complementary-and-alternative-medicine/>
2. NHS England (2017, updated 2019): Items which should not be routinely prescribed in primary care: Guidance for CCGs
3. NICE guidance NG193 (April 2021) Chronic pain (primary and secondary) in over 16s: assessment of all chronic pain and management of chronic primary pain
4. NICE guideline NG59 (2016, last updated 2020): Low back pain and sciatica in over 16s: assessment and management
5. NICE guidance CG177 (2014, last updated 2020) Osteoarthritis: care and management

Clinical coding: N/A

Version	Date	Reason for change
Version 2.0	Agreed May 2022 (Ratified by the Board – January 2023)	Update with no change in commissioning position. Addition of NICE and NHSE references and NICE guidance NG193 (April 2021) guidance for acupuncture service provision.