

Commissioning Policy

Breast Procedures

	Procedure	Policy Category
A.	Breast augmentation and insertion of breast implants (non-cancer related indications and treatments)	Prior approval (PA)
B.	Breast prosthesis removal	Criteria based access (CBA)
C.	Breast reconstruction (cancer-related indications and treatments)	Criteria based access (CBA)
D.1.	Female breast reduction (hypermastia)	Interventions Not Normally Funded (INNF)
D.2.	Female breast reduction (asymmetry)	Prior approval (PA)
E.	Male breast reduction for gynaecomastia	Interventions Not Normally Funded (INNF)
F.	Other breast procedures	Interventions not normally funded (INNF)

NB: Throughout this document, the terms 'female' and 'male' are used to define an individual's biological sex when registered at birth.

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Authorisation and document control

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Job title of author:	Commissioning Manager – Elective Care
Name of sign off group:	Commissioning Policy Review Group

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Lead Consultant for Breast Surgery	25/07/2024
ICB Clinical and Care Lead for Cancer	

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Version control				
Version number	Date	Summary of changes	Author/Editor	Approved by
1.0	25/07/2024	All individual breast procedure policies combined into single document and new policy template adopted.	Commissioning Manager – Elective Care	Commissioning Policy Review Group 11/03/2025

		<p>'Removal and replacement of breast implants' policy renamed 'Breast prosthesis removal' and EBI criteria adopted.</p> <p>Female breast reduction policy EBI criteria adopted for hypermastia.</p> <p>Developmental breast asymmetry policy renamed to 'Female breast reduction (asymmetry) and EBI criteria adopted.</p> <p>Male breast reduction for gynaecomastia policy category changed from PA to INNf and relevant EBI criteria adopted from overarching 'breast reduction' policy.</p>		
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A. Breast augmentation and insertion of breast implants (non-cancer related indications and treatments)

1.0 Background

This policy sets out the Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board's position on breast implant surgery. Breast implant surgery – also called breast augmentation or enlargement – is the most common type of cosmetic surgery carried out in the UK. Generally, breast implants used for purely cosmetic reasons are not available on the NHS and will need to be paid for privately.

In Gloucestershire, non-cancer related breast augmentation surgery will only be funded if there is a need to reconstruct the breast after a major injury, or when a patient has a total absence of breast tissue caused by a congenital defect (known as congenital amastia).

NB:

- *This policy does not apply to gender reassignment or surgery following breast cancer.*
- *For asymmetric breasts, unilateral breast reduction may be considered as opposed to breast augmentation if there is an impact on health – see policy 'D.2. Female breast reduction (asymmetry)' below.*

2.0 Policy statement

Policy category	Prior Approval
Policy details	
Gloucestershire ICB will only consider funding secondary care assessment and subsequent insertion of breast implants, unilaterally or bilaterally, where one of the following criteria applies. Prior Approval must be granted by Gloucestershire ICB before treatment.	
Criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reconstructive surgery following major trauma to the breast before or after development• Congenital amastia (total absence of breast tissue).	
Insertion of breast implants is not otherwise routinely funded.	
<i>Note: This policy does not apply to gender reassignment or surgery following breast cancer.</i>	

3.0 Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy

Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy may be considered on an individual basis where their GP or consultant believes exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the rule of this policy.

Individual cases will be reviewed at the ICB's Individual Funding Request Panel upon receipt of a completed application form from the patient's GP, Consultant or Clinician. Applications cannot be considered from patients personally.

4.0 References

- [Information for commissioners of Plastic Surgery Services - referrals and guidelines in Plastic Surgery](#) *Modernisation Agency (Action on Plastic Surgery, 2005)*

B. Breast prosthesis removal

1.0 Background

This policy sets out the Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board's position on the removal or replacement of breast implants.

Breast implants may be inserted during reconstructive surgery for treatment or prevention of breast cancer or for cosmetic purposes. Surgery to remove or replace breast implants is only carried out by the NHS in specific situations when criteria are met.

Patients should be informed at the time of initial surgery that due to capsular contracture and less frequently rupture, implants are likely to need replacement and further surgery may be required.

2.0 Policy statement

Policy category	Criteria based access
Policy details	
Gloucestershire ICB will fund removal or replacement of breast implants where the criteria outlined in the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges' best practice guidance below is met:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Evidence-based interventions (EBI): Breast prosthesis removal https://ebi.aomrc.org.uk/interventions/breast-prosthesis-removal/	

3.0 Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy

Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy may be considered on an individual basis where their GP or consultant believes exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the rule of this policy.

Individual cases will be reviewed at the ICB's Individual Funding Request Panel upon receipt of a completed application form from the patient's GP, Consultant or Clinician. Applications cannot be considered from patients personally.

4.0 References

- As per EBI guidance - <https://ebi.aomrc.org.uk/interventions/breast-prosthesis-removal/#references>

C. Breast reconstruction (cancer-related indications and treatments)

1.0 Background

This policy sets out Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board's position on breast reconstruction surgery as a result of cancer-related indications and treatments, including risk reducing surgery (mastectomy).

In cancer patients, reconstructive surgery, including breast implants, is often necessary following initial cancer surgery, particularly in order to reconstruct the breast mound after a mastectomy (the surgical removal of the breast, often used to treat breast cancer). In some cases, further surgical procedures may be required to achieve an acceptable result, and some patients may choose to delay this surgery for a number of years after the initial cancer surgery.

Local doctors have agreed that generally 4 surgical procedures should be sufficient to achieve a good result (to include contralateral surgery if required), and that further procedures beyond this generally will not deliver sufficient benefit to justify the cost and risk of surgery.

2.0 Policy statement

Policy category	Criteria based access
Policy details	
Gloucestershire ICB will fund a maximum of four breast reconstruction procedures, including any surgery to the contralateral side, where the following criteria are met:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cosmetic/reconstructive surgery to reduce discomfort and improve appearance• Scar revision for patients who are unable to wear a prosthesis, or who have other significant problems related to previous cancer surgery	
Fifth or subsequent procedures will require funding approval to be granted by NHS Gloucestershire on a case-by-case basis. All cases prior to August 2015 are exempt.	

3.0 Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy

Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy may be considered on an individual basis where their GP or consultant believes exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the rule of this policy.

Individual cases will be reviewed at the ICB's Individual Funding Request Panel upon receipt of a completed application form from the patient's GP, Consultant or Clinician. Applications cannot be considered from patients personally.

4.0 References

- [Information for commissioners of Plastic Surgery Services - referrals and guidelines in Plastic Surgery](#) (Modernisation Agency - Action on Plastic Surgery, 2005)

- [Guidance for commissioning of oncoplastic breast surgery](#) (*ABS, BAPRAS, BCN, 2018*)

D.1. **Female breast reduction (hypermastia)**

1.0 **Background**

This policy sets out the Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board's position on female breast reduction for hypermastia (enlargement).

Breast reduction surgery is a procedure used to treat females with breast hypermastia (enlargement), where breasts are large enough to cause problems like shoulder girdle dysfunction, intertrigo and adverse effects to quality of life.

***NB:** NHS England holds commissioning responsibility for breast reduction surgery (mastectomy) as a surgical intervention for individuals on the NHS pathway of care for the treatment of gender dysphoria.*

2.0 **Policy statement**

Policy category	Interventions Not Normally Funded (INNF)
Policy details	
Gloucestershire ICB will only fund secondary care assessment and subsequent breast reduction surgery on an exceptional basis.	
Funding approval must be sought from the ICB via the Individual Funding Request process prior to treatment.	

3.0 **Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy**

Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy may be considered on an individual basis where their GP or consultant believes exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the rule of this policy.

Individual cases will be reviewed at the ICB's Individual Funding Request Panel upon receipt of a completed application form from the patient's GP, Consultant or Clinician. Applications cannot be considered from patients personally.

5.0 **References**

- EBI guidance - <https://ebi.aomrc.org.uk/interventions/breast-reduction/#references>

D.2. **Female breast reduction (asymmetry)**

1.0 **Background**

This policy sets out the Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board's position on female breast reduction for asymmetric breasts.

Breast asymmetry can be corrected through breast reduction. The majority of females do not have identically sized breasts. In fact, slight asymmetry is considered the norm. Whilst the variation in size is of little concern to the majority of females, there are some for whom the size difference is so pronounced that it impacts on their body image and can affect their self-esteem.

NB: NHS England holds commissioning responsibility for breast reduction surgery (mastectomy) as a surgical intervention for individuals on the NHS pathway of care for the treatment of gender dysphoria.

2.0 **Policy statement**

Policy category	Prior Approval (PA)
Policy details	
Gloucestershire ICB will only consider funding secondary care assessment and subsequent breast reduction surgery for asymmetric breasts, where the criteria outlined in the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges' best practice guidance below is met:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Evidence-based interventions (EBI): Breast reduction https://ebi.aomrc.org.uk/interventions/breast-reduction/	
Prior Approval must be granted by Gloucestershire ICB before treatment.	

3.0 **Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy**

Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy may be considered on an individual basis where their GP or consultant believes exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the rule of this policy.

Individual cases will be reviewed at the ICB's Individual Funding Request Panel upon receipt of a completed application form from the patient's GP, Consultant or Clinician. Applications cannot be considered from patients personally.

5.0 **References**

- As per EBI guidance - <https://ebi.aomrc.org.uk/interventions/breast-reduction/#references>

E. Male breast reduction for gynaecomastia

1.0 Background

This policy sets out the Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board's position on male breast reduction surgery for gynaecomastia.

Gynaecomastia is a common condition that causes male breasts to swell and become larger than normal. It is most common in teenage and older males. Signs vary from a small amount of extra tissue around the nipples to more prominent breasts. It can affect one or both breasts. Sometimes, the breast tissue can be tender or painful, but this isn't always the case.

Gynaecomastia can be caused by an imbalance between the sex hormones testosterone and oestrogen. Oestrogen causes breast tissue to grow. While all males produce some oestrogen, they usually have much higher levels of testosterone, which stops the oestrogen from causing breast tissue to grow. If the balance of hormones in his body changes, this can cause a male's breasts to grow. Sometimes, the cause of this imbalance is unknown. The growth in breast tissue is not due to extra body fat from being overweight, so losing weight or doing more exercise will not improve the condition.

2.0 Policy statement

Policy category	Intervention not normally funded (INNF)
Policy details	
Gloucestershire ICB will only fund male breast reduction for gynaecomastia on an exceptional basis, in line with the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges' best practice guidance below:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Evidence-based interventions (EBI): Breast reduction https://ebi.aomrc.org.uk/interventions/breast-reduction/	
Funding approval must be sought from the ICB via the Individual Funding Request process prior to treatment.	

3.0 Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy

Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy may be considered on an individual basis where their GP or consultant believes exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the rule of this policy.

Individual cases will be reviewed at the ICB's Individual Funding Request Panel upon receipt of a completed application form from the patient's GP, Consultant or Clinician. Applications cannot be considered from patients personally.

4.0 References

- As per EBI guidance - <https://ebi.aomrc.org.uk/interventions/breast-reduction/#references>

F. Other breast procedures

1.0 Background

This policy sets out the Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board's position on other breast procedures which are considered cosmetic. Breast surgery for cosmetic reasons is a low priority for NHS funding and will not be routinely funded by NHS Gloucestershire.

Breast lifts (mastopexy) are cosmetic procedures that raise the breast by removing excess tissue and tightening the surrounding tissue.

Inverted nipples are usually present from birth. Surgery to correct inverted nipples is considered a cosmetic procedure.

Supernumerary nipples are additional nipples, often referred to as third nipples. As a general rule these are harmless, and no medical intervention is required to remove them; removal is therefore considered a cosmetic procedure.

2.0 Policy statement

Policy category	Intervention not normally funded (INNF)
Policy details	
Gloucestershire ICB will only fund the breast procedures listed below on an exceptional basis:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breast mastopexy (breast lifting)• Corrective surgery on nipple (e.g. nipple inversion)• Removal of supernumerary nipples (exceptionally, supernumerary nipples that develop in conjunction with breast tissue and/or ducts (polymastia) may be considered for treatment)	
Funding approval must be sought from the ICB via the Individual Funding Request process prior to treatment.	

3.0 Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy

Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy may be considered on an individual basis where their GP or consultant believes exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the rule of this policy.

Individual cases will be reviewed at the ICB's Individual Funding Request Panel upon receipt of a completed application form from the patient's GP, Consultant or Clinician. Applications cannot be considered from patients personally.

5.0 References

- [Information for commissioners of Plastic Surgery Services - referrals and guidelines in Plastic Surgery](#) (*Modernisation Agency - Action on Plastic Surgery, 2005*)