

CLINICAL POLICY ADVISORY GROUP (CPAG)

NHS Derby and Derbyshire ICB Position Statement: Low Back Pain Imaging

Statement

NHS Derby and Derbyshire ICB has deemed that imaging should not routinely be commissioned for people with low back pain with or without sciatica unless the result is likely to change management.

These commissioning intentions will be reviewed periodically. This is to ensure affordability against other services commissioned by the ICB.

Rationale

Many of the imaging findings (for example, disc and joint degeneration) are frequently found in asymptomatic people. Requests for imaging by non-specialist clinicians, where there is no suspicion of serious underlying pathology, can cause unnecessary distress and lead to further referrals for findings that are not clinically relevant. There is evidence that most patients in whom a serious underlying pathology is not suspected and without red flag symptoms will recover from low back pain within six weeks.

Reference

- NICE Clinical Knowledge Summaries, Back pain - How should I diagnose the cause of low back pain?, last revised in February 2022, accessed 15/09/22, <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/back-pain-low-without-radiculopathy/diagnosis/diagnosis/>
- NICE Guidance [NG59], Low back pain and sciatica in over 16s: assessment and management, published November 2016, Updated December 2020, accessed 15/09/22, <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng59>
- Evidence-Based Interventions List II Guidance, Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, reviewed Nov 2020, accessed 15/09/22, https://www.aomrc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/EBI_list2_guidance_150321