Using evidence to support commissioning decisions

Is the proposed policy or change based on NICE/national specialty guidance?

- Yes
  - Is the guidance up to date?
    - Yes
      - Does the wording of the proposed policy or change match current evidence?
        - Yes
          - Consider adopt
        - No
          - Consider amendment
    - No
      - Search for current evidence from systematic reviews of research
        - Yes
          - Relevant systematic reviews identified?
            - Yes
              - Search for trials and other research studies?
                - Yes
                  - Assess quality and strength of evidence
                    - Does the wording of the proposed policy or change match current evidence?
                      - Yes
                        - Consider adoption
                      - No
                        - Consider amendment
                - No
                  - Consider rejecting the proposed policy or change
          - No
            - Consider amendment
        - No
          - Search for trials and other research studies?
            - Yes
              - Assess quality and strength of evidence
                - Does the wording of the proposed policy or change match current evidence?
                  - Yes
                    - Consider adoption
                  - No
                    - Consider amendment
            - No
              - Consider amendment

Consider patient experience; useful evidence may come from qualitative studies
Is the proposed policy based on NICE/national specialty guidance?

Websites to search include:
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (guidelines and quality standards for England and Wales)
- Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (clinical guidelines for Scotland)
- Royal Colleges relevant to the topic (e.g. Royal College of General Practitioners)
- NHS Evidence - under “Types of evidence” use the filter “Guidance” (evidence from a range of accredited sources)

Is the guidance up to date?
Check when the guidance was last updated (the search for evidence may have been performed a significant amount of time before the guidance was published):
- Is the date of the last update or search appropriate to the topic? Is there a rapid or stable rate of knowledge change on the topic?
- Is there likely to have been new research published since release of the guidance that could impact on the recommendations?

Search for current evidence from systematic reviews of research literature
A systematic review is a consistent, transparent and reproducible approach to identifying, evaluating and summarising all relevant evidence on a topic

Sources to search for systematic reviews include:
- Health Technology Assessment database (completed and ongoing health technology assessments)
- Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (health interventions)
- NHS Evidence - under “Type of evidence” use filter “Systematic review” (health and social care interventions)
- Health Systems Evidence (health system interventions)
- Campbell Collaboration Library of Systematic Reviews (education, crime and justice, and social care).
- PubMed Health (health interventions)
- Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects* (health interventions and social care interventions)
- NHS Economic Evaluation Database* (health interventions)
*no new records added after December 2014

Search for trials and other research studies
A full systematic search for evidence is unlikely to be feasible; consider criteria for restricting your search by study design, sample size, or date of publication as appropriate to the topic

Sources to search include:
- Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (bibliographic database of randomised controlled trials)
- NIHR Journals Library (archive of research funded by the National Institute for Health Research)
- NHS Evidence (evidence from a range of accredited sources)

Assess quality and strength of evidence
Check when systematic reviews were last updated (the search for evidence may have been performed a significant amount of time before the review was published)
Just because it has been published do not accept the research at face value
The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) has free tools to help assess the quality of systematic reviews and other types of research evidence such as randomised controlled trials

Consider adoption/Consider amendment/Consider rejecting proposed policy
Consider patient experience; useful evidence may come from qualitative studies. PubMed (database of a broad range of biomedical literature) may be a useful source to search.
Where there is evidence of no or marginal benefit use appropriate judgement when considering adopting, amending or rejecting the proposed policy