

Birmingham, Sandwell and Solihull

Eligibility Criteria Policy for NHS Non-Emergency Patient Transport (NEPT)

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1. Introduction

From the 1st April 2013 Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) took over responsibility for commissioning non-emergency patient transport (NEPT). In 2014, CCGs in Birmingham, Sandwell and Solihull began working together to review provision of NEPT services at local NHS healthcare services. This review has led to development of a universal set of local standards for non-emergency patient transport and eligibility criteria; these will be applied to all NHS healthcare services within the CCGs geographical area.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a consistent set of guidance to be used locally to determine eligibility for NEPT services across all applicable healthcare services.

CCGs recognise that NEPT services play a critical role in reducing health inequalities and improving access to healthcare services. Equally, NEPT services help improve patient experience ensuring that patients are conveyed with dignity in a safe and timely manner. These local eligibility criteria will also help ensure that we improve NEPT services focusing them on those who have a medical need for transport whilst ensuring that the service is sustainable in the future.

NEPT services are provided to only those patients who have a specific medical need requiring patient transport. Across the NHS it is the responsibility of patients to make their own way to and from healthcare services unless there is a medical reason why they cannot use private or public transport including:

- walking
- cycling
- bus, train, taxi or community/voluntary transport schemes
- use of mobility cars, lifts from family, carers, neighbours or other support networks
- or a combination of the above.

Patients should exercise all means available to them to reduce reliance upon the NHS, unless there is a clear medical need for transport.

This policy is also linked to NHS guidance which encourages adults and children to be active daily. Walking or cycling to healthcare services can count towards daily or weekly physical activity.

The eligibility criteria set out in this policy will apply to all applicable services commissioned by the Birmingham, Sandwell and Solihull CCGs.

1.1. What is Non-Emergency Patient Transport?

The Department of Health's (2007) guidance on *Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport Service* definition of NEPT is typified by the non-urgent and planned transportation of patients to and from premises providing NHS healthcare and between healthcare providers. This can and should encompass a wide range of vehicle types and levels of care consistent with the patients' clinical needs.

NEPT services help patients get to and from healthcare services this may include:

- Patient transport to or from a hospital, satellite or community services
- Transfer of patients between healthcare services
- Repatriation of patients to their home area.

NEPT is not available for patients accessing primary care services or private healthcare services. It is not for patients that require an emergency or immediate response.

1.2. Who is Non-Emergency Patient Transport for?

A non-emergency patient is one who has a medical need for patient transport, but does not require an emergency or immediate response. The Department of Health guideline have not extended NEPT to those patients who do not meet the medical criteria outlined below. Those who have a social need only for transport are not eligible for transport.¹ Financial hardship is not a qualifying factor for NEPT, financial assistance is provided for through the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme; see section 6.

¹ Department of Health (2007) *Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport*, section 14, p8

Patients are eligible for NHS funded NEPT if they meet the following Department of Health² criteria;

- Where the patient's medical condition is such that it requires the skills or support of the patient transport service (PTS) staff for their journey and where it is deemed detrimental to the patient's condition or recovery if they were to travel by other means.
- Where the medical condition impacts on the patient's mobility to such an extent that they would be unable to access healthcare and/or it would be detrimental to the patient's condition or recovery to travel by any other means.

The Department of Health criteria also states that NEPT can also be provided to an escort (carer or professional) where they have particular skills and/or support needed. Any requests for an escort to travel with a patient must be booked in advance through the Booking Office or NHS trust.³ This may include a health professional travelling with a patient where they have particular skills required to support the transfer of a patient.

The overarching principle of NEPT is that patients who are eligible for transport will receive safe, timely and comfortable transport, without detriment to their medical condition.

1.3. Medical Need

Medical need is defined as the definite or likely requirement for any of the following;

- the skills or support of clinical trained patient transport staff
- patient will need substantial assistance/support to move from their bed/chair at pick up point to vehicle and from vehicle to destination
- unable to weight-bear, transfer or self-mobilize
- patient needs to be monitored and/or gases need to be administered during or after the journey
- a clinician has assessed that a journey by other means would be detrimental to the health of the patient

² Department of Health (2007) *Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport*, section 8, p8.

³ Department of Health (2007) *Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport*, section 9, p8.

- patient requires protection to prevent harm to themselves and/or existing wound or condition
- passengers or vehicle crew will need to be protected due to the patient's condition
- patient requires equipment during or after the patient's journey
- patient requires conveyance in a specialist ambulance vehicle

1.4. Policy Scope

This policy relates only to the mandatory provision of free NHS funded NEPT services as per the Department of Health's (2007) guidance on *Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport Service*.

It applies to the following NHS trusts and services:

- Birmingham Children's Hospital
- Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Trust
- Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Birmingham Women's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Forward Thinking Birmingham (0-25 mental health service)
- Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust
- Royal Orthopaedic NHS Foundation Trust
- University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust
- Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust
- Worcestershire Acute Hospital NHS Trust
- West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust or
- any other secondary or community NHS service as defined by the Commissioners including non-emergency patient transport providers.

It does not include the following other forms of transport:

- community transport where patients pay to travel
- emergency ambulance transport
- public or private transport
- secure mental health transport

- specialist neonatal transport.

1.5. Equalities Impact Analysis

A full equality analysis was carried out in two stages; pre and post consultation. The analysis explored the potential impact of the proposed eligibility criteria against protected characteristics. Full consultation was undertaken with a range of stakeholders which included patients currently accessing NEPT services.

It has been determined that the implementation of a single, consistently applied eligibility criteria supported by a patient charter should result in the provision of a more equitable service for eligible patients. Eligible patients will benefit from the receipt of safe, timely and comfortable transport, without detriment to their health or medical condition.

All public bodies have a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 when exercising public functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality, and foster good relations. The duty applies to the relevant protected characteristics – age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, gender, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership.

Public authorities and other organisations when carrying out functions of a public nature have a duty under the Human Rights Act 1998 not to act incompatibly with rights under the European Convention for the Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms. All health care providers are required to work within the NHS FREDA principles (Fairness, Respect, Equality, Dignity, and Autonomy).

All staff are expected to deliver NEPT services and provide care in a manner which respects the individuality of patients and their carer and as such treat them and members of the workforce respectfully, with dignity, and with regard for diversity of background and belief, and without discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristic.

2. Determining Eligibility

Patients can either book their transport direct with the NEPT service provider or for some NHS trusts their healthcare service will manage their booking. All NEPT bookings will be made in accordance with the locally agreed booking procedures.

It is the responsibility of patients to demonstrate how they meet the NEPT eligibility criteria by answering a series of screening questions. Where a representative or parent/guardian is acting on behalf of a patient they will be required to answer a series of screening questions where it is appropriate to do so in line with data protection regulations. Health professionals involved in the patient's care, booking NEPT on behalf of their patient will be asked the same screening questions. Failure to answer these screening questions and/or provide the necessary information will result in a delay in completing the eligibility assessment and requests may be rejected.

Following a request for transport it is the responsibility of booking staff at either the NEPT service or NHS trusts (where they manage bookings) to determine if the patient meets the eligibility criteria.

A patient's eligibility for NEPT will be determined by undertaking an assessment against the eligibility criteria based on medical need and risks to health. This eligibility assessment will also help identify the patient's mobility class and determine the type of vehicle that is required and level of support required from patient transport staff (PTS); see Appendix 1 NEPT Support Levels. The eligibility criteria are intended to act as a guide and each case will be assessed based on its own merits and the individual patient's medical needs.

Eligibility will be determined either by a healthcare professional or by a non-qualified staff. Staff involved in determining eligibility must be employed by the NHS (or providing services under a contract with the NHS), and either be clinically supervised and/or working within locally agreed guidelines and protocols.⁴

⁴ Department of Health (2007) *Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport*, section 10, p8

Information provided by a secondary or community care health professional involved in the clinical care of the patient may be taken into account when determining eligibility and or supporting clinical evidence required; however the final decision will be the responsibility of the NEPT service provider or NHS trust where they provide the booking service. General practitioners shall not routinely be required to provide supporting evidence as to a patient's medical need. This final decision should be in line with these eligibility criteria and based on medical needs of the patients. All providers shall manage all patient identifiable information in line with their obligations under the Data Protection Act and any local procedures.

Failure to provide accurate information or deliberately providing misleading information will result in request(s) for NEPT services to be rejected or stopped. It is important that patients or their representatives where they are acting on their behalf notify the booking office of any changes in medical condition or personal circumstances. Equally, if a patient's mobility changes and requires a higher level of support to travel, they or their representative should notify the booking office.

If patients are in receipt of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance and/or if they have access to a mobility car they will be required to demonstrate why they are unable to travel by other means and require NEPT. Failure to provide this information may result in a delay to processing requests for NEPT services or requests may be rejected.

The NEPT service provider or NHS trusts are responsible for ensuring that they have a fair and equitable system in place for determining eligibility. Information on eligibility and how this is determined should be available to healthcare professionals, patients and the public. This should include details of how to ask for a decision to be reconsidered if a patient or their representative has been deemed not eligible and would like a review of the original decision; see section 8.

If the patient is either a regular user (requiring transport for an indefinite period) or will use the service for over six months in any one treatment episode, then their eligibility will be reviewed every six months as set out in 4.2.

3. Eligibility Criteria

These eligibility criteria below have been developed based on the principles set out in the Department of Health (2007) *Eligibility for Patients Transport Services* guidance. It is the responsibility of CCGs to decide who receives NEPT services and this should be based on meeting reasonable requirements in the local area.⁵

3.1 Developing the local criteria

Using the principles of the Department of Health eligibility criteria CCGs have worked with a range of stakeholders to develop a locally defined set of criteria. CCGs undertook a public consultation in 2015 on the proposed new NEPT service and eligibility criteria. Following the outcome of this consultation CCGs have used this feedback to develop the final eligibility criteria set out below:

3.2 Acceptance & exclusion criteria

Except as otherwise specified, the service shall be available to all eligible patients, each of whom may be accompanied by no more than one eligible escort. No more than one assistance dog can accompany any eligible patient, and only if needed by the patient.

3.3 General requirements for eligible patients:

The patient must be registered with a GP within the commissioning area, or is normally resident within the commissioning area and has either:

- a) a medical condition that requires the skills or support of a patient transport staff, on or after the journey, to the extent that it would be detrimental to their condition or recovery if they were to travel by any other means or
- b) a medical condition that impacts on their mobility, to such an extent that they would be unable to access healthcare, and it would be detrimental to the patient's condition or recovery to travel by any other means.

3.4 Specific clinical eligibility

A patient is eligible for non-emergency patient transport if:

⁵ Department of Health (2007) *Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport*, section 12, p8.

The patient requires any one of the following during transport:

- a) a stretcher or sling/hoist
- b) intravenous support
- c) oxygen or other medical gases
- d) specialist bariatric provision.

Or

The patient has any one of the following such that they are unable to travel to and from their appointment by means of private or public transport which also affects their daily living due to:

- a) a mental health condition or brain injury
- b) are unable to stand unless aided by another person or
- c) disability⁶.

Or

The patient is attending their appointment for active treatment and will experience serious side effects on their return journey that mean that they are unable to travel by other means of public or private transport.

3.5 Distance Travelled and Frequency

The distance to be travelled and frequency of travel may also be taken into account, if the patient is able to demonstrate that their medical need may be affected by these factors.⁷ Distance travelled and frequency are not, in isolation, qualifying criteria for NEPT. The patient will need to demonstrate why they are unable to travel by private or public transport due to their health condition and therefore would require NEPT e.g. no mobility car and/or how such travel may adversely impact on their health. The patient will also need to demonstrate if they are on a low income, why, assistance from the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme is not a suitable alternative to NEPT.

⁶ Definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010. You're disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Long-term means lasting longer than 12 months or for the rest of your life if this is expected to be shorter than 12 months.

⁷ Department of Health (2007) *Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport*, section 7, p7.

4. Exclusions Criteria

Eligibility for NEPT services has not been extended to include patients who do not fit the above criteria. The following key exclusion criteria applies:

- patients requiring an emergency ambulance
- patients attending A&E for inward journeys (with exception to eligible patients booked by a healthcare professional for a same day assessment e.g. Acute Medical Centre)
- high risk mental health patients or those requiring secure mental health transport
- transport for primary care services (e.g.GP surgeries, health clinics, dental services)
- prisoner transport
- neonatal transfers
- non-NHS patients (private patients)
- patients requiring transport outside the United Kingdom
- unaccompanied children under 16 years of age
- visitors to hospital
- patients with only social need for transport
- patients registered at with a GP outside the commissioning area the West Midlands CCGs, with exception to where the patients home CCG has agreed to fund NEPT
- out of area transport requests where the patient's home CCG have not agreed funding
- staff transport where they are not accompanying an eligible patient.

4.1 Eligible Escorts

Escorts may only travel with a patient where it has been booked in advance and eligibility has been determined as one or more of the following:

- a) the parent or guardian of a child aged under 16;

- b) a professional or other person, who is able to provide the necessary skills or services that the patient requires on the journey that cannot be supplied by the patient transport staff;
- c) carer or family member travelling with a patient who has been assessed by a health professional requiring a final journey to preferred place of death;
- d) clinical staff travelling with the patient to provide on-going medical care.

Escorts may only be conveyed where the eligible patient is present in the ambulance; therefore they will not be entitled to a return journey without the patient. For healthcare professionals their employing organisation will be responsible for the cost of any return transport.

Visitors, carers, family members and professionals should be encouraged to meet the patient at the destination where their skills and services are not required to convey the patient. The NEPT service is not extended to include visitors.⁸

4.2 Reviewing Eligibility

A patient's eligibility for NEPT services shall be reviewed by the booking office or NHS trust for every new journey requested unless they have been assessed by staff as either:

- a) a regular user requiring transport for an indefinite period or
- b) a user requiring the service for over six months in any one treatment episode.

Patients in the walking mobility category attending outpatient appointments cannot be assessed as a regular user and their eligibility will be reviewed by the booking office for every new journey booked to ensure that they continue to meet the eligibility criteria. This will enable booking staff to provide patients in the walking category with information on other travel options to enable them to gain control where they become able to undertake self-care and travel independently where appropriate (moving from category D to category E see Appendix 2).

⁸ Department of Health (2007) *Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport*, section 27, p10.

Where patients are classed as regular users (requiring transport for an indefinite period) or will use the service for over six months in any one treatment episode, their eligibility will be reviewed every six months.

The type of review carried out will depend on the patients' health condition and the reasons why eligibility was granted in the first instance. Where patients have been diagnosed with a health condition which requires on-going or prolonged treatment they will not be expected to provide evidence of this health condition as part of the review or subsequent review(s). All patients will be required to answer a number of simple questions to assess if any changes to their personal circumstance have occurred in the last six months.

This will also provide the patient with an opportunity to make sure that the booking office has the most up to date information about their health, mobility and support needs.

5. Who Pays for Non-Emergency Patient Transport

NEPT services shall be provided free of charge to eligible patients and their escorts where they are accessing NHS healthcare services.⁹ Payments by non-eligible patients or escorts who would like to pay to use the NEPT service are not permitted; and such requests should be sign-posted to community or private taxi transport options. Local information shall be available from the NEPT booking service and on the NEPT service website from 2017 on alternative travel options.

6. Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme

Non-eligible patients who are on low incomes may qualify for assistance towards the cost of travelling to and from healthcare services. Information on the Healthcare Travel Costs scheme is available from on the NHS Choices website, CCG websites and leaflets in NHS trusts.

⁹ Department of Health (2007) *Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport*, section 16, p9.

CCGs will work with local NHS trusts to ensure availability of this scheme for patients on low incomes who meet the eligibility criteria in line with the regulatory requirements.¹⁰

7. Assuring Adherence to the Policy

Adherence to this policy will be monitored by CCG commissioners through the contract management of local NEPT and NHS services. This will include working with a range of stakeholders including users of the service to monitor and review application of the policy.

8. Reconsider a Decision and Complaints

It is the patient's responsibility to demonstrate how they meet the eligibility criteria to receive free NHS transport and provide any supporting clinical evidence. Non-eligible patients do not have any formal right of appeal however, they are permitted to ask for any decision to be 'reconsidered' the provider or NHS trust shall be responsible for managing all such requests in a timely manner.

General practitioners shall not routinely be required to provide supporting evidence as to a patient's medical need where a patient chooses to request that the decision is re-considered or make a complaint.

If after this step the patient remains dissatisfied they shall be entitled to make a formal complaint as per the NEPT provider or NHS trust's complaints procedure.

Complaints regarding the application of the eligibility criteria and service should be made directly to the NEPT providers or NHS trusts in the first instance in accordance with their complaints procedure.

Complaints to one of the four Birmingham, Sandwell and Solihull CCGs must be raised within 12 months of the issue taking place. The CCGs have discretion to investigate any issue that may have breached this, upon receipt of a valid reason.

Please be aware that we are unable to assist in the following circumstances:

¹⁰ Department of Health (2010) Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme: Instructions and Guidance for the NHS.

- If a complaint that has already been raised and investigated by us or by another organisation
- If an oral complaint has been resolved to the patient's satisfaction by the end of the next working day
- With regards to a Freedom of Information response or process undertaken
- Where a complaint is under investigation by the Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman

If you have a general enquiry or would like to make a complaint, please let us know as soon as possible so that action can be taken to resolve the problem for you.

For further information on making a complaint please read the relevant CCGs Policy and Procedure for the Management of Complaints and Concerns.

If you would like to provide feedback or make a complaint, please write to:

Birmingham CrossCity CCG

Bartholomew House

142 Hagley Road

Birmingham

B16 9PA

Email: complaints.bhamcrosscity@nhs.net

Birmingham South Central CCG

Bartholomew House

142 Hagley Road

Birmingham

B16 9PA

Email: patientexperience@nhs.net

Sandwell & West Birmingham CCG

Kingston House

438-450 High Street

West Bromwich

B70 9LD

Email: swbccg.time2talk@nhs.net

Solihull CCG
Friars Gate
1011 Stratford Rd
Solihull
B90 4BN

Email: solihullccgcomplaints@nhs.net

References

Birmingham CrossCity CCG (2015) Non-emergency Patient Transport Consultation Report.

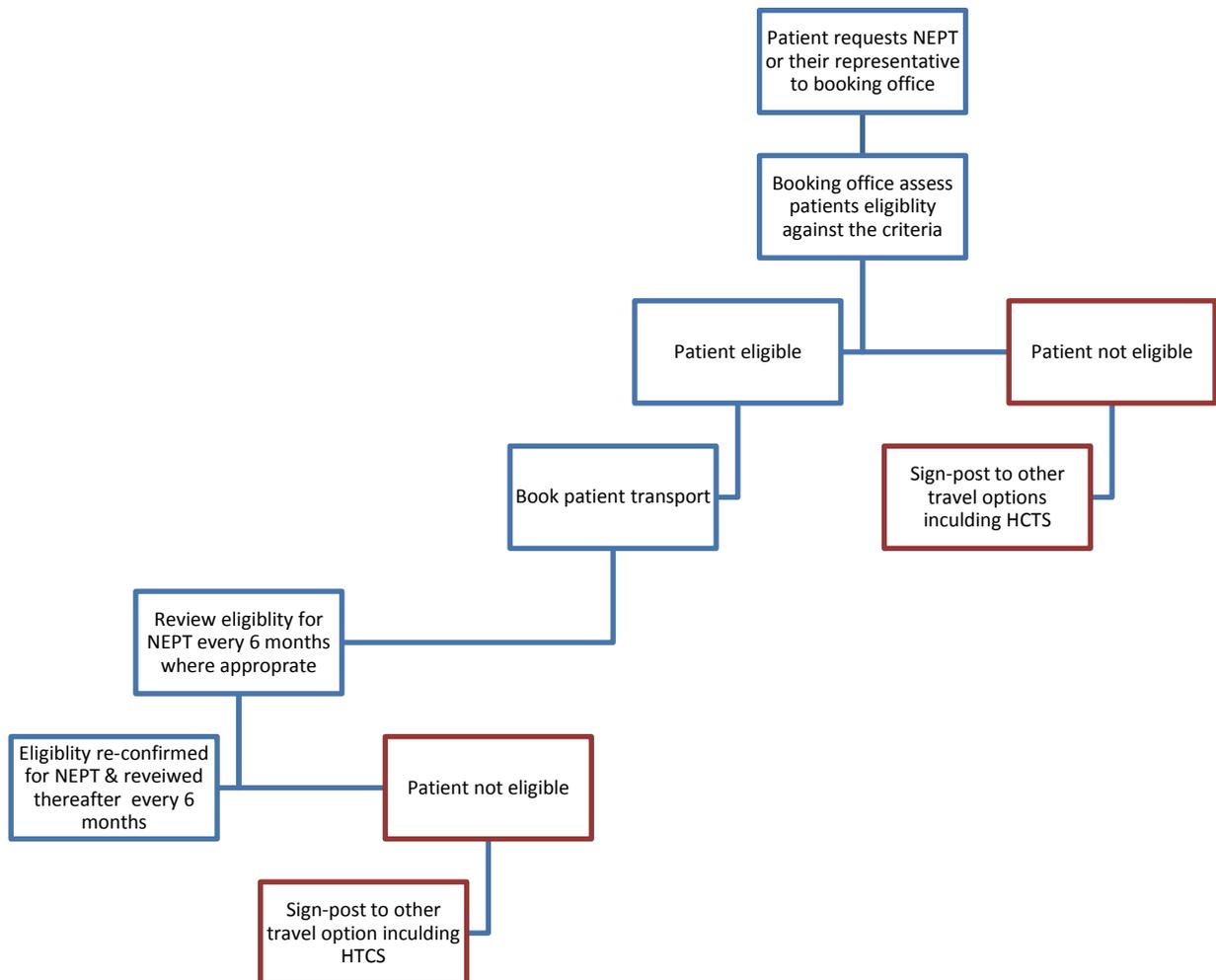
Birmingham CrossCity CCG (2015) Non-emergency Patient Transport Equalities Analysis.

Department of Health (2007) Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport.

Department of Health (2010) Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme: Instructions and Guidance for the NHS.

NHS England (2013) Who Pays Determining Responsibility for Payments for Providers.

Appendix 1: Process for Assessing Eligibility



Appendix 2: NEPT Patient Support Levels

Birmingham, Sandwell and Solihull Non-emergency patient transport support levels



Emergency ambulance transport

Category A

999 response

Serious or life threatening conditions where there is a medical emergency or full paramedic crew is required

Non-emergency patient transport

Category B

Specialist ambulance with two to four staff

Require ongoing treatment and monitoring
High dependency patients
Those who need to lie down

Non-emergency patient transport

Category C

Vehicle with two staff

Requiring monitoring and support
Patient with home oxygen
Immobilised patient
Transfer between healthcare services
Wheelchair users requiring assistance

Non-emergency patient transport

Category D

Vehicle or car with one or two staff

May require some support
Patients who have had renal dialysis, chemotherapy or surgery returning home
Patient unsafe to travel home by other means
Transfer between healthcare services
Wheelchair users requiring some assistance

Taxi, community transport, private vehicle, public transport

Category E

Able to self-care

Patients not eligible for NHS funded non-emergency patient transport services are responsible for making their own travel arrangements

