

Policy
For
**Non-Emergency Patient Transport
Services (NEPTS)**
&
Hospital Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS)
May 2016

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1. Introduction

NHS funded Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services (NEPTS) are considered part of an integrated programme of care by NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group (NHS GYW CCG) and are provided in accordance with NHS Policy and Guidance. A NEPTS patient is one, who whilst requiring treatment which may or may not be of a specialist nature, does not require an immediate or urgent response but who requires medical support during their journey, due to a current medical need or severely impaired mobility.

NHS GYW CCG transport services are provided by the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust, and includes the eligibility screening and booking of transport.

Hospital Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS) is part of the NHS Low Income Scheme, and was set up by the Department of Health to provide financial assistance to those patients who do not have a medical need for NHS funded transport, but who require assistance with their travel costs.

2. Policy Statement

NHS GYW CCG is committed to the equitable and timely provision of NEPTS to NHS GYW CCG patients. NHS GYW CCG will ensure common Eligibility Criteria for NEPTS is delivered in accordance with the national Department of Health Guidance Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport Services (PTS) Gateway Reference 8705¹ issued in August 2007.

The NHS principle is that it is the patient's responsibility to make their own way to and from hospital for patient episodes of care of all types, including outpatients' appointments, elective admissions and discharges from hospital. CCGs are not permitted to provide transport based on a patient's financial or social need, NHS

¹ References Page 11

GY&W CCG promotes the use of HTCS to assist those patients. And will adhere to the HTCS – Instructions and Guidance for NHS Organisations. Gateway Reference 14322² which applies to both NHS and independent service providers contracted to the NHS. This policy encapsulates NHS guidance and supersedes any previous local policy, the eligibility criteria will be used by the transport booking service to determine whether patients registered with a GP in the Great Yarmouth and Waveney area are entitled to NHS funded NEPTS.

3. Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services

Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services are typically the non-urgent, planned, transportation of patients with a medical need from their place of residence to and from premises providing NHS healthcare and between NHS healthcare providers.

This includes the premises used by the providers of care commissioned by the NHS (including treatment, outpatient appointments, including outreach clinics or diagnostic services), but excludes GP, dental appointments or A&E attendances including walk-in centres or minor injuries units. This encompasses a wide range of vehicle types and levels of care consistent with the patients' medical needs.

The place of residence is defined as any address specified at the time of booking the transport, e.g. home, nursing/residential home, or hospice. Patients will be transported in a timeframe and manner that will not be detrimental to their medical condition.

Patients transferred by a provider to improve their bed status will be at that organisation's cost; NHS GYW CCG will only pay for transfers with medical need and integral to that patient's pathway of care.

² References Page 11

3.1 Great Yarmouth & Waveney transport booking and eligibility screening

Responsibility for ensuring that a patient meets the eligibility criteria lies with the booking service who will make the appropriate transport bookings. The eligibility criteria used is on page 9.

Escorts/carers will only be able to travel with patients who have a medical need for the carers' assistance during the journey. Approval is not guaranteed and will depend on seat availability; and priority will be given to other patients.

3.2 Contact Details to book NHS funded transport

The Eligibility Screening and Advice Service opening hours for patients are Monday to Friday 8.30am to 6.00pm and their telephone number is: **0845 603 8115**.

For Healthcare professionals needing to arrange transport for patients outside of these hours, a service is available 24 hours a day. Prior approval via this service is recommended, any transport arranged without prior approval will be at that healthcare providers clinical and financial risk.

3.3 Booking Transport notice and authorisation

Routine healthcare journeys cannot be booked more than two weeks in advance and 48h notice is requested. Patients will be reassessed at 6 monthly intervals to ensure they remain eligible, unless there are significant changes to their medical condition. It is a patient responsibility to advise of an improvement in their condition which means that NHS funded transport is no longer required.

3.4 Alternatives for patients who do not qualify for NHS funded transport

Patients who do not meet the eligibility criteria will be advised by the booking service on alternative transport options to enable them to attend their appointment. These could include:

- Public transport (e.g., bus, coach or train)
- Taxi
- Community transport or volunteer services
- Suffolk County Council voucher scheme <http://www.suffolkonboard.com/fares-tickets-concessionary-travel/concessionary-travel/free-travel-bus-pass-voucher-scheme/travel-voucher-scheme/>

3.5 Appeals Process for NHS funded NEPTs

Patients who wish to appeal against a decision regarding their eligibility for patient transport should first contact the EEAST booking service by telephone and explain the reasons for their appeal. The booking service will investigate and respond within 2 working days. This may include a contact with the patient's GP. The EEAST Appeals Process is set out in Appendix 1.

Should the patient wish to appeal further they can contact NHS GYW CCG Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) by telephone 01502 719567 or by email on:

gywccg.PALS@nhs.net . **4. Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS)**

Claims for HTCS should always be made on the day at the cashier's office at the location where the healthcare has been provided.

Under the scheme, patients on low incomes or receiving specific qualifying benefits or allowances are reimbursed in part or in full for costs incurred in travelling to receive medical care, where their journey meets certain criteria. The eligibility criteria is summarised on page 12.

Where there is no cashier's office available for example an outreach clinic, claims will need to be made on an HC5T refund claim form within 3 months after the date of the treatment. NHS GYW CCG will in those cases;

1. If the claim has not been approved by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHS BSA), verify patient's eligibility to receive payment, in that they are in receipt of one of

the qualifying benefits or allowances (table 3 HTCS guidance) or be named on a NHS Low Income Scheme certificate. Where the patient cannot provide evidence, the claim will be passed to NHS Business Services Authority for verification.

2. Check that the journey was made to receive services under the NHS Act 2006, which are not primary medical or primary dental care services, for which the patient has been referred by a doctor or dentist.
 - NHS GYW CCG will calculate the rate of reimbursement by reference to the cost of the cheapest means of transport which is reasonable, having regard to the person's relevant circumstances.
 - Costs incurred by private car will be reimbursed at either the public transport rate or .12p per mile, whichever is less.
 - Wherever possible, patients are advised to discuss the use of a taxi in advance to clarify what reimbursement will be given. If the use of a taxi is considered to be the only alternative, taking into account the patient's circumstances, reimbursement for the costs incurred will be made subject to a receipt being provided.
 - Advance payments may be made to patients and each request will be assessed individually, evidence will be required that the patient attended the appointment and cross referenced with the cashiers office at the Provider.
 - Payments for a maximum of 1 escort per patient will only be reimbursed for children under the age of sixteen or if deemed medically necessary by a health care professional.

4.1 Appeals for HTCS

Appeals should be made initially via the Provider where treatment was received, if this is not possible it should be through NHS GYW CCG PALS.

- NHS GYW CCG PALS 01502 719 567 and gywccg.PALS@nhs.net

Eligibility Criteria for NEPTs

Eligible patients are those:

- Where the medical condition is such that they require the skills or support of NEPTS staff on/after the journey and/or where it would be detrimental to the patient's condition or recovery if they were to travel by other means.
- Where the patient's medical condition impacts on their mobility to such an extent that they require a medical vehicle and would be unable to access healthcare and/or it would be detrimental to the patient's condition or recovery to travel by other means.
- Recognised as a parent or guardian where children are being conveyed.

Medical Need Criteria

Only patients who have a genuine medical need will be considered for NHS funded transport, these could include:

- Patients who need to be transported on a stretcher
- Inpatients who are being **medically** transferred to another hospital for an upgrade in care and/or specialist treatment which is not available at the hospital where they are an Inpatient.
- Patients who require continuous oxygen or other medical gases
- Patients who require continuous intravenous support

Individual consideration will also be given to patients who have no other alternative means of private/public transport and who also satisfy any of the following supplementary conditions:

- Patients requiring a wheelchair who have a medical need during the journey

- Patients who are confused, or have learning / communication difficulties who are unable to use public transport and who do not have a carer/s able to transport them
- Patients with a medical condition or disability, infirmity or illness that would compromise their dignity or make it impossible for them to be conveyed by public transport
- Patients who cannot walk without the continual support of a walking aid (e.g. walking frame or crutches)
- Patients who could experience considerable side-effects as a result of the treatment they receive
- Patients who require skilled medical assistance to transfer them to and from the vehicle
- Patients who are a danger to themselves or others
- Patients with a communicable disease who do not have access to private transport.

The following are **NOT** in themselves reasons for the provision of a non-emergency transport:

- The age of the patient
- The distance the patient needs to travel
- The availability or otherwise of alternative (public) transport options
- The cost of other ways of travelling to an appointment
- Patients who are undergoing specific treatment regimes eg chemotherapy, renal dialysis

Escorts / Carers

Escorts must be fully mobile with any wheel chair patients requiring support being accompanied by a fully mobile escort or carer, priority will be given to other patients

travelling on the same route. Escorts will usually be limited to one unless there are clinical reasons for more than one escort for example patients receiving ECT. Where an escort is accompanying the patient, return transport is not guaranteed and may not be available if the patient is not making the return journey on the same day i.e. if the patient is admitted. Patient care will remain the responsibility of the escort, the driver will solely be responsible for the safe and appropriate transportation of the patient and escort.

In summary, Escorts will usually only be approved in the following circumstances:

- Accompanying a patient with special or complex needs e.g. the patient is aphasic, blind, confused, has dementia, has communication difficulties including learning difficulties, impaired sight or is hard of hearing and needs skilled assistance for the journey and / or the duration of the time in clinic.
- The patient is a minor with a physical or mental incapacity and under 18 years of age.
- Clinical escorts who are medically required to accompany the patient.

For all other circumstances, carers, friends or relatives have to make their own way to the hospital/clinic and meet the patient there. Consideration should be given to the feasibility of escorts providing transport for the patient, even if the patient is eligible for NEPTS. If the patient is a carer for another patient who needs to accompany the patient, consideration will be given to the two patients travelling on an individual basis. In exceptional circumstances, such as where the carer needs to support a patient with communication difficulties, individual cases will be considered on the basis of medical need.

Eligibility Criteria for HTCS

Eligible patients are summarised as:

- All patients in receipt of Income Support
- All patients in receipt of Income Based Employment and Support Allowance
- All patients in receipt of Income Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Some Patients who are receiving or are named on an award certificate for Working Tax credit and/or Child tax Credit
- All patients in receipt of Pension Credit – Guarantee Credit
- Some patients can claim on the grounds of low income
- Persons living permanently in a care home or accommodation provided by a local authority
- Asylum seekers for whom support is provided under Part V1 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Children of 16 or 17 being supported by a local authority

The above list is not exhaustive and is subject to conditions, explicit details are available in HTCS – Instructions and Guidance for NHS Organisations. Gateway Reference 14322³ or in a concise form for patients and carers at NHS choices

[Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme - Health costs - NHS Choices](#)

³ References Page 11

APPENDIX 1 – EEAST Appeals Process



GYW CCG NEPTS
Appeals Process - Final

References

Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport Services – Gateway Reference 8705



Eligibility Criteria
Gateway Reference 8705

Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme Instructions and Guidance for the NHS – Gateway
Reference 14322



HTCS - Guidance for
NHS Gateway Reference 14322

HC5(T) Claim form for a refund of travel costs to receive NHS treatment



HC5(T)-april-2012.pdf