

Non-Emergency Patient Transport

Eligibility Criteria Policy

ICB document reference:	ICB QUALITY 013
Name of originator/author:	Lisa Sharpe / Tim Fowler
Date of approval:	May 2023
Name of responsible Committee:	SMODG
Responsible Director/ICB Officer:	Tim Fowler
Category:	
EIA undertaken:	No
Date issued:	May 2023
Review date:	May 2024
Target audience:	All staff
Distributed via:	Email, Website, Intranet and Board Portal

Document Control Sheet

Document Title	Non-Emergency Patient Transport Eligibility Criteria Policy
Version	3.0
Status	Review
Authors	Lisa Sharpe / Tim Fowler
Date	24 February 2023

Document history			
Version	Date	Author	Comments
1.0	21/11/2017	Lisa Sharpe	New Policy
2.0	24/02/2023	Lisa Sharpe	Review and update in line with published national guidance by NHSE May 2022
3.0	14/05/2023	Tim Fowler	Review and update prior to SMODG consideration for approval

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the eligibility criteria for the Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services (NEPTS) and will apply to all NEPTS journeys to funded by the ICB. It will ensure that there is transparency and a standard approach to eligibility assessments is taken, ensuring that patients receive a consistent response to transport requests. This ICB policy is based on the updated national NEPTS eligibility criteria published by NHSE England on 31 May 2022.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 This Policy updates the previous Eligibility Policy used in the ICB and predecessor CCGs which reflected the most recent high-level eligibility criteria published by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in 2007.
- 2.2 This Policy reflects the updated national NEPTS eligibility criteria published in May 2022 and the accompanying implementation guidelines.
- 2.3 NEPTS is typified by the non-urgent, planned, transportation of patients with a medical need for transport to and from a premises providing NHS healthcare and between NHS healthcare providers. This may also include nursing home transfers, community hospitals transfers and movement of a patient from an urgent care facility to an acute facility, and discharges from hospital wards and A&E to a patients' place of residence. Community and Primary care services (eg GP appointments or district nurse clinic appointments) are excluded from NEPTS.

3. Overarching Principle

- 3.1 It is expected that most people should travel to and from hospital independently by private or public transport, with the help of relatives or friends if necessary. NHS-funded patient transportation is reserved for when it is considered essential to ensuring an individual's safety, safe mobilisation, condition management or recovery. If patients do not fully meet the agreed eligibility criteria, transport will not be awarded.
- 3.2 Reason for the appointment - only patients who meet one of the below reasons for an appointment will be considered for eligibility for NEPT:
- The patient has been referred by a doctor, dentist or ophthalmic practitioner for non-primary care NHS-funded healthcare services – that is, diagnostic or treatment.
 - The patient is being discharged from NHS-funded treatment.

4. Qualifying Criteria

- 4.1 The patient is likely to qualify for non-emergency patient transport if they meet one or more of the following criteria:
- A. They have a **medical need** for transport (refer to Section 3: Overarching Principle), typically because they:

- require oxygen and are unable to self-administer this during transit
 - need specialised equipment during the journey
 - need to be closely monitored during the journey
 - need to be transferred to another hospital
 - have a medical condition, have undergone major surgery (such as a transplant) and/or the potential side effects of treatment are likely to require assistance or monitoring during their journey
 - have a medical condition or disability that could compromise their dignity or cause public concern on public transport or in a licensed taxi or private hire vehicle, and do not have access to appropriate private transport
 - have a communicable disease with which travel on public transport or in a taxi is not advised, and do not have access to appropriate private transport
 - have been clinically determined as at risk from using public transport due to being immunocompromised and are unable to make their own way with relatives/friends and/or escorts/carers whether by private transport or a taxi (refer to Section 3: Overarching Principle).
- B. They have a **cognitive or sensory impairment** requiring the oversight of a member of specialist or non-specialist staff or a suitably trained driver. This is likely to include patients who:
- have dementia or another mental health condition that means they are unable to make their own way with relatives/friends and/or escorts/carers whether by private transport, public transport or a taxi (refer to Section 3: Overarching Principle)
 - have a confused state of mind, learning/communication difficulties, hearing loss and/or impaired sight of a severity that they are unable to make their own way with relatives/friends and/or escorts/carers whether by private transport, public transport or a taxi (refer to Section 3: Overarching Principle)
 - are at risk to themselves or others if they travel independently (please note that secure mental health transport for high-risk patients is managed separately from non-emergency patient transport).
- C. They have a **significant mobility need** that means they are unable to make their own way with relatives/friends and/or escorts/carers whether by private transport (including a specially adapted vehicle if appropriate for the journey), public transport or a taxi (refer to Section 1: Overarching principle). This is likely to include patients who:
- need to travel lying down and/or need a stretcher for all or part of the journey
 - need specialist bariatric provision
 - are unable to self-mobilise
 - are wheelchair users.
- D. They are **travelling to or returning from in-centre haemodialysis**, in which case specialist transport, non-specialist transport or upfront/reimbursement costs for private travel will be made available. This will be following a shared decision-making process to consider the appropriate requirements for the patient.
- E. A **safeguarding concern** has been raised by any relevant professional involved in a patient's life, in relation to the patient travelling independently. This may mean that the patient requires the oversight of a suitably trained driver or other member of patient transport staff.

- F. They have **wider mobility or medical needs** that have resulted in treatment or discharge being missed or severely delayed.

An authorised eligibility assessor will provide a judgement on whether any other transport is suitable or available. The transport options that should be exhausted before NEPTS is provided include:

- the patient's own transport – for example, the person does not have a car or would not be able to drive for medical reasons, including the side effects of treatment
- a relative, friend or carer who could assist – for example, using their own vehicle to take the patient or escorting them on public transport or in a taxi
- patient booking their own taxi, including a mobility or assisted taxi
- public transport, including community transport, where the public transport journey is not unreasonably complex or long – see guidance notes at Appendix A
- transport that people are entitled to as part of funded social care provision or a social security benefit.

If patients are deemed to be eligible for NEPTS under criteria F, appropriate NEPTS transport (including non-specialist) may be made available. Non-specialist transport may include community transport and support from volunteers (refer to Section 7: Wider Support).

5. Escorts and Carers

5.1 Patients are able to travel with their relative/friends and/or carers when (refer to Section 3: Overarching Principle):

- They are under 16 years of age and are required to travel with an escort or carer
- They need an escort or carer's particular skills and/or support
- The patient requires an escort to communicate with the healthcare professional even if the escort themselves have poor mobility or in a wheelchair
- They cannot be left alone, or their condition means that they need the support of someone who knows them well
- Is dependent on the help of a relative or carer (eg blind, mentally impaired, or elderly with dementia/acute confusion)
- Has mental health need or learning difficulty and needs constant supervision on the journey
- They are under the care of the patient who is eligible for NEPTS, cannot be left alone, do not require the support of the NEPTS ambulance care assistant when travelling, and no alternative care is available at that time.

6. Location of Appointment

6.1 People referred by a healthcare professional for non-primary care NHS-funded healthcare services, and who are deemed eligible under the criteria above, will be offered access to NEPTS regardless of

the geographical location of treatment. This may include transport to non-hospital setting such as community facilities and community diagnostic hubs.

- 6.2 NEPTS do not provide transport to primary care services but may be used for healthcare treatment delivered in primary care settings.

7. Wider Support

7.1 Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS)

It should be made clear that NEPTS will not be provided for social or financial reasons. When receiving enquiries, NEPTS eligibility assessors and/or services provided by transport co-ordinations hubs should consider providing people with information about the HTCS. Patients who do not have a medical need for ambulance transport but who are eligible for the HTCS include those who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit and those who qualify for the Low-Income Scheme or under other specified criteria.

- Income Support
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance
- Guarantee Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit

- 7.2 Patients will only be able to claim back the full travel costs by using the cheapest form of public transport available. If travelling by private car, patients may be able to claim for the fuel used and unavoidable car parking costs, up to the cost of the same journey by public transport. Further information can be found at: <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/Travelcosts.aspx>

8. Providing Information and Assistance

- 8.1 If the patient fails to meet the criteria for NEPTS then transport should be declined and the patient sign posted to known services, including:

- Local authority provided transportation
- Public transport, including bus routes
- Voluntary sector transport provision
- Private hire/taxi services

Any appeal against a refusal to award NEPTS should initially be dealt with informally by the patient transport provider and if a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached it should be escalated to the ICB NEPTS lead via the Commissioning Support Unit (CSU) operational team.

9. Equality and Diversity Statement

- 9.1 NHS Lincolnshire ICB aims to design and implement policy documents that meet the diverse needs of our services, population and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over

others. It takes account of current UK legislative requirements, including the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998, and promotes equal opportunities for all. This document has been designed to ensure that no-one receives less favourable treatment due to their protected characteristics of their age, disability, sex (gender), gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity. Appropriate consideration has also been given to gender identity, socio-economic status, immigration status and the principles of the Human Rights Act.

10. References

10.1 Not applicable

11. Glossary

11.1 Not applicable