



North Norfolk, South Norfolk
West Norfolk, Norwich
Clinical Commissioning Groups

Policy for Non- Emergency Patient Transport (NEPTS)

October 2017

NHS North Norfolk CCG, NHS Norwich CCG, NHS South Norfolk CCG,
NHS West Norfolk CCG



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Version	Circulated to	Date
Draft 1	Eligibility working group	Feb 2017
Draft 2	Commissioners + ERS Medical	Mar 2017
Draft 3	Not circulated	
Draft 4	Eligibility working group	27.04.17
Draft 5	Consultation patients, public and stakeholders	
Draft 6	NEPTS steering Group	

1. Introduction: What is a Non- Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS)?

“Non-emergency patient transport services, known as NEPTS, are typified by the non-urgent, planned, transportation of patients with a medical need for transport to and from a premises providing NHS health care and between NHS health care providers. This can and should encompass a wide range of vehicle types and levels of care consistent with the patients’ medical needs.” (DH, 2007)

The above statement states that NEPTS funded by the NHS is for patients receiving NHS care. Premises include those used by the providers of care commissioned by the NHS (including outreach clinics or diagnostic services) but excluding GP or dental appointments or A&E attendances including walk-in centres or minor injuries units.

The service is available to patients who are deemed to have a medical need based on the Department of Health (DH) eligibility criteria: *Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport Services (PTS) Gateway Reference 8705* issued in August 2007. NHS Norwich, North Norfolk, South Norfolk and West Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Groups have used the national eligibility criteria to write this local policy. Eligible patients are not charged for NEPTS transport provided by the NHS.

NEPTS can be used for eligible patients for journeys to hospitals but also to procedures which were traditionally provided in hospital, but are now available in a hospital or community setting, in secondary and primary care settings.

This service is for non-urgent, planned transportation of patients whose medical condition is such that they require the skills or support of clinically trained NEPTS staff and/or their equipment on/after their journey.

Patients should arrive at their appointment in reasonable time and in reasonable comfort without detriment to their medical condition. A non-emergency 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.

Patients will be able to book their transport direct with the NEPTS provider for North Norfolk, Norwich, South Norfolk and West Norfolk CCGs: currently the provider is ERS Medical. The eligibility assessment for NEPTS will be undertaken by the ERS Medical call centre team in consultation with the patient using the Department of Health (DH) eligibility criteria.

The forms of transport provided include a range of vehicle types and levels of care consistent with the patient's medical needs. This may be an ambulance, a car with the facilities to take a wheelchair or another type of suitably equipped vehicle.

2 Who is eligible for NEPTS?

Patients are generally expected to make their own way to and from their NHS appointment. This can be with the assistance of friends, relative or community transport schemes. Transport may be provided for a patient only if they meet the medical eligibility criteria. Affordability cannot be taken into account in deciding if a patient can use NEPTS. Financial assistance with transport is provided for through the Hospital Travel Costs Schemeⁱ

Patients are deemed eligible for NEPTS where they meet the following Department of Health (DH) criteria.

Eligible **journeys** are those:

- made for non-primary healthcare services, for which the patient has been referred by a doctor or dentist;
- made for treatment paid for by the NHS, regardless of whether it is carried out by an NHS care professional or an independent one. This includes journeys to and from:
 - Local NHS Acute Trusts in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire
 - Norfolk Community Hospitals, clinics and services;
 - Independent sector providers who are contracted to provide NHS care;
 - Health services outside Norfolk
 - Respite and care homes where the patient is receiving NHS funded nursing care

Eligible **patients** are those:

- where the medical condition of the patient is such that they require the skills or support of Patient Transport Service (PTS) 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 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 (aged 16 and under) are being conveyed.

Medical need is defined as the definite or likely requirement for the skills or support of clinically trained PTS staff and/or their equipment on/after the patient's journey

NEPTS can also be provided to a patient's escort or carer where their particular skills and/or support are needed e.g. this might be appropriate for those accompanying a person with a physical or mental incapacity, vulnerable adults or to act as a translator. Discretionary provision such as this would need to be agreed in advance, when transport is booked.

3. What is medical need?

Medical need based on a patient's mobility, need for treatment and assistance, need for protection to ensure safety:

- Patient will need substantial assistance/support to move from their bed/chair at pick-up point to vehicle and from vehicle to destination;
- patient is unable to weight-bear, transfer or self-mobilise.
- journey by other means would be detrimental to the patient's health;
- patient needs 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 needs to be monitored and/or treated on or after the journey.

4 NEPTS eligibility and journey distance, frequency and duration

DH guidance (November 2007) states that patients should be able to access healthcare without detriment to their medical condition. The distance, frequency and duration of the journey should be taken into consideration in conjunction with the patient's medical condition at that time when determining their need for PTS.

Distance, frequency and journey duration are not qualifying criteria for PTS transport without taking the patient's medical condition and requirement for clinical support into account. Frequency, distance or time travelling will not affect a patient's eligibility for PTS unless it detrimentally impacts on the health of the patient.

5 Assessing Eligibility

The guidance used by the NEPTS call centre team for assessing eligibility for NEPTS is the DH national eligibility criteria (2007)ⁱⁱ

The criteria will be used for all patients requesting transport to and from an NHS facility, whether booked directly by the patient themselves or by a clinician.

To enquire as to whether you qualify for patient transport and make a booking contact ERS Medical on 0333 240 4100

6. Escorts/Carers

An escort (additional to the support provided by the NEPTS crew) will usually only be allowed in the following circumstances:

- The patient is aged 16 or under: a person with parental responsibility must accompany
- The patient has a special or complex need e.g. has aphasia, is blind, has dementia, particular communication need; has a learning disability or sensory impairment and needs skilled/ assistance from a particular person for the duration of the journey
- Clinical escorts who are medically required to accompany the patient

ERS Medical staff are not expected to give support to escorts. Escorts will usually be limited to one unless there are clinical reasons for more than one escort. Room for escorts is at the discretion of the NEPTS provider.

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 e.g. if the patient is admitted to hospital.

Patient care will remain the responsibility of the escort. The driver will be solely responsible for the safe and appropriate transportation of the patient and escort.

For all other circumstances, carers' friends or relatives are expected to make their own way to the hospital/ clinic. Consideration should be given to the feasibility of the escort providing transport for the patient, even if the patient is eligible for NEPTS. Exceptional needs for an escort to accompany a patient will be considered on an individual assessment of medical need.

7 How is NEPTS booked?

ERS Patient Transport Services provides NEPTS for NHS Norwich, North Norfolk, South Norfolk and West Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Groups

Patients will be able to book the transport for their appointments directly by 0333 240 4100 whereby they will be assessed for their medical eligibility. All requests for transport will be against the medical eligibility criteria defined by the Department of Health guidelines and patients will be assessed for each request as medical conditions can change over time.

For the majority of requests, at least 48 hours' notice is required to book transport. Routine journeys cannot be booked more than two weeks in advance. The call centre team will call the patient or healthcare professional that has made the booking ahead of the planned date of travel to ensure that the journey is still needed.

The contact centre is open 24 hours 7 days per week

8 Who funds NEPTS?

It is the responsibility of NHS Norwich, North Norfolk, South Norfolk and West Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Groups to fund NEPTS for patients who are medically eligible for transport, registered with a GPⁱⁱⁱ of one of the CCGs and receiving NHS funded care within a health setting (see **Section 2 Eligible journeys**).

NHS Norwich, North Norfolk, South Norfolk and West Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Group CCGs are not responsible for funding NEPTS for:

- Transport to primary care services such as a GP surgery or dentist or optometrists (the exception to this is where a non-primary care service is being provided in one of the settings e.g., a community clinic that is taking place in a GP practice)
- Patients travelling for private treatment paid for by themselves;
- Transport relating to care homes or respite care for patients who need to travel because of a social care need (is arranged by Social Care)
- Care home residents who are self-funded with no NHS funded nursing care.
- Commissioners will only pay for transfers between healthcare settings for patients with a medical need that are integral to that patient's pathway of care

9 Social Care Requests to the NHS

This policy does not cover transport related to social needs which are not currently funded within Norfolk by the NHS. The NHS is not liable to pay for journeys where the patient is not being transported to premises providing NHS healthcare. This includes:

- Transfer from residential home to residential home;
- Transport into residential respite care from a patient's home.

The NHS and Norfolk County Council should work together to ensure that patients receive transport as appropriate to the criteria in place. Where there are disputes between organisations then both organisations agree that patients / clients will not be left vulnerable and in need. If a dispute cannot be resolved in a timely manner prior to the journey, the organisation that first raised the transport issue will arrange transport whilst funding issues are resolved at a later date.

CCGs do not have to provide transport for social reasons. However, the NHS can use income generation powers to charge patients for the provision of transport for 'social' rather than 'medical' needs. (DH, 2007)

Examples of journeys

Where patients are travelling from a social care premises to NHS funded treatment and meet the medical eligibility criteria then the NHS would fund NEPTS

Where patients are travelling from a social care premises to NHS funded treatment, do not meet the medical eligibility criteria but are on low income and qualify for HTCS then the patient would be able to claim back transport costs as per the HTCS scheme.

Where an NHS service was being provided, patients are either eligible for NEPTS transport if medically eligible or be able to claim back travel costs under the HTCS scheme if on low income or be expected to make their own travel arrangements

Patients who pay privately for their own social care or for private healthcare treatment will need to make their own transport arrangements.

Individuals who require conveyance having been detained under the 1983 Mental Health would meet the eligibility criteria but might have a further assessment of their needs to ensure they can be safely transported.

10 Hospital Transport Costs Scheme

The Hospital Travel Costs Scheme was set up by the Department of Health to provide financial assistance to those patients without a medical need for NHS funded transport, but who, because of low income, need help with their travel costs.

Under the Scheme patients on low income or receiving a qualifying benefit (see below) are reimbursed in part or in full for costs incurred in travelling to receive medical care, where their journey meets certain criteria

This scheme is for patients who are in receipt of any of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Guarantee Pension Credit
- Some patients who are receiving or are named in an award certificate for Working Tax credit (with the disability or severe disability element) and/ or Child Tax credit
- Some patients can claim on the grounds of low income
- Asylum seekers for whom support is provided under Part V1 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Children 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 Health Care Travel Casts Scheme (HTCS) - Instructions and Guidance for NHS organisations or in a concise form for patients and carers at NHS choices- help with healthcare costs.

Claims for HTCS should be made on the day at the cashier's office at the location where the healthcare has been provided. Where there is no cashier's office, the patient can claim by completing an HTC(5) Form which they then send to the relevant agency stated on the form (depending on which section they complete) within 3 months of the date of the treatment.

Once this has been approved it will be sent to the relevant CCG and then authorised for payment via the NHS Shared Business Services (SBS) payment service.

12 Appeals process for NHS funded NEPTS

A patient who wishes to appeal against a decision regarding their eligibility for NEPTS should first contact ERS Medical call centre team by telephone and explain the reasons for their appeal. The call centre Team Leader/Manager will review the decision and respond within 2 days. The appeals process for ERS Medical is as follows:

You can appeal the decision by asking the call handler to refer your call to the team supervisor or leader. If you are still unhappy contact ERS Medical by emailing complaints@ersmedical.co.uk, or writing to us at: The Complaints Team ERS Medical, Hetton Court, The Oval, Leeds, LS10 2AT.

13 Appeals for HTCS

Appeals should be made initially via the Provider where treatment was received. If this is not possible it should be through the relevant Patient Advocacy and Liaison Service (PALS)

References

ⁱ Hospital Travel Cost Scheme: Guidance for NHS Organisations, Department of Health, November 2007; Gateway Reference 14322

ⁱⁱ Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport Services, Department of Health, August 2007 (Updated January 2008);

Guidance on Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services: Post-Consultation Report, Department of Health, September 2007;



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Chapter 20 Finance Manual: Finance Arrangement for Ambulance Services, Department of Health, September 2007.

Who Pays Determining Responsibility for payments to providers? Department of Health, August 2013