

WHEELCHAIRS IN SOMERSET

GUIDANCE FOR PRESCRIBERS AND REFERRERS FOR PROVISION OF WHEELCHAIRS

Version:	V5
Name of Originator/Author:	Simon Edwards
Name of Responsible Committee/Individual:	Somerset Wheelchairs Clinical Reference Group
Date issued:	October 2022
Review date:	March 2025
Target audience:	Accredited Wheelchair Prescribers and Referrers

WHEELCHAIRS IN SOMERSET
GUIDANCE FOR PRESCRIBERS AND REFERRERS
CONTENTS

Section		Page
	VERSION CONTROL	3
1	INTRODUCTION	4
2	GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR NHS WHEELCHAIR SERVICE PROVISION	5
3	CATEGORIES OF NHS FUNDED EQUIPMENT AND ASSOCIATED CRITERIA	7
4	MANUAL WHEELCHAIRS AND BUGGIES	7
	Standard wheelchairs and buggies	7
	Non-standard wheelchairs and buggies	7
	Self-propelling configurable wheelchairs	8
	High specification energy efficient manual wheelchairs	8
	Manual wheelchairs and buggies with a tilt-in-space and/or recline facility	8
	One arm lever or dual rim self-propelled wheelchairs	8
	Double buggies	8
	Bariatric wheelchairs	9
5	POWERED WHEELCHAIRS	10
	Electrically Powered Indoor Wheelchair (EPIC)	10
	Electrically Powered Indoor/Outdoor Wheelchair (EPIOC)	12
	Powered tilt-in-space wheelchairs	14
	Wheelchairs with dual control	15
	Powered assistance (power packs)	Err o r! Boo kmar k not

Section		Page
		defin ed.
6	ACCESSORIES	16
7	SPECIALIST SEATING	18
8	CARE HOMES (NURSING AND RESIDENTIAL)	18
9	ISSUING OF STANDARD EQUIPMENT IN NON-ROUTINE CIRCUMSTANCES	20
10	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELATED TO PROVISION FOR CHILDREN	
	Equipment provision related to school attendance	20
11	ALTERNATIVE FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS	
	NHS Personal Wheelchair Budget scheme	21
	Risers and accessories	22
	Joint funding initiatives	22
	Self-pay	22
12	EXCEPTIONALITY	23
13	DEFINITIONS	24
APPENDICES		
Appendix 1	Personal Wheelchair Budget Scheme Agreement	25

WHEELCHAIRS IN SOMERSET
GUIDANCE FOR PRESCRIBERS AND REFERRERS
VERSION CONTROL

Document Status:	Final
Version:	4

DOCUMENT CHANGE HISTORY		
Version	Date	Comments
1	December 2019	Agreed for publication at CRG 27-11-19
2	October 2022	Change of wheelchair contract provider Update of CCG to ICB (Integrated Care Board) Update of Voucher Scheme to PWB (Personal Wheelchair Budgets)
3	October 2022	V2 reviewed and updated by Commissioners – with particular focus on EBI and Virtual Panel processes
4	November 2022	Formatting changes
5	March 2025	Revised Power Packs wording 5.8 – 5.10

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form OR EIA Screening Form completed. Date:	5 September 2016
---	------------------

Sponsoring Director:	Alison Henly, Chief Finance Officer and Director of Performance, Somerset ICB
Author(s):	Simon Edwards, Head of Acute & Community Contracts, Somerset ICB
Document Reference:	

WHEELCHAIRS IN SOMERSET

GUIDANCE FOR PRESCRIBERS AND REFERRERS

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document has been produced to support the staff working for the Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service, the NHS commissioned service for Somerset. It also provides guidance to allied health professionals (AHPs) who undertake low to medium level assessments and who prescribe wheelchair equipment.
- 1.2 The details in this guidance may be shared with service users and carers to help them understand more about wheelchairs and equipment that may be funded by the NHS and supplied by the Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service. This document provides details of the criteria against which decisions are made and how these criteria are applied.
- 1.3 Generally, provision of wheelchairs is the responsibility of the individual, their carer or family and not the NHS, and there are a number of retail outlets and charities where a chair can be hired or purchased. Details about these services can be found on the internet or at:
- *Somerset Choices*:
<https://www.somersetchoices.org.uk/adults/cat/product/491>
 - *NHS Choices* - <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/pages/mobility-equipment-wheelchairs-scooters.aspx>
- 1.4 NHS funded wheelchairs will only be provided where it can be demonstrated that the service user has a substantial health need that affects daily life. This means that NHS funding for the provision of wheelchairs is limited and appropriately targeted. The NHS will support people with disabilities whose need for a wheelchair is permanent. In a limited number of circumstances, it may also support people with a temporary need (see paragraph 2.2).
- 1.5 Somerset ICB, the commissioner, has worked collaboratively with local health and social care staff to interpret national guidance for the needs of its local population. This collaborative approach has reviewed eligibility, the types of wheelchairs to be supplied, and the timescales for assessment and equipment delivery.
- 1.6 This guidance document focuses on those individuals who meet the Somerset requirements for NHS eligibility. It sets out the clear limitations

of the service, details the types of equipment that are appropriate to meet service users' specific needs, and identifies who should be responsible for prescribing this equipment. Where wheelchairs are supplied, they will be maintained free of charge to the service user.

- 1.7 For service users with low level need and where these criteria are not met, the expectation is that this is not the responsibility of the NHS and alternative provision should be signposted by health and social care professionals (see paragraph 1.3).

2 GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR NHS WHEELCHAIR SERVICE PROVISION

- 2.1 NHS funded equipment will be considered where the person:

- is registered to a GP in Somerset, and
- has a health condition that significantly affects their mobility which impacts on their ability to participate in essential everyday living tasks; this may include people with fluctuating conditions, those receiving end of life and palliative care and those with postural support requirements, and
- is able to self-propel with no medical contraindications to this activity, or
- is unable to self-propel, but has a regular carer who can push the wheelchair safely, or
- is able to drive a powered chair, if applicable, and
- in all cases can demonstrate at assessment, or has the potential to safely use, the equipment in the intended environment; the safety assessment will be undertaken jointly between the clinician, the person and their carer to ensure there is a clear understanding of how to use the chair

- 2.2 Short term loans will be considered for a person with a self-limiting condition, that is, the medical condition is temporary, for example, post-surgery or fracture. The NHS will provide a wheelchair on a temporary basis if the condition results in the person having no mobility, or an inability to mobilise within their own home. Short term loans for external mobility can be accessed via a number of agencies including the British Red Cross, or else purchased by the individual. See paragraph 1.3 above for other suggested links.

- 2.3 There is no age restriction for provision, however equipment will not be provided for babies and children (under 18 months old) whose postural and mobility needs can be met by commercially available equipment. Referrals may be accepted by exception only and in order to meet

behavioural needs, but only where these have been supported with appropriate evidence, for example, autism with no sense of danger).

2.4 Provision includes:

- Wheelchairs to meet basic mobility, postural and pressure care needs, some of which may be prescribed by appropriate professionals in the community
- Complex and custom-built wheelchairs, specialist seating and pressure relieving cushions, powered chairs for both indoor and outdoor use and support
- The NHS Personal Wheelchair Budget (PWB) scheme to enables individuals to choose different specifications or models to suit individual preferences and provide choice and control.

2.5 The criteria for the provision of all equipment supplied by Somerset wheelchair service have been agreed by Somerset ICB, working with health and social care colleagues.

2.6 The NHS in Somerset does **not** issue:

- chairs for occasional use, such as for social and leisure activities (rather than essential activities of daily living)
- more than one wheelchair, unless
 - the service user is in receipt of a powered chair, in which case a manual back up chair will be supplied
 - there are exceptional circumstances, such as a double amputee who has a stair lift in their house and is able to self-propel on the ground floor - a second self-propel chair would be required upstairs
- when provision of the wheelchair has contraindications to the person's medical condition or their safety
- sit to standing wheelchairs (available through PWB)
- high / low wheelchairs (available through PWB)
- mobility scooters
- power assisted hand-rim systems, unless there are exceptional circumstances, e.g., where an active service user can self-propel but is functionally deteriorating, and a power chair would be negative in maintaining functionality, provision may be considered
- rain covers, sunshades, or comfort items, unless there is a specific clinical justification from the service user's GP, e.g., children that may suffer seizures brought on by sunlight or wind – information on

extras will be provided (for example, rain covers) see paragraph 11.10.3

- wheelchairs / buggies where they could be used as a restraint or a static chair
- wheelchairs / buggies for transit use only (e.g., portering within nursing homes)
- specialist sporting equipment
- equipment where the home environment is not suitable for wheelchair use (adaptations may be required to ensure the person's safety and to maximise accessibility, such as doorway widening)

3 CATEGORIES OF NHS FUNDED EQUIPMENT AND ASSOCIATED CRITERIA

3.1 This falls into several categories covered in the sections below:

Section 4 manual wheelchairs and buggies

Section 5 powered wheelchairs

Section 6 accessories

Section 7 specialist seating

4 MANUAL WHEELCHAIRS AND BUGGIES

Standard wheelchairs and buggies (low need¹)

4.1 The majority of basic wheelchairs and buggies will be supplied following an assessment by local AHPs, but also occasionally by Somerset wheelchair service following a more complex assessment. Equipment will be prescribed and delivered direct to the person where:

- the assessment detail indicates the criteria have been met, and
- the prescription is for standard, basic equipment

Non-standard wheelchairs and buggies

4.2 In circumstances where the individual needs cannot be met by the basic wheelchair or buggy range, and the complexity of assessment is beyond the skills of the local AHP, a specialist assessment can be requested from Somerset wheelchair service.

¹ Refer to Section 13 Definitions

- 4.3 This range of equipment will only be supplied where there are clear clinical, functional and mobility management reasons for provision.
- 4.4 Types of wheelchair and buggy equipment requiring further assessment include:
- a) **Self-propelling configurable wheelchairs (medium need²)** - these wheelchairs offer more adjustability and range of size options than are available in the standard wheelchair range and can be prescribed by Somerset wheelchair service staff and prescribing AHPs.
 - b) **High specification energy efficient manual wheelchairs (high need²)** - assessment for this range of equipment is undertaken by Somerset wheelchair service staff and will be considered for provision when:
 - the service user's clinical and mobility needs cannot be met by another wheelchair of lower specification within the range available
 - the service user is a full-time wheelchair user, where lifestyle needs and ability is such that maximum independence and mobility will be gained by provision of an energy efficient wheelchair
 - the service user has demonstrated adequate control of static and dynamic stability of the wheelchair necessary for their likely environment and planned usage
 - c) **Manual wheelchairs and buggies with a tilt-in-space and/or recline facility (medium need²)** - these will be supplied where the person requires postural support and regular changes in positioning within their wheelchair, and where their needs cannot be accommodated in any other wheelchair type through the addition of accessories. This equipment can be prescribed by Somerset wheelchair service staff and prescribing AHPs.
 - d) **One arm lever or dual rim self-propelling wheelchairs (low need²)** - these will only be issued to people who can demonstrate the ability to use this type of wheelchair with functional mobility. They will only be prescribed by Somerset wheelchair service staff who will assess the service user's requisite level of cognition and physical abilities.
 - e) **Double buggies (low need²)** - the main responsibility of the NHS is provision of appropriate seating and mobility within a single buggy / wheelchair required by the child meeting the criteria. Somerset wheelchair service staff will assist families in making a suitable

² Refer to Section 13 Definitions

choice. Provision of a double buggy will only be considered where **both** children meet the main criteria for the provision of wheelchair service equipment.

Where only **one** child meets the criteria, a third party PWB (see Section 11) will be offered to parents / guardians and the buggy will then be the responsibility of the PWB holder. The buggy chosen by the family must meet the postural needs of the disabled child requiring wheelchair provision and accommodate the weight of both children.

Somerset wheelchair service staff must be given detailed information on the buggy of choice to confirm the basic requirements set out in the prescription are met and if additional postural support is required, the Somerset wheelchair service therapist will provide advice and assistance.

f) **Bariatric wheelchairs (low to medium²):**

- All wheelchairs have a weight limit established by the manufacturer. Chairs to address a greater weight limit will be assessed on an individual basis and will usually need to be ordered specifically. There may be delays in supply for this range of equipment.
- These wheelchairs have a more durable heavy-duty frame and are therefore heavier than the standard wheelchair; the additional weight may impact on the individual's or carer's ability to propel the chair and/or for them to lift the chair into the boot of a car.
- Referrals for this type of equipment require full investigation and a risk assessment on the proposed method of propulsion, medical fitness of the person (if planned to self-propel), suitability of the home environment for manoeuvrability and management of the chair, identification of carer management issues and risk assessment for use in the home and local environment.
- Regular weight checks are required by prescribers in order to ensure the chair continues to meet the service user's needs.
- Routinely these should be prescribed by, or in consultation with, Somerset wheelchair service staff.
- A power pack, raiser, or other assisted device can be prescribed but will need to gain through the Virtual Equipment Panel³ process – please see paragraph 5.8.

² Refer to Section 13 Definitions

5 POWERED WHEELCHAIRS

Electrically Powered Indoor Wheelchair (EPIC)

- 5.1 Assessment for this type of equipment will be undertaken by Somerset wheelchair service clinical staff as most cases will involve a full clinical and functional assessment.
- 5.2 If the service user decides to accept this type of wheelchair, further training from the prescriber team should be made available to ensure the service user has the ability to safely control the EPIC independently within the home environment.
- 5.3 This type of chair is **not** suitable for use in schools.
- a) **EPIC criteria** - an EPIC may be supplied under the following circumstances:
- the person meets the Somerset wheelchair service general criteria for the provision of equipment
 - the person is unable to walk, or the walking is not functional within the home environment
 - the person has a minimal ability to walk or self-propel around the home but there are medical and/or functional contraindications to them continuing to do so, such as severe breathing difficulties or a high risk of fall
 - the person is unable to self-propel a wheelchair, or there are medical issues that limit the consistent ability to self-propel, or provide a significant risk of injury to the person
 - the person has a residential environment that is compatible with the use of an EPIC, that is, there is:
 - adequate space for the movement of the EPIC including leg rests/foot plates within the home; and
 - a suitable area with power supply for charging the batteries and storing the chair
 - the person can demonstrate an ability or reasonable potential to control the chair

³ Virtual Equipment Panel – a panel of Somerset County Council and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust staff to oversee approval of all power pack orders

- the person can demonstrate that the EPIC will be used on a daily basis to increase mobility and independence around the home, contributing to an improved quality of life
- the person is willing to accept and agree to the conditions of supply of the EPIC as fully discussed at the initial assessment stage
- the provision of an EPIC must enable the user to obtain a level of independence within the home which would otherwise not be achieved

b) **EPIC assessment**

- The person's home environment and their ability to manage the chair safely within this setting will be assessed by a Level 2 trained AHP who would complete a powered wheelchair referral form for all new referrals; questions relating to the home environment, the patient's functional ability, and associated health risk factors (such as epilepsy) must be completed; incomplete referrals will be rejected and returned to the referrer; the form is available on the online ordering system and on the service website.
- An EPIC is not intended for outdoor use
- Electrically powered indoor / outdoor wheelchair (EPIOC) provision may be considered at a future date but will require a new referral for change of circumstances

c) **Contraindications to supply** - Somerset wheelchair service will seek advice from GPs or other health professionals if, prior to or at assessment, actual or potential risks to the health and safety of the person and others are identified. This will be done with the consent of the person.

d) **Additional information**

- EPIC provision is not considered to allow mobility solely for use within the workplace; for this usage the person should contact Access to Work for advice:
 - Access to Work atwosu.london@dwp.gsi.gov.uk
Telephone: 0345 268 8489
Textphone: 0345 608 8753
- A standard manual transit wheelchair (low need) will be provided as a backup and for outdoor mobility use when an EPIC is supplied (see section 5)

- An annual service check (planned preventative maintenance check) will be arranged and carried out by Somerset wheelchair service
- e) **EPICs for use by children** - these will be issued where the child is unable to walk or self-propel functionally, but are capable of independently controlling a powered wheelchair safely.
- g) **EPICs used by care home residents** – (see section 8)

Electrically Powered Indoor / Outdoor Wheelchair (EPIOC)

5.4 EPIOCs can be prescribed **only** by Somerset wheelchair service staff and will **only** be considered where the person is dependent on a powered wheelchair for **all** mobility within their residential environment. EPIOCs have a maximum speed of 4 mph and are for pavement use only.

- a) **EPIOC criteria** - applicants must meet **all** of the following criteria before they can be considered eligible for assessment for the provision of an EPIOC. They must:
- meet the Somerset wheelchair service general criteria for the provision of equipment
 - have a medical reason for severely and permanently restricted mobility, requiring the permanent need for an EPIOC indoors and outdoors
 - be able to demonstrate they have the potential to benefit from an EPIOC and will derive significant benefit to an improved quality of life through increased independent mobility indoors and outdoors
 - be medically fit to independently control a powered wheelchair both indoors and outdoors
 - pass a visual, perception and driving test
 - be free from conditions causing loss of consciousness and/or epileptic seizures within the last 12 months, in line with the DVLA requirements for motor vehicle drivers - see www.dvla.gov.uk for more information on medical requirements (**NOTE:** i) the service user may continue to use the EPIOC indoors on their own, but will require dual controls outdoors shared with a carer and only after an assessment has taken place; ii) risk control measures will be taken into consideration as part of the assessment).

- be free from any combination of medical conditions and treatments likely to make independent powered wheelchair control unsafe for themselves, pedestrians, or other road users with whom they will come into contact in the public domain
- have an adequate field and acuity of vision to be safely aware of the outdoor environment including:
 - a visual acuity of at least 6/60 (can read a number plate at 27 feet) and
 - a visual field of 120 degrees in a horizontal plane and 20 degrees above and below this plane (equivalent to class 3 vehicle user standards) - see www.dvla.gov.uk for more information on visual requirements (risk control measures will be taken into consideration as part of the assessment, i.e., compensatory strategies)
- be able to demonstrate during a driving/chair management assessment that they have the insight, intellectual capacity and physical dexterity to operate an EPIOC both safely and responsibly on their own, without assistance (consideration is given to capacity for learning and age-appropriate skills)
- have a suitable home / residential environment which is compatible with the use of an EPIOC including:
 - adequate space for storage with an accessible power supply for battery charging
 - secure storage space that is protected from the elements
 - adequate space for the movement of the EPIOC including leg rests/foot plates within the home and
 - safe and easy access to the outdoors, including use of ramps, if required
- Have a local environment which is accessible and compatible with safe EPIOC use
- Be able to ensure that the EPIOC will be maintained either personally or by a carer
- Agree to Somerset wheelchair service conditions of loan, including the recommendation to take out appropriate insurance cover

b) **Assessment** - this will involve a review of the current power chair use within the home, including where applicable a visit to the person's home to review environment suitability for EPIOC use, and

a driving and chair management assessment. For school age service users the assessment will also include a visit to the school.

- **Home / environmental assessment:**
 - this will involve a visit to the home / school to review current power chair use, if applicable, and to ensure the environment is proving suitable for current equipment on issue and to identify whether there are any implications for any change of equipment that may be required
 - this will include access, manoeuvrability around the home, any home adaptations that may be necessary, storage, charging and any other relevant factors to ensure the criteria is met
 - for school age service users the assessment may include liaison with the community therapists as they may have a clearer picture regarding the environments the child has to manage in and/or any future proposed changes, for example Disabled Facilities Grants
 - the assessor is required to identify the make and model of chair which most suits the individual's needs and any accessories or modifications that are required
 - **Driving assessment** – this will usually be carried out in the home environment as this needs to be suitable:
 - to assess the service user's abilities to safely drive and manage the wheelchair both indoors and outdoors, with consideration given to age-appropriate skills; at this appointment eyesight, cognitive and perceptual issues will also be reviewed
 - to undertake training within a public environment when required
- d) **Contraindications to supply** - there may be medical, visual or management issues that will contraindicate assessment and/or provision of an EPIOC. Further advice and information may be sought, if appropriate, with the consent of the service user. Reasons for non-provision will be fully explained.

Powered tilt-in-space wheelchairs

5.5 Assessment for powered tilt-in-space wheelchairs is usually carried out in the home environment as this needs to be suitable:

- powered tilt-in-space wheelchair will be supplied to service users who have difficulty maintaining their posture, or who need to change their position for pressure relief
- for tall service users this will ensure footplates are adjusted to cater for cambers in the local environment
- powered tilt-in-space wheelchairs will also be supplied to aid stability when an EPIOC is being used in an outdoor environment with especially steep gradients, i.e., facing down the slope tilt may be required to prevent the service user slipping forward on their seat, and to maintain traction over the drive wheels to facilitate braking

Wheelchairs with dual control

- 5.6 Wheelchairs with dual control can only be prescribed by Somerset wheelchair service staff.
- 5.7 Dual controls will be supplied for service users who meet the criteria for the supply of an EPIOC and are able to drive safely but are likely to suffer fatigue when out for long periods allowing a carer to take over the driving of the EPIOC. It may also include a) service users, such as those with epilepsy, who may need their carer to take control outdoors, or b) those using special controls.

Powered assistance (power packs)

- 5.8 All requests for power packs require a referral to the Wheelchair Service. The Wheelchair Service will carry out an assessment using a standardised assessment protocol and form. The results of the assessment will be presented to the Virtual Equipment panel for discussion and decision. Decisions are normally made within 2 weeks unless further information is required.
- 5.9 Power packs can be supplied to service users where the Virtual Equipment panel approves, based on the following factors:
- the service user's weight. For reference, the average weight for UK male: 85.4 kg, female: 72.1 kg.
(Ref: <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/9D/4195D5/HSE19-Overweight-obesity-rep.pdf>)
 - the equipment weight (including additional item such as medical equipment). Typical weight for a folding manual wheelchair and cushion is 15kg. Typical weight for a tilt in space wheelchair and cushion is 36kg
 - an impairment of the regular attendant that results in a significantly reduced ability to push the service user

- the local environment requires that the attendant negotiate a steep slope to leave or enter the property
- the attendant can fit and remove the power pack. (Necessary for using the wheelchair in a vehicle)
- the attendant can charge the battery
- there is a suitable charging point in the service user's accommodation

5.10 An attendant-controlled electric powered outdoor chair may be considered by the VEP for service users where a power pack is ineffective due to the following reasons:

- The combination of the user and equipment weight exceeds the performance of the power pack
- The gradient of the immediate external environment is too steep for the capabilities of the power pack

5.11 This service is **not** funded for the provision of powered wheelchairs for use outdoors only; this includes scooters.

6 ACCESSORIES

6.1 Accessories are generally off-the-shelf parts available from the manufacturer. These will be supplied following an assessment and recommendation from an AHP or Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service therapist. This will be determined by the level of training and the level associated with the AHP PIN.

6.2 Accessories must be justified with clear clinical reasoning for their provision on a case-by-case basis.

6.3 Criteria for issue of accessories are as follows:

a) Risers and powered elevating leg rests (ELRs)

- Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service may consider provision of powered ELRs if a service user's medical condition is such that they need to have their legs elevated but are unable to move the ELR themselves.
- Risers are not funded but could be made available by separate agreement such as a PWB or sourced by charity funding such as the MND Association and the MS Society. If the individual is considered to have an exceptional medical need it may be

possible to pursue an application through the Evidence Based Interventions (EBI) Panel, see [Evidence Based Interventions \(EBI\) Service for Interventions Not Normally Funded \(INNF\) - NHS Somerset](#)

b) **Headrests**

- Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service provide headrests for service users sitting in wheelchairs or seating systems where it is a clinical need e.g. to meet postural needs
- They are not supplied to meet transport needs alone; it is the responsibility of the transporter to consider provision of a headrest as part of the safe transportation of a service user seated in a wheelchair

c) **Trays** - the supply of trays to fit NHS funded wheelchairs will be considered in the following situations:

- To assist postural support management (i.e., to support service users' arms, to encourage trunk extension or to facilitate fitting of anterior trunk support)
- To allow mounting of power chair controls to facilitate independent management of the power chair

It is advised that the tray should be removed from the wheelchair and stored for transit if the service user is transported in a vehicle (refer to wheelchair manufacturer's guidelines on transporting the wheelchair and occupant).

Trays are **not** supplied where school tables are neither accessible nor suitable; it is the responsibility of the school to provide suitable working surfaces to meet education needs within the school environment. See section 6.3a re risers and the EBI Panel.

If the tray is privately purchased, fitting and its use are the responsibility of the service user or their advocate.

- d) **Postural belts and harnesses** will be supplied to aid postural support for safety when seated in the wheelchair. They are **not** supplied as a form of restraint and are **not** suitable as a vehicle seatbelt when being transported in a vehicle.
- e) **Ankle huggers** will be supplied to aid postural support for safety when seated in the wheelchair. They are **not** supplied as a form of restraint.
- f) **Pressure relieving cushions** - Provision of a pressure relieving cushion will be considered where:

- the service user meets the NHS general criteria for provision of equipment
- the service user is a full-time wheelchair user, with either a manual wheelchair or a powered wheelchair as their main means of mobility

Provision for service users with privately purchased wheelchairs will be considered on an individual basis, however, to receive a pressure cushion the service user must still meet Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service criteria for the issue of equipment.

Pressure relieving cushions will be selected according to the cushion's performance and an assessment of the patient's Waterlow or Braden score.

Exclusions - pressure relieving cushions must only be used in the wheelchair for which the assessment has been made and will **not** be provided:

- for use in armchairs or any other form of seating
- for use in a privately owned wheelchair where it is assessed that the addition of the cushion compromises safety

7 SPECIALIST SEATING

- 7.1 Specialist seating may be in the form of either off-the-shelf / bespoke equipment or individual moulded systems that are fitted to a wheelchair chassis, such as matrix or carved foam seating units.
- 7.2 Assessments will be carried out by Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service staff and may involve contractors from manufacturers of the equipment used.
- 7.3 The provision of specialist seating will be considered where the service user meets all the general service criteria and has a postural positioning need which cannot be addressed through the provision of standard equipment.
- 7.4 **Note:** specialist seating is provided for use within a wheelchair to meet mobility needs and is **not** supplied to replace armchair provision in the service user's place of residence or purely to provide school seating or a transport system.

8 CARE HOMES (NURSING AND RESIDENTIAL)

- 8.1 To be eligible for issue of equipment, the resident must meet the general wheelchair service criteria for the provision of equipment.
- 8.2 Attendant propelled transit wheelchairs will only be issued for the purposes of taking a resident out of the nursing / residential home (including the grounds) if this is on a regular basis by a relative or friend or care staff, and this chair should not be used by another individual.
- 8.3 The **NHS is not responsible** for provision of transit chairs within the nursing / residential home setting. It is the responsibility of the care home to supply equipment to transfer residents around the home in order to socialise, access meal facilities, access the immediate care home environment, garden, etc.
- 8.4 The **NHS wheelchair service is not responsible** for seating within the nursing / residential home setting. It is the care home's responsibility to ensure that the service user has a suitable armchair or dining room chair to manage their comfort, postural and pressure care requirements.
- 8.5 Residents wishing to go on outings or to the shops with staff, relatives or friends on an occasional basis should use the British Red Cross or other short-term loan provider to hire a wheelchair (see paragraph 2.2 above).
- 8.6 Self-propelling wheelchairs and accessories, including pressure relieving cushions, may be issued to meet criteria to any resident who:
- Has a permanent disability, which prevents him/her from mobilising independently within the home
 - Is physically fit and able to self-propel a wheelchair
 - Is motivated to use the equipment for independent mobility
- 8.7 Residents who, prior to admission have a wheelchair on issue, will be able to retain the equipment for their own personal use within the care setting. It is the responsibility of the care home staff to inform Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service if the equipment is no longer required by the named individual.
- 8.8 It is the responsibility of the care home staff to notify Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service or the community therapists of any changes for service users, for example weight or posture.
- 8.9 If a resident requires a reassessment of their wheelchair needs within the care setting, general service conditions will apply.
- 8.10 Pressure relieving cushions are not issued for use in armchairs or non-NHS supplied wheelchairs. Care homes are expected to provide this equipment themselves.

- 8.11 Indoor power chairs (EPICs) may be supplied if the care home resident meets the general wheelchair service criteria for provision of equipment and the EPIC criteria (see paragraph 5.3 above).
- 8.12 Electrically powered indoor / outdoor wheelchairs (EPIOCs) may be supplied if the care home resident meets the general wheelchair service criteria for provision of equipment and the EPIOC criteria (see paragraph 5.4 above).

9 ISSUING OF STANDARD EQUIPMENT IN NON-ROUTINE CIRCUMSTANCES

- 9.1 Individuals may benefit from the supply of additional equipment over and above what would normally be provided. This should only ever happen where there are clear clinical justifications for doing so and will follow a specialist assessment by Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service staff. The rationale for supporting the service user's case is likely to be linked to housing, education or employment needs when identified and provided in collaboration with other agencies.
- 9.2 Equipment may include (the list is not exhaustive):
- Mountings for communication aids or environmental controls where these are funded and supported by other agencies
 - Powered chairs with a capacity of more than 4 mph. These are not part of the agreed criteria and must be fitted with larger motors, lights, indicators and rear-view mirrors, and must be registered with DVLA as a class 3 vehicle.
 - Second wheelchairs, including individuals that require a non-standard manual back-up chair.

10 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELATED TO PROVISION FOR CHILDREN

- 10.1 The general criteria apply in equipment provision for children.

Equipment provision related to school attendance

- 10.2 Wheelchairs and buggies supplied to children are for school and home use (see manual and power chair equipment provision above).
- 10.3 The Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service will consider provision of an indoor / outdoor electric wheelchair (EPIOC), for school use only, where a child is able to self-propel or walk at home but needs a powered wheelchair to be independent over the larger distances in the school environment.
- 10.4 The EPIOC can be used in playgrounds and between classrooms providing the gradient and surfaces are compatible with the chair. It cannot be taken off the school campus other than to transport home.
- 10.4 If Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service is made aware that the child will be transported to school in their equipment, efforts will be made to ensure, where possible, that the equipment on issue or to be supplied is declared as being transportable by the manufacturer. However, it should be noted that transport to school is not the responsibility of Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service.

11 ALTERNATIVE FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

NHS Personal Wheelchair Budget scheme

- 11.1 The NHS Personal Wheelchair Budget [NHS England » Personal wheelchair budgets](#) was introduced by NHS England in 2017; during 2019 it became a legal requirement for wheelchair services to offer PWB to all eligible service users.
- 11.2 Details of the scheme and frequently asked questions are publicly available on the local website [Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service](#)
- 11.3 Eligibility is determined by the Somerset community and equipment Wheelchairs staff. PWBs cannot be issued for equipment where the service user does not meet the criteria and is not ordinarily available for seating or pressure cushions.
- 11.4 A PWB will be valued at the cost of the chair to the NHS that would have been prescribed after assessment. The value can be put towards upgrades to an NHS prescribed chair or to an approved third party provided the chair is purchased independently.
- 11.5 PWBs are limited to one issue in a 5-year period for adults and one issue in a 3 year period for children unless there is a clinical reason to review within these timeframes.
- 11.6 **Third party PWB** - this option allows the user to choose a chair outside of the NHS range. The PWB prescription value can be used to part fund the user's choice.
- 11.6.1 The third party PWB means that the equipment is owned by the service user and it is their responsibility to maintain and to pay for any repairs required during the period of issue.
- 11.6.2 The third party PWB value is decided following the assessment and is based on the cost of the standard equipment to the NHS that Somerset wheelchair service would supply and includes an element for maintenance for the lifespan of the PWB.
- 11.7 **Notional combined PWB** - the prescription PWB value is based on the cost of the standard equipment that Somerset wheelchair service would supply following an assessment.
- 11.7.1 Notional combined PWB allows the service user to contribute to the cost of the equipment to have a higher specification chair (and accessories that would not be deemed part of the prescription) but enables them to remain dependent on the NHS for maintenance of the equipment.

Risers and accessories

- 11.8 If a school or charity funds a riser or accessory then maintenance of these items will be passed back to the school or charity to fund but would be ordered by Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service on prescription, and the agreement would be sent breaking down equipment costs. At the end of the life of the chair these items become the property of whoever funded them.

Joint funding initiatives

- 11.9 Joint funding will be encouraged with other organisations and by means of notional combined or third party PWBs.
- 11.9.1 Service users entering into this arrangement will be asked to complete the Personal Wheelchair Budget agreement at Appendix 3.
- 11.9.2 Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service responsibility extends only to the wheelchair itself. Any additional equipment funded by PWB will remain the responsibility of the service user, including its maintenance, repair and replacement.

Self-pay

- 11.10 Self-pay is an option for people who do not meet the eligibility rules for NHS funded equipment.
- 11.10.1 This will include service users with low level need and where the eligibility rules for NHS funded equipment are not met.
- 11.10.2 Alternative provision will be sign-posted by health and social care professionals (see paragraph 1.3 above).
- 11.10.3 Where the service user has been referred to Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service for assessment, staff will also provide information on the retail options available.
- 11.10.4 A non-eligible pathway has been developed to support service users who want a wheelchair but are not eligible for NHS provision.

12 EXCEPTIONALITY

- 12.1 There may be a small number of service users with extremely complex needs who fall outside the product tariff structure; they should be brought to the attention of the Somerset wheelchair service staff for assessment.
- ~~12.2~~ By way of example, The Provider's ordering system will require battery packs to be authorised by the Virtual Equipment Panel – see paragraph 5.8.
- 12.3 The Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service clinical lead or service manager will be responsible for submitting the application to the Virtual Equipment Panel using the standard application form and guidance which can be found on the Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service website [Somerset Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service](#)
- 12.4 Exceptionality will be demonstrated on the grounds that funding for the service user is justified on the basis of clinical factors that set the service user apart from other service users in the same service user group, who are not being funded in this way.
- 12.5 In making a case for special consideration, the prescriber will need to demonstrate:
- the service user's needs are significantly different to the general population of service users with the condition in question, which the prescriber will be expected to define
 - the service user is likely to gain significantly more benefit than might be normally expected for service users with the same condition
- 12.6 The fact that the equipment is likely to prove effective for the service user is not, in itself, a basis for exceptionality.

DEFINITIONS⁴**Low need**

- Regular (4 times per week minimum) user of a wheelchair with relatively simple needs that can be readily met
- Does not have postural or special seating needs
- Physical condition is stable, or not expected to change significantly
- Assessment does not typically require specialist wheelchair service staff, although they are available for checking / governance as required
- Limited (or no) requirement for continued follow up / review
- Equipment requirements - basic wheelchair (self or attendant-propelled) / standard cushion / up to 1x accessory / up to 1x modification

Medium need

- Daily user of a wheelchair, or use for significant periods most days
- Has some postural or seating needs
- Physical condition may be expected to change (e.g. weight gain / loss; some degenerative conditions)
- Comprehensive, holistic assessment by Somerset wheelchair service staff or Level 2 PIN AHP.
- Regular follow up / review required
- Equipment requirements - configurable, lightweight or modular wheelchair (self or attendant propelled) / medium pressure relieving cushions / basic buggies / agreed accessories and modifications

High need (wheelchair service staff only)

- Permanent user who is fully dependent on their wheelchair for all mobility needs
- Complex postural or seating requirements (e.g. for high levels of physical asymmetry)
- Physical condition may be expected to change / degenerate over time
- Very active users, requiring ultra-lightweight equipment to maintain high level of independence
- Initial assessment for all children
- Comprehensive, holistic assessment by Somerset wheelchair service staff required
- Regular follow up / review with frequent adjustment required / expected
- Equipment requirements - complex manual or powered equipment, including tilt-in-space chairs, fixed frame chairs, seating systems on different chassis, high pressure relieving cushions, specialist buggies, multiple accessories, multiple and/or complex modifications, needs are met by customised equipment

**PERSONAL WHEELCHAIR BUDGET SCHEME AGREEMENT
Agreement with the user under the NOTIONAL COMBINED BUDGET**

I (name of wheelchair user)

of (address of wheelchair user)

.....

.....

understand and agree that:

Following Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service assessment of my clinical needs and their prescription of the wheelchair which would meet my needs, I have requested additional equipment to be fitted to the wheelchair that the service is not authorised to supply and/or maintain as agreed with the Somerset commissioners.

I understand by entering into the notional combined PWB, I will be invoiced for the following equipment
.....
by the service, and agree to pay the sum of £.....

The Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service accepts no responsibility for maintaining, repairing or replacing the above equipment, and I agree that if work is required, I will inform the Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service of any adaptations or repairs that affect the wheelchair before instigating any work with other organisations.

If I arrange any form of loan, hire purchase, or any other financial arrangement in order to be able to pay for repairs to the equipment that I have purchased, that will be a matter between myself, the supplier and any third party involved. The Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service shall have no liability for meeting the cost of my contribution.

The Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service is not liable for advising me on the terms and conditions which the supplier imposes on the supply of the equipment which I purchase. This is entirely a matter between the supplier and myself.

I accept these terms.

Signed **Date**

I confirm that the Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service agrees to the issue of a PWB prescription on the above terms.

Signed **Date** **Ref No**
For Community Equipment and Wheelchair Service