

NHS York & North Yorkshire Wheelchair Service Eligibility Criteria

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1. Introduction

This Eligibility Criteria was produced in collaboration with the lead Commissioner and in consultation with Clinicians and Service Users of the Wheelchair Service.

National Health Service (NHS) hospital treatment is free for people who live in the United Kingdom (UK) and is not based on British nationality or the past or present payment of National Insurance contributions or UK taxes. Under the current regulations, visitors to the UK are liable to pay for NHS hospital treatment. Treatment in A&E is free but once a person is made an inpatient, or given an outpatient appointment, all treatment is chargeable.

This document has been written for the benefit of service users, parents, carers and health and social care professionals. It aims to clearly outline the services and equipment choices that our users are eligible to receive. It is also an essential reference document for clinicians working within the wheelchair service.

The contents of this document have been agreed by the Commissioners.

Staff members working in the Wheelchair Service and other health care professionals referred to in this document include:

Wheelchair Service Staff

- Service Manager
- Wheelchair Clinical Lead
- Occupational Therapist (OT)
- Physiotherapist (PT)
- Rehabilitation Engineer (RE)
- Technical Instructor (TI)
- Administrators

Community staff Who Refer

- General Practitioner (GP)
- Occupational Therapists (OT)
- Physiotherapists (PT)
- District Nurses (DN's)
- Wheelchair Approved Referrer
(See attached Glossary of Terms)

2. General Eligibility Criteria

Wheelchair Service assesses and provide equipment which is safe and clinically appropriate for an individual's independent mobility requirements. The service also assess for lifestyle needs which will be met via the option to choose a Personal Wheelchair Budget. (PWB)

In order to be eligible for any type of NHS Wheelchair and associated equipment service users must meet the general criteria set out below:

1	Be residents who are registered with a GP within the boundaries of Vale of York & North Yorkshire CCG
2	Require a wheelchair for long term use; this means for longer than 6 months
3	Be unable to walk indoors to carry out essential activities and can demonstrate that they would use a wheelchair at least three times a week.
4	Require a wheelchair as part of an end of life care plan
5	Are children over 36 months who require a wheelchair/buggy for mobility
6	Are children under 36 months who have significant postural and mobility needs that cannot be met by commercially available buggies.

7	<p>Require a chair for short term purposes.</p> <p>Consideration will be given on an individual basis for services users who require a chair on a short-term basis e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • following an episode of acute clinical intervention to support a hospital discharge such as those people who will be non-weight bearing for less than 6 months • where extensive repair work is required to a wheelchair which is on long-term loan to a service user • the service user is awaiting the delivery of a long-term loan wheelchair.
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3. Manual Wheelchairs (General Eligibility Criteria applies)

3.1 Eligibility for Personal Wheelchair Budgets (PWB) *NB: For detailed information please refer to Appendices 4&5)*

Everybody who is eligible for an NHS wheelchair (as laid out in section 2) has the right to be considered for a Personal Wheelchair Budget (PWB). However, being offered a PWB is subject to some additional eligibility criteria (refer to appendices 4&5). A PWB is not offered to:

- Service users with rapidly changing conditions resulting in rapidly changing mobility / seating needs
- Service Users receiving End of Life care
- Service Users requiring a Short Term Loan Wheelchair.

All service users who meet the NHS Wheelchair General Eligibility Criteria (section 2) and the PWB eligibility criteria will be offered a PWB.

3.2 Standard Wheelchairs: Standard wheelchairs will be supplied to service users who meet the general eligibility criteria and can either independently and safely self-propel a wheelchair (known as a Self-Propelled wheelchair) or have someone who is able to safely push them (known as an Attendant Propelled Wheelchairs). The appropriate wheelchair will be

supplied following triage of the written referrals or ordered by a Wheelchair Approved Referrer (see glossary Appendix 6). A standard chair may be issued directly from the Wheelchair Service without a face to face assessment. Some referrals may be subject to an assessment by a Wheelchair Service Clinician when clinically required.

Standard wheelchairs are supplied from a range of chairs held in stock by the Wheelchair Service. The range is attached in Appendix 3: Prescribing Matrix.

3.3 Non-standard Wheelchairs / Special Bespoke Wheelchairs: This includes lightweight and tailor-built wheelchairs and those which are not part of the prescribing matrix. This range of equipment will only be supplied following an assessment by a Wheelchair Clinician when needs cannot be met by standard equipment as above in 3.2.

3.4 Accessories: Wheelchair accessories will only be supplied following approval by a Wheelchair Clinician or Approved Prescriber and where they are required for a clinical need (or lifestyle choice if accessing a PWB).

3.5 Standard Modifications: Standard modifications will only be supplied following an assessment by a Wheelchair Clinician or Approved Prescriber. Any non-standard modifications will also be subject to a Risk Assessment carried out by the Wheelchair Clinician.

4. Criteria for the Supply of more than one Wheelchair

4.1 The Wheelchair Service will usually only provide one wheelchair to meet essential clinical needs. On occasion a second basic wheelchair may be provided to meet the assessed needs. For example, if the service user required a wheelchair upstairs and this is a cost effect alternative to providing a through-floor lift.

If a second wheelchair is desired (rather than clinically needed) then the Wheelchair Service can support the service user to purchase the Wheelchair via the PWB process or can signpost users and their carers to other companies or organisations who may be able to help (charities or retailers).

Service users who are issued a Powered Wheelchair will usually receive an additional backup standard manual wheelchair – exceptions to this will require clinical justification on a case by case basis and be approved by the Commissioning CCG.

4.2 Consideration of joint funding a second wheelchair with Local Authorities will be considered via the Personal Wheelchair Budget route.

5. Exclusion Criteria

The Wheelchair Service does not supply:

- Adult wheelchairs for outdoor use only
- Attendant brakes for manual wheelchairs available via PWB
- Powered Wheelchairs for outdoor use only
- Mobility Scooters
- Sunshades / Canopies for Buggies unless clinically required or via a PWB
- Wheelchairs in place of a suitable static seat
- Equipment for work, education or sporting requirements, unless via a PWB
- Wheelchairs for transportation purposes only

6. Active User Wheelchairs

Definition:

“Active User” wheelchairs have a more flexible set up than the standard chairs and can be adjusted to meet the individual requirements so they can achieve greater independent mobility. They have quick release wheels and multiple axle positions. The chairs lend themselves to modification to maximise posture. High performance wheelchairs have the attributes of an Active User chair but are lighter weight with the ability to set in a very active position in compromise with stability to enable users to achieve maximum amount of independent mobility.

6.1 Active Criteria:

The service user must:

- meet the general eligibility criteria
- possess the skills to safely manage this type of equipment and be capable of using its features or
- have the potential to develop the necessary skills to do so and would benefit by having this type of wheelchair

These wheelchairs will be considered six months' post incident or hospital discharge to allow the users weight and level of function to stabilise.

The Service User must be a full-time wheelchair user and their lifestyle needs and ability must be such that maximum independence and mobility will be gained by such provision.

7. Cushions

A standard comfort wheelchair cushion, which comprises of a medium density foam pad and a vinyl cover can be issued for basic comfort/ care needs.

Criteria for nonstandard cushions

7.1 Service users must have an assessed and documented clinical need for a non-standard cushion. The need will usually be defined by using a recognised pressure assessment score or demonstrate a need for postural seating. Requests for a pressure-redistributing cushion can be supplied directly following confirmation that it will meet the service users' needs and the receipt of an updated recognised pressure risk assessment tool supplied by a qualified clinician.

7.2 Service Users who have been identified as requiring a pressure relieving or curative cushion or have a postural requirement will be assessed by a Wheelchair clinician. If clinically appropriate the requested cushion/item will be issued. Alternatively, a Wheelchair Clinician may undertake a further assessment for more complex cases and may issue a clinically suitable alternative.

7.3 Cushions for all risk levels are available and can be issued for use in an NHS or privately purchased wheelchair.

7.4 Service users in care homes will be issued with non-standard cushions following the above criteria. This will be only for use in their prescribed wheelchair. Standard wheelchair cushions should be provided by the care home. Care home staff (or community nursing when applicable) will be responsible for the regular review of the assessment score and should be encouraged to contact the Wheelchair Service if needs change.

8. Criteria for Posturally Supportive Seating

8.1 Service users who cannot maintain a safe posture when seated in a standard wheelchair will be supplied with the most appropriate supportive system for their mobility needs.

Posturally supportive seating is divided into two main types:

- a) Standard and non-standard wheelchairs with postural “off-the-shelf “support – modular systems.
- b) Custom contoured (such as foam carved or moulded) seating systems fitted to a wheelchair chassis.

8.2 Posturally supportive seating will only be supplied following assessment by a Wheelchair Service Clinician and when standard and non-standard seating in standard or non-standard wheelchairs does not meet the service user's needs.

8.3 Only one posturally supportive seating system will be supplied at any one time. Where the user is eligible for/ or has purchased a second wheelchair, the service will endeavour to make the seating system transferrable between both wheelchairs.

8.4 Posturally supportive seating may be supplied for fitting into a private wheelchair at the discretion of the Wheelchair Service, this could be considered under a Personal Wheelchair Budget

9. Guidelines For The Supply Of Equipment For Children And Young People

9.1 Pushchairs and Buggies: These will only be issued to children under 36 months of age, when there is special postural support required, for example when a child's posture or postural control is not in line with developmental milestones and a standard buggy does not meet their needs.

9.2 Fully Reclining Buggies: fully reclining buggies will be provided where clinically indicated, such as for children with significant seizures or epilepsy activity. Fully reclining buggies cannot be issued for personal care purposes only.

9.3 Standard Wheelchairs for Children & Young People: These will be supplied following a referral in accordance with the general criteria for adult wheelchairs. Further assessment by a Wheelchair Clinician will be undertaken where deemed appropriate.

9.4 Double / Twin Buggies: These are supplied, if both children have a disability affecting their mobility and meet the criteria for issue which also includes the any necessary postural support. (Where parents are requesting a double buggy for a child with a disability and a second child without a disability, a Personal Wheelchair Budget may be offered.)

9.5 Powered Wheelchairs: These will be issued to children and young people who are unable to walk or not able to functionally self-propel a manual wheelchair over distance due to fatigue and have been assessed as having the ability and skills to be safe with the independent control a powered wheelchair gives them.

9.6 Mobility Equipment for use in Education only: Funding for mobility equipment for use to access the curriculum only is the responsibility of Education. Payment for the chair and accessories can be considered under a Personal Wheelchair budget.

9.7 Cushions: Basic cushions will be supplied as required and non-standard cushions will be supplied after assessment by a Wheelchair Clinician. See section 7 for non-standard cushions

9.8 Headrests: will be provided when clinically appropriate and for transportation within a private vehicle. It would be expected that statutory transport services carry out their own risk assessments for transporting service users and provide the equipment assessed as most appropriate on an individual basis. This could be considered as part of a PWB

9.9 Trays: Will only be provided where clinically assessed as appropriate to support postural needs, but could be considered as part of a PWB.

9.10 Accessory exclusions. The Wheelchair Service does not provide rain covers, cozy toes, parasols and other such accessories, however, these can be considered under Personal Wheelchair Budgets.

9.11 Children and Young People with hidden disabilities. See section 12

10. Powered Wheelchairs

All service users will be required to meet the general eligibility criteria and will be subject to an assessment by a Wheelchair Clinician to assess their physical ability, medical safety and cognitive ability required to drive a powered wheelchair safely.

The wheelchair service will usually receive a manual wheelchair as a back-up to any powered wheelchair prescription.

10.1 Indoor Powered Wheelchair criteria

These will be considered where the Service User:

- a) Has significantly restricted mobility which includes the inability to walk consistently and functionally or propel manual wheelchair or be medically at risk to do so.
- b) Has the visual, cognitive, perceptual ability to drive the wheelchair safely and to demonstrate, through a comprehensive wheelchair driving assessment, that they have the insight, cognitive ability and suitable independent ability to operate a powered wheelchair safely without assistance.

- c) Does not have any recurring loss of consciousness that would impede safe use of a powered wheelchair. Exceptions to this will require clinical justified on a case by case basis and approved by the Commissioning panel, which comprises Clinicians from the wheelchair service and representatives from the commissioners
- d) Has a residential environment that is appropriate for the use of a powered wheelchair
- e) Is able to ensure that the powered wheelchair will be maintained adequately either personally or by a career. This includes the charging of the batteries.
- f) Agrees to conditions of supply. These are supplied to the service user outlining their personal responsibilities at the time of issue of the wheelchair and/or accessories.

10.2 Indoor/Outdoor Powered Wheelchair criteria

These will be considered where the Service User:

- a) Meets the general criteria for supply and the indoor powered wheelchair criteria with the exception of 10.1 section C. which automatically disqualifies the service user from independent outdoor powered mobility
- b) Has no medical conditions that would pose a danger to the user, pedestrians, or other road users and can comply with current DVLC requirements for motor vehicle drivers regarding the loss of consciousness (e.g. epilepsy).
- c) Has the visual acuity to read a car number plate from at least 40 feet (adhering to Class 3 vehicle visual standards).
- d) Has suitable facilities to enable independent access to the outdoor environment (e.g. a ramped access, area to store and charge)
- e) Has a local outside environment that is accessible to a powered chair and is compatible with its use.
- f) Has the ability to operate a powered chair without assistance including ascending 2-inch kerbs and dismounting kerbs backwards where appropriate.
- g) Has the capacity to derive significant improvement in their independence and quality of life through the use of a powered chair (e.g. use the wheelchair regularly to go out for social engagements or shopping).

10.3 Dual Access Control

Dual Access controls may be considered if clinically indicated due to the needs of the service user. For example, if they became unable to use the controls short term or require assistance in /outdoors for safety reasons.

10.4 Power Packs.

These can be considered under the PWB option

11. Issue of Wheelchair Equipment to Care Homes

Department of Health Guidance: *Community Equipment and Care Homes 2004* - Integrated Community Equipment Services: Community Equipment and Care homes. States “*Equipment should be provided by the care home if it is the type of equipment often required by its users as part of its statement of purpose*”. Therefore, standard wheelchairs and wheelchair cushions will not be supplied to nursing and residential homes, short break settings and hospice facilities.

The Royal College of Occupational Therapy (RCOT) “Care Homes and Equipment. Guiding Principles for Assessment and Provision” Ref RCOT 2019, advises only “Very particular or specialised needs, outside the care home’s stated purpose, should be assessed and met with specific apposite equipment from the most appropriate provider.

11.1 New referrals:

- I. **Self-propelling wheelchairs:** General eligibility criteria applies when the user is able to self-propel within or outside their home environment
- II. **Attendant propelled wheelchairs:** It is the responsibility of the care home to provide this type of standard wheelchairs for residents. These will only be issued in exceptional circumstances, if the resident has significant postural needs or significant modifications are required to the wheelchair.
- III. **Powered wheelchairs:** These may be supplied if the resident meets the relevant criteria for supply (section 10)

11.2 Existing users: Service users can take their wheelchair into a Care Home, but if their needs change, they must be re-referred to the Wheelchair Service for a reassessment of their needs

12. Hidden Disability:

Provision will be considered on an individual basis for adults and children who are assessed of being at risk of serious harm when walking, or pose, when walking, a risk of serious harm to themselves or any other person.

To qualify under the criteria, the service user must have a disability which is enduring (has lasted or is likely to last for at least three years) and substantial. For children under 36 months it is likely their needs can be met by a standard buggy so they would not be eligible for provision under the Wheelchair Service.

The wheelchair service expects that, in the context of disabilities that are predominately nonvisible (hidden) in nature, a risk of serious harm to self/ others could manifest as one or more of the following behaviours:

- Becoming physically aggressive towards others, possibly without intent or awareness of the impact their action may have;

- Refusing to walk altogether, dropping to the floor, or becoming a dead weight;
- Wandering off or running away; possibly without awareness of surroundings or their associated risks (e.g. nearby roads, car park environments);
- Disobeying, ignoring and /or being unaware of clear instructions;
- Experiencing very severe or overwhelming anxiety (e.g. through hypervigilance);
- Experiencing an overwhelming sense of fear of public/open/busy spaces;
- Experiencing serious harm or causing harm to others Avoiding some/all types of journeys due to the kinds of experiences listed above.

This list is not exhaustive, and the referrer will need to satisfy themselves that the risk of serious harm to self / others is caused by an enduring and substantial disability and not as part of ordinary child / adult behaviour. It is therefore important for the referrer to consider the extent of any such behaviours and / or difficulties experienced by a service user in relation to common developmental milestones. The expectation is, prior to referral that all other options in relation to safety and alternative equipment has been considered and investigated by the refer and can be evidenced to Wheelchair Services clinical staff, such as walking harnesses and behavioural therapy.

13 Attaching Communication & Additional Aids to Wheelchairs

Privately purchased items or other prescribed aids can be added to NHS provided equipment with the prior consent from a Wheelchair Service Clinician

13.1 Companies providing additional aids are responsible and must provide a written statement confirming compatibility and safety of items fitted onto wheelchairs. E.g. mounting brackets, communication or feeding aid and environmental control switches.

13.2 Each piece of equipment fitted to the wheelchair must undergo a documented stability check within the manufacturer's guidelines and recommendations for safe set up before the equipment is issued. If the wheelchair requires additional features to ensure its stability the costs must be met by the relevant authority or service.