

West Berkshire Wheelchair Service

Eligibility Criteria

August 2025

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1 Introduction and core criteria

All referrals are triaged and assessed against the following criteria:

- Registration with a General Practitioner (GP) in the West Berkshire area
- Formal diagnosis with a long term physical disability or medical condition lasting more than six months which permanently affects the person's ability to walk; exception will be given to individuals whose life expectancy is less than 6 months; conditions include but are not limited to:
 - Congenital conditions (e.g., spina bifida, muscular dystrophy)
 - Neurological conditions (e.g., cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis)
 - Acquired conditions (e.g., head injury, spinal cord injury)
 - Musculoskeletal conditions (e.g., arthritis, amputation)
- Equipment will only be provided to those who are dependent upon a wheelchair or buggy to mobilise regularly throughout the week, i.e., four days or more
- Minimum age for referral is generally 36 months, but younger children with functional wheelchair needs will be considered, as will those where postural needs cannot be met seated in a standard commercially available buggy that a parent would normally purchase
- Modifications and accessories may be provided for use in the wheelchair to address specific clinical and mobility needs, e.g., postural support, pressure care
- Provision of equipment is subject to the Terms & Conditions of Loan issued with the equipment: the service user and / or their personal assistant or carer are expected to take responsibility for the basic care of the equipment, i.e., cleaning, reporting repairs, storage, etc; provision of equipment may be declined if storage areas at the home address are not secure or sufficient
- Equipment will only be replaced if it ceases to meet the persons' clinical needs, is beyond economical repair, or where spare parts are no longer available
- Repairs will be carried out only by the wheelchair service (note this does not apply to third party PWB because the service user owns the chair)
- The service user and / or their personal assistant or carer must demonstrate or have the potential to safely use the equipment in the intended environment
- The home environment must be suitable for wheelchair use; equipment will not be provided until agreed adaptations have been carried out
- If equipment is stolen, replacement is at the discretion of the service, and may be refused if due care was not taken; the wheelchair service has the right to withdraw or refuse to replace equipment if it is found that damage has been deliberate or that the wheelchair is being improperly used
- Service users will agree for their details to be stored on the wheelchair service database (also known as an *electronic patient record*)

If an individual does not meet these criteria, provision will be declined, but note the need for equipment is assessed on a case-by-case basis taking into account the particular circumstances of the person and the views of other relevant professionals.

2 Eligibility exclusions

The wheelchair service will not supply any of the following:

- Standard attendant propelled wheelchairs for transit (portering) purposes only to those living in a residential or nursing home; if an existing service user is relocating into a nursing home, a wheelchair previously issued for transit purposes only must be returned to the wheelchair service
- Powered chairs for use outdoors only, or mobility scooters
- Powered wheelchairs that weigh above 150kg, or 150kg + 50kg where additional equipment is fitted (under current DVLA requirements)
- Powered wheelchairs that travel at more than 4mph (due to current DVLA requirements)
- Attendant controls (joystick fitted to rear of chair) for powered wheelchairs, apart from when specialist controls are fitted for the service user
- More than one powered wheelchair
- Riser-seats on powered wheelchairs
- Power packs, either occupant or attendant controlled
- Stair climbing devices
- Powered assisted hand-rim systems
- Manual wheelchairs with a user weight capacity exceeding 250kg
- Wheelchairs/buggies solely as a means of restraint
- Wheelchairs/buggies in place of a suitable static seat, i.e., the wheelchair must be used primarily as a mobility device
- Equipment for those who are able to walk, but for various reasons refuse to do so, i.e., there is no underlying physical reason why they cannot walk
- Wheelchairs used as a walking aid, i.e., the user must be seated in the wheelchair when in use
- Equipment solely for use in wheelchair accessible transport
- Equipment solely for use at work, education or sport
- Cushions for use in armchairs or other seating
- Equipment for use in rehabilitation
- Wheelchair equipment specifically for support whilst sleeping or resting
- Lap trays, other than for postural purposes
- Rain covers, sunshades, device holders, or comfort (non-postural) items
- Lights, indicators, and Bluetooth technology

3 Determining eligibility

- The duty clinician evaluates against the stated eligibility criteria the details contained within the referral; note that information may come to light during the subsequent clinic assessment which leads the member of staff to determine that the person does not, in fact, meet the criteria for provision
- At subsequent clinical review a clinician may determine that the service user no longer meets the criteria owing to a change in circumstances, e.g., someone with a deteriorating condition has a decline in their function, leaving them unable to operate the equipment safely; the wheelchair would be withdrawn but the service will endeavour to support the person with the options they have available
- If a person does not meet the criteria for a wheelchair, the wheelchair service will communicate this clearly, stating the reasons behind the decision
- Disagreement about eligibility should first be raised with the service informally, subsequently using the complaints procedure if necessary

4 Levels of need

West Berkshire wheelchair service uses for reference the Department of Health & Social Care categories of need, which are reproduced below:

National Wheelchair Operational Data Collection Definitions – low and medium need	
Low need	Occasional users of wheelchair with relatively simple needs that can be readily met
	Do not have postural or special seating needs
	Physical condition is stable, or not expected to change significantly
	Assessment does not typically require specialist staff (generally self-assessment or telephone triage supported by health/social care professional or technician)
	Limited (or no) requirement for continued follow up / review
	Equipment requirements:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic • Non-modular wheelchair (self or attendant propelled) • Standard cushion • Up to 1 x accessory • Up to 1 x modification
Medium need	Daily users of wheelchair, or use for significant periods most days
	Have some postural or seating needs
	Physical condition may be expected to change (e.g. weight gain / loss, some degenerative conditions)
	Comprehensive, holistic assessment by skilled assessor required
	Regular follow up / review

	<p>Equipment requirements:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Configurable • Lightweight or modular wheelchair (self or attendant propelled) • Low to medium pressure relieving cushions • Basic buggies • Up to 2 x accessories • Up to 2 x modifications
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National Wheelchair Operational Data Collection Definitions – high and specialist need	
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High need	Permanent users who are 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 skilled assessor required
	Regular follow up / review with frequent adjustment required / expected
	<p>Equipment requirements:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex manual or powered equipment • Fixed frame chairs • High pressure relieving cushions • Specialist buggies • Up to 3 x accessories • Up to 3 x modifications • Needs are met by customised equipment
Specialist need	Permanent users who are fully dependent on their wheelchair for all mobility needs
	Highly complex postural or seating requirements (e.g. for high levels of physical disability) and/or are at greatest risk to their health and well-being
	Physical condition may be expected to change / degenerate over time
	Have complex and/or fluctuating medical conditions and multiple disabilities, which may include physical, cognitive, sensory and learning aspects
	They are likely to require 24 hour postural management due to: poor trunk control, inability to sit without support, limited upper limb function, possible spinal curvature and joint contractures
	They are at high risk of secondary complications due to their levels of disability such as pressure ulcers, contractures, chest infections and respiratory diseases

	The most common diagnoses for people who need specialist wheelchair services are: cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, brain injury, motor neurone disease, high level spinal cord injuries
	Regular follow up / review with frequent adjustment required / expected
	Comprehensive, holistic assessment by skilled assessor required
	Equipment requirements:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly complex powered equipment with specialist controllers • Tilt in space chairs • Seating systems on different chassis • Complex manual wheelchairs with integrated seating systems • 4 or more accessories • 4 or more modifications • Highly complex modifications that needs are met by bespoke equipment • Specialist controls • Devices that require integration with other assistive technology drivers

For further definition the following is reproduced from Healthcare Standards for NHS-Commissioned Wheelchair Services (2015):

Category 1 – Full-time wheelchair user, and the terminally ill

Category 2 – Part-time regular user

Category 3 – Part-time occasional user

Category 4 – Short-term user (**N.B.** This category is EXCLUDED from this contract)

GRADE	DESCRIPTION OF USER	EQUIPMENT NEEDS
1 (CAT 4)	PART TIME USER SHORT TERM – Temporary requirement. Normally independently mobile. Immobile due to accident or operation. May include terminal care. N.B. NOT INCLUDED IN SOME WHEELCHAIR CONTRACTS	Pushed or self-propelling standard. Special chair may be required.
2 (CAT 3)	PART TIME USER LONG TERM – Ability to walk short distances. Requires wheelchair on regular basis for outdoor use or to enhance quality of life for user/carer	Pushed standard or lightweight. Self-propelling standard, buggies for children.
3 (CAT 2)	PART TIME USER LONG TERM – Variable indoor walking due to fluctuating condition . High degree of independent lifestyle but	Self-propelling standard or lightweight.

	requires wheelchair to maintain level of independence and quality of life.	
4 (CAT 1)	FULL TIME USER LOW ACTIVITY – Limited or lack of ability to self-propel. Dependent for many daily living needs.	Pushed or self-propelling standard or buggy. Specialist chassis for custom-made seat. Bespoke seating.
5 (CAT 1)	FULL TIME USER ACTIVE – Unable to self-propel. Independent mobility with powered wheelchair. Degree of independence in daily living activities.	EPIC and EPIOC depending on ability / environment + motivation + transit + transit for travel.
6 (CAT 1)	FULL TIME USER ACTIVE – Independent mobility and lifestyle. Appropriate equipment reduces dependence on others and improves quality of life.	Self-propelling standard or high performance (adjustable stability by change of wheel position).

5 Prescription request process

Healthcare professionals who are employed outside the wheelchair service and are suitably trained may request low complexity equipment solutions on behalf of and in consultation with their patients / existing service users.

These external staff take full responsibility for the prescription, adjustment and handover of the equipment they have requested.

Recommendations should be made in accordance with the 'external prescription' process; provision is at the discretion of the wheelchair service.

External prescribers will comply with all wheelchair service requirements, e.g., completing necessary paperwork. Prescription requests require 10 working days to process from date of receipt.

6 Hospital discharges

Equipment is considered essential for discharge only where:

- a) The recipient will be eligible for equipment from the wheelchair service, as detailed above AND
- b) Wheelchair provision will negate the need for or reduce the required package of care, i.e., wheelchair provision will enable independence with personal care and social need

All other referrals are processed in accordance with standard referral and external prescription request processes.

7 Criteria for the provision of specific equipment

7.1 TRANSIT / ATTENDANT MANUAL WHEELCHAIRS

Used where the person cannot self-propel themselves; the service user has a personal assistant or carer who is willing and able to manage and manoeuvre the wheelchair in a suitable environment.

7.2 SELF-PROPELLED MANUAL WHEELCHAIRS

The service user must be able to physically self-propel, and this should not be detrimental to their medical condition. The GP may be required to provide advice on medical fitness to self-propel.

A therapist may sometimes provide a self-propelled solution to assist personal assistants or carers who would benefit from the improved manoeuvrability gained by use of large diameter rear wheels.

7.3 HIGH PERFORMANCE MANUAL WHEELCHAIRS

The criteria for a self-propelling wheelchair must be met.

The service user's medical condition results in reduced strength and / or where excessive activity would result in deterioration of the medical condition.

The service user must be a full time user; their lifestyle needs and ability must be such that significantly improved independence and indoor and outdoor mobility will be gained by such provision.

These chairs are not provided solely for the benefit of the personal assistant or carer, i.e., reduced weight for lifting into a car.

7.4 BUGGIES

Buggies are provided to children up to 4 or 5 years old who cannot be safely sat in a commercially available buggy. Younger children may alternatively be issued with a wheelchair instead of a buggy where this is deemed beneficial; equally, a buggy may be issued to an older child where suitable, particularly if they have a very small stature.

7.5 TILT-IN-SPACE WHEELCHAIRS

Tilt-in-space wheelchairs are provided for service users who require assistance to maintain their sitting balance and posture, optimising the effect of the force of gravity.

A fixed recline wheelchair with ramped seat cushion may be considered as an alternative if a variable tilt-in-space angle is not required, i.e., a fixed orientation in space would be sufficient/acceptable.

Personal assistants or carers must be able to demonstrate they are able to operate the wheelchair safely and appropriately as demonstrated by the clinician at hand over.

These chairs will not be provided solely to overcome difficulties with a) moving and handling / hoisting, b) eating and drinking, or c) breathing; they will not be provided for use during rehabilitation, nor to replace suitable static chair provision.

7.6 POWERED WHEELCHAIRS

Provision will be considered where:

- a) the service user is permanently unable to effectively self-propel a manual wheelchair indoors (i.e. inside their own home), or
- b) self-propelling within their home would be detrimental to their medical condition or pose a significant risk of injury, and
- c) function and independence within the home will be increased

Where the service user has a rapidly deteriorating condition, provision may be considered prior to the level of disability indicated above, e.g., MND.

Generally, the service user must comply with the DVLA requirements for motor vehicle drivers concerning epilepsy and other causes of loss of consciousness; see: '*At a Glance Guide to the current Medical Standards of Fitness to Drive*', issued by Drivers Medical Group, DVLA, Swansea, February 2007. Note that where epilepsy is well managed, provision will be considered.

Where the wheelchair service needs to contact the person's GP or other health professionals to gain further information, the service user will first be consulted.

If at any review the service user is found no longer to meet the eligibility criteria for a powered wheelchair, including no longer being able to independently and safely operate the equipment, the wheelchair service has the right to withdraw the equipment.

Power chairs are not provided where strict supervision is required, i.e. the service user must within their environment be broadly independent when driving.

A basic manual wheelchair will be offered as a back-up for use during essential repairs and maintenance of the powered wheelchair.

People who have high performance manual wheelchairs prior to powered provision may retain their high performance chair (at the service manager's discretion) until that chair is beyond economical repair; any replacement manual wheelchair will be a basic model.

Service users are strongly recommended to take out third party insurance.

7.6.1 ELECTRICALLY POWERED INDOOR WHEELCHAIR (EPIC)

The service user must:

- Be medically fit to independently and safely control the equipment indoors
- Be free from any combination of medical condition (including visual, cognitive and visuospatial disturbances), medication and / or treatment likely to make independent control of a powered wheelchair unsafe to themselves or others
- Be able to complete basic maintenance tasks, such as recharging the battery, or have a personal assistant or carer who is able to do so

Provision is also dependent on a suitable home environment which includes:

- Adequate space for storage of the wheelchair with power supply for battery charger (including ventilation as specified by the manufacturer)
- Adequate space for movement of the wheelchair within the home

- Suitable and safe access to areas required
- Ramps, if required, are fixed and permanent, and no steeper than 1:12

7.6.2 ELECTRICALLY POWERED INDOOR / OUTDOOR WHEELCHAIR (EPIOC)

The service user must:

- Meet all requirements for an EPIC
- Have suitable access to street level

During an outdoor driving assessment the service user will have demonstrated to a wheelchair service therapist and / or rehabilitation engineer the ability to drive independently, safely and appropriately, with due care and attention to the environment and the safety of self and others with whom they will come into contact in the public domain.

8 More than one manual wheelchair

More than one wheelchair may be provided when it is required to facilitate independent mobility over two levels within the home (where a through-floor lift is not fitted); provision for an additional chair is strictly limited to a basic manual wheelchair model.

9 Cushions, accessories and modifications

Cushions, accessories and modifications will be provided as appropriate to meet an assessed clinical need, e.g., postural, mobility and pressure care needs.

Cushions are provided to optimise posture and to distribute pressure as part of an individual's 24 hour posture and pressure management regime.

Cushions may be considered for privately purchased wheelchairs in special circumstances relating to an individual's case, and as agreed by the service manager, but only if that private purchase wheelchair is clinically suitable and the service user would have met the criteria for NHS provision of that wheelchair, e.g., not for outdoor-only powered wheelchairs. Note only one cushion may be issued per person, regardless of the number of wheelchairs they use.

Modifications affecting a manufacturer's warranty will not be considered for equipment, including those purchased under third party PWB.

10 The NHS Personal Wheelchair Budget (PWB) scheme

Introduced by the Government to give people choice in the selection of their wheelchair, this scheme is very similar to, and follows on from, the Voucher Scheme introduced to wheelchair services in the 1990s. Service users have the option of either staying within the standard NHS provision or of receiving a contribution towards the cost of a different wheelchair.

- Service users must meet the criteria for the provision of a manual or power wheelchair
- Service users must be assessed by the wheelchair service prior to considering the PWB scheme, i.e., a PWB cannot be issued retrospectively
- The value of the PWB is based on clinical need and on the NHS equipment which would have been issued to meet that need; the value is not based on the equipment the service user would like to purchase
- The prescription of any proposed wheelchair must meet the clinical need of the service user and pose no risk in provision (e.g. appropriate for postural needs)
- With the *Combined PWB* option the wheelchair remains the property of the NHS and will have repairs and maintenance for the core equipment covered by the wheelchair service, at cost to the wheelchair service; note repairs and maintenance for additional items fitted (e.g., seat riser unit) are not covered by the wheelchair service
- With the *Third Party PWB* option the service user owns the wheelchair; the PWB includes a maintenance contribution to assist with the cost of repairs and maintenance, which are wholly the responsibility of the service user
- (Note there is a third category of PWB known as *Notional*, but this simply refers to equipment provision coming wholly from the NHS)
- Provision of pressure care cushions and postural accessories will remain the responsibility of the wheelchair service
- In contrast to the preceding Voucher Scheme there is no set lifespan for a PWB, i.e., there is no automatic right to another PWB after five years
- PWBs will only be considered under exceptional circumstances for service users with rapidly deteriorating conditions.