



Wirral Community
Health and Care
NHS Foundation Trust

WIRRAL AND WEST CHESHIRE NHS WHEELCHAIR SERVICE

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR THE SUPPLY OF WHEELCHAIRS AND ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to outline the service and equipment that service users are eligible to receive. It is also an essential document for clinicians working in the wheelchair service.

The NHS wheelchair service only prescribes/ provides items which are deemed to meet clinical need and basic/ essential mobility requirements, working within the eligibility criteria set by the commissioners of the service.

To be eligible for an assessment by the Wheelchair Service a person must:

- Be registered with a GP in the area covered by the wheelchair service.
- Have a permanent disability or medical condition which will last longer than 6 months and significantly affects their ability to walk.
- Require a wheelchair for longer than 6 months.
- Demonstrate that they will use the equipment on a **frequent and regular** basis (more days of the week than not) for mobility purposes only.

The NHS wheelchair service has a duty to ensure that the clinical needs and outcomes of service users who meet the local criteria for an NHS wheelchair are met in the most cost-effective way.

The NHS wheelchair service does not provide:

- Wheelchairs for short term/ occasional use.
- Powered wheelchairs solely for outdoor use.
- Wheelchairs for rehabilitation purposes and/ or when a person's needs are likely to change within next 6 months.
- Wheelchairs to control/ manage behaviour or as a form of restraint.
- Or consider buggies/ wheelchairs for children, until they have reached age related milestones for walking.

The NHS wheelchair service only prescribes/ provides wheelchairs to care home residents with particular needs.

If a service user wishes to appeal this eligibility criteria a request for this should, in the first instance, be made to wheelchair service, service providing any further information that may be of use in reviewing the case. This does not affect a person's right to complain via the Trust's patient experience service.

GENERAL POLICY FOR PROVISION OF EQUIPMENT

- Equipment will be prescribed/ provided to any user with permanently impaired or no mobility and users with temporary impairment, who needs a wheelchair on a long-term basis (for more than 6 months).
- Users who require a wheelchair for less than 6 months will be signposted to an appropriate short-term loan/ hire provider/ service.
- Wheelchairs will not be prescribed/ provided when the user is showing signs of recovery from an operation, injury or illness, and whose wheelchair needs are likely to significantly change within the next 6 months.
- Prescription decisions are made following assessment by qualified personnel (Consultant in Rehabilitation Medicine, Rehabilitation Engineer, Wheelchair Therapist, Assistant Practitioner and Approved Prescriber), and are based on clinical (postural and support and pressure distribution) /mobility needs, user category and anticipated usage. Note – not all aspects of usage can be considered e.g. rough terrain, stair climbing, varying seat heights etc. It is not always possible to accommodate personal preference, e.g. colour, a specific manufacturer etc. Age will not be a discriminating factor.
- Priority for assessment/ provision will be given according to clinical need/ risk. All terminally ill users will be treated as urgent and prioritised accordingly.
- All equipment prescribed/ provided is from a selected range of equipment used by the wheelchair service, which is regularly reviewed/ updated.
- Each user is prescribed/ provided with only one set of equipment, however secondary provision maybe considered in the following circumstances:
 - To facilitate mobility upstairs, when there is no possibility of transferring the primary equipment upstairs. Any secondary item/s may not necessarily be the same model/s as the primary item/s.
 - A basic type of manual wheelchair as a back-up for a powered wheelchair.
- Wheelchairs will not be provided as a walking aid.
- Accessories will only be prescribed/ provided to meet clinical need, and at the discretion of the wheelchair service.
- Wheelchairs/ accessories are not exclusively prescribed/ provided for any (or any combination) of the following:
 - School/ college use
 - Work use
 - Occasional use
 - Sporting activities
 - Static seating
 - Transportation purposes

- Moving and handling purposes
 - Powered outdoor only mobility
- Self-propelling wheelchairs will only be prescribed/ provided to users who are able to self-propel safely with no medical contraindications to this activity. Provision must provide the user with increased function and independence. Self-propelling wheels will not be prescribed/ provided for the benefit of the attendant only.
 - The user must be within the specified weight and size for **any** prescribed item.
 - Buggies will only be supplied, as an alternative to a wheelchair, if a child meets the access/ eligibility criteria for the provision of wheelchairs and it is both clinically and age appropriate. Provision is limited to single buggies.
 - Buggies (or wheelchairs) are not provided for the purpose of restraint to users that have behaviour that challenges/ cognitive deficit if a child/ adult has the physical ability to walk.
 - As all young children require a buggy/ pushchair until walking age, a specialist buggy will only be considered if their postural and mobility needs cannot be met by a commercially available buggy/ pushchair and the child is too small for standard wheelchair. Where commercially available, it is the responsibility of the parent/ guardian to provide the buggy/ pushchair.
 - Powered mobility driving assessments are based on users driving ability/road safety awareness as applicable. Certain limitations on use may be added as part of the conditions of loan.
 - Outdoor powered driving assessments are based on the Highway Code and wheelchair service driving assessment form. Driving assessments will be carried out at the user's permanent address, although it may be necessary to carry out further assessment at another location. Users will be judged on their own road safety awareness and ability to safely control the powered wheelchair.
 - Attendant controlled powered wheelchairs are only prescribed/ provided under exceptional circumstances and are only provided to full time users who meet the criteria for powered provision, for use around their home. They are supplied for use by the main carer who is named on the conditions of loan; this is expected to be a constant family member/ advocate actively involved delivering the user's care. The named carer must ensure that any other carer who will operate it has been trained and assessed safely to do so. If/ when the named carer is no longer involved the attendant controls will be removed. Attendant controls are not provided for use in multiple care settings.
 - Individuals who wish to fit power packs should ensure the equipment is compatible and be fitted by a suitable qualified individual, preferably the supplier of the power pack. The purchase of the power pack, fitting and maintenance costs are borne by the user.

- If a user has an energy-efficient wheelchair from the service and their condition deteriorates and a powered wheelchair is provided, when the manual wheelchair needs replacing it will be replaced with a basic manual model.
- Belts and harnesses are supplied for postural support/positioning and safety only. They will not be provided as a restraint for users with behaviour that challenges.
- Cushions will be supplied to all wheelchairs provided to assist with comfort, stability, postural management and pressure ulcer prevention and management. Alternating air pressure cushions (dynamic pressure cushions) are not supplied by the wheelchair service.
- Equipment will only be handed over if the user and/ or named carer agrees to the conditions of loan. Any breach of these conditions may result in withdrawal of equipment.
- Equipment will only be replaced when it no longer meets the user's assessed clinical need and/ or is beyond economical repair. New provision will be based on current eligibility criteria.
- Items of equipment new to the service will not be provided until appropriate staff in the wheelchair service and/ or authorised repairers have received sufficient and appropriate training in prescription and maintenance.

POLICY FOR THE PROVISION OF EQUIPMENT TO PEOPLE IN CARE HOMES

Residents of care homes are entitled to an assessment for a wheelchair if they meet the eligibility criteria.

Provision is limited to self-propelling, tilt in space and electrically powered wheelchairs, and the user must meet all the specific conditions listed in the next section; they must demonstrate that they will use the equipment on a frequent and regular basis.

Care homes are expected to provide standard transit wheelchairs for the portage of residents.

NHS wheelchair provision is to enable independent mobility or when a resident requires significant postural support to maximise function and prevent deterioration.

- **Independent mobility-** residents must have the mental and physical ability to safely propel themselves in a wheelchair or safely operate a powered wheelchair.
- **Significant postural support to minimise deterioration and maximise function-** residents must be unable to sit independently and safely in a wheelchair and need wheeled mobility indoors and outdoors.

The only exception to this is when a person is in residential care, and it essential that they require frequent and regular use of a standard transit wheelchair for clinical reasons. They must meet all other criteria for a standard transit wheelchair.

In certain cases, residents will need to have a named carer who will be taking them out and this person must be present for assessment/handover of equipment.

The wheelchair service is unable to provide:

- Wheelchairs or associated equipment for transferring and moving residents around the care home e.g., from bedrooms to communal areas or around the grounds, to socialise or access facilities/ meals.
- Wheelchairs for trips out of the care home e.g., going on outings, for appointments etc. either with care home staff or residents own family /friends.
- Wheelchairs as a substitute for the provision of an armchair or dining room chair.
- Wheelchairs as a means of controlling/ managing behaviour.
- Wheelchairs for use by multiple residents.
- Wheelchairs for rehabilitation purposes and/ or where the resident's needs are likely to change within the next 6 months.
- Pressure redistribution cushions for use in armchairs/standard transit wheelchairs.

Care Homes who have a Residents who have Wheelchairs on Issue from the Wheelchair Service

Residents can keep their existing wheelchair if they were provided with this before they moved into the care home.

They are required to return their wheelchair if they no longer meet criteria when they are re-assessed.

Care homes must ensure any resident with a wheelchair on issue from the Wheelchair Service complies with the wheelchair service conditions of loan and:

- The wheelchair is available for any repair or maintenance.
- The wheelchair is stored safely on the premises.
- Report any concerns about the wheelchair to the wheelchair service.
- Notify the wheelchair service they the user no longer requires the NHS wheelchair.
- The wheelchair remains the property of the NHS wheelchair service and should not under any circumstances be used for another resident.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR THE PROVISION OF SPECIFIC EQUIPMENT

Our NHS Wheelchair Service endeavours to provide a range of high-quality equipment to meet the users' varied and diverse needs and facilitate independence and choice. We follow the criteria below for the prescribing and provision and associated equipment of wheelchairs to ensure equity of provision and maximise cost effectiveness.

Service users must first be eligible for an assessment by the Wheelchair Service specified on page 3, **all users must demonstrate that they intend to use the equipment on a frequent and regular basis** (more days of the week than not) **and for mobility purposes only.**

Criteria for the supply of a standard transit wheelchair

1. The user must have impaired mobility.
2. The user has a named carer who is willing and able to push the wheelchair.
3. The user must demonstrate that they will use their wheelchair for essential activities of daily living at home and/ or going out on a **frequent and regular basis** (more often than not) to access essential services/ facilities in the community, such as day care, health appointments, work/ education/ volunteering, or undertake food shopping.

***Exceptions:** Residents of care homes will not be supplied with a standard transit wheelchair unless the user is in residential care, and it is essential that they require frequent and regular use of a standard transit wheelchair for clinical reasons, and they meet all the other criteria above.*

Criteria for the supply of a standard self-propelling wheelchair

1. The user must have impaired mobility.
2. The user must be deemed medically fit to self-propel.
3. Self-propulsion should not adversely affect or be detrimental to the user's medical condition.
4. Provision must provide the user with an increase in functional independence.
5. The user can be assessed to self-propel in an indoor environment; however, they must have a named carer who is willing and able to push the wheelchair outdoors.
6. The user must demonstrate that they will use their wheelchair for essential activities of daily living at home and/ or going out at on a **frequent and regular basis** (more days of the week than not) to access essential services/ facilities in the community, such as day care, health appointments, work/ education/ volunteering, or undertake food shopping.

Criteria for the supply of a configurable wheelchair

1. The criteria for a self-propelling wheelchair are met.
2. The user's clinical and mobility needs cannot be met by another wheelchair of lower specification within the wheelchair service range.
3. The user must be a full-time user who independently propels most of the time indoors.

Criteria for the supply of an active user wheelchair

1. The user must be functionally unable to walk and need to use a wheelchair for independent mobility indoors and outdoors.
2. The user must have been assessed as a full-time user who is highly active. They must propel the wheelchair more than they are pushed.
3. The user must have a long-term condition with their needs unlikely to improve reducing their use of the wheelchair.
4. The user must be a skilled wheelchair user who would directly benefit by having this type of chair and capable of exploiting its features or have the potential to develop these skills.
5. The user must demonstrate an understanding of static and dynamic stability necessary for their likely environment and planned use.
6. The user must have the cognitive ability to learn new skills, be able to show insight into safety implications and have an awareness of risk.

Criteria for the supply of electrically powered indoor wheelchairs (E.P.I.C.)

1. The user is unable to walk* or self-propel* within their own home environment or it would be detrimental to their medical condition to do so within their own home.
2. The user would gain a measure of independence from the provision of such a wheelchair.
3. The user is mentally and physically capable of safely operating the powered wheelchair and they/their carers are capable of maintaining it.
4. The user must have been assessed as a full-time user.
5. The user's home environment must be compatible with the use of a powered wheelchair, including sufficient space for moving the wheelchair (with footplates on) around the home and suitable space with a power supply for charging batteries overnight.
6. The user has demonstrated that they have the insight, intellect, capacity and dexterity to operate E.P.I.C. safely and responsibly on their own without physical assistance and verbal instruction.
7. The user has demonstrated that they have the capacity to compensate for any sensory or physical impairment.
8. If the user meets the above criteria, they can be assessed to use the E.P.I.C. in their garden, providing access/ environment is deemed suitable.
9. The user has obtained medical approval to use a powered wheelchair from their GP or the medical officer.

Criteria for the supply of an electrically powered indoor/outdoor chair (E.P.I.O.C.)

1. The criteria for the E.P.I.C. are met, and their home must be wheelchair accessible; they must have safe and easy access to the outside environment and any ramps must be fixed in place.
2. The user must be able to demonstrate that the E.P.I.O.C. will significantly improve his/her quality of life/independence greater than that supplied by the E.P.I.C.
3. The user must have safely used an E.P.I.C. for more than 6 months and have an expert driving score before they are considered for an E.P.I.O.C. Wheelchair

therapists and technicians reserve the right to upgrade E.P.I.O.C.s before this period when deemed appropriate.

4. The user must be free from any combination of medical conditions (including visual, cognitive and visuospatial disturbances) 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
5. The user must be free from conditions causing loss of consciousness and/or epileptic seizures within the last 12 months.
6. The user must have an adequate field and acuity of vision to be safely aware of outdoor environment.
7. The user is able to autonomously control the prescribed powered wheelchair outdoors.

Criteria for the supply of an attendant controlled powered wheelchair

1. The user must be a full-time wheelchair user who fulfils the criteria for E.P.I.C provision but due to other factors cannot independently operate a powered wheelchair
2. The named carer (the main carer who is a constant family member/ advocate actively involved in delivering the user's care) is unable to push the wheelchair around their home environment, on medical grounds on a permanent basis; this must be supported by a letter from a medical doctor.
3. The named carer (the main carer who is a constant family member/ advocate actively involved in delivering the user's care) is physically and mentally fit to control the powered wheelchair and able to comply with the manufacturers guidelines for the safe use of the equipment and specific conditions associated with attendant controls.
4. The user will derive some significant improvement in quality of life from using such a piece of equipment.
5. The user/ carer must demonstrate that attendant controls on the powered wheelchair are not for outdoor mobility only.
6. The user/ carer must demonstrate that a power pack will not meet the need
7. Only users with a deteriorating condition can be considered for an E.P.I.O.C. with dual controls to prevent the powered wheelchair being withdrawn when they can no longer operate it.
8. Dual controls can be added to a child's powered wheelchair during the learning process.

Criteria for the supply of a buggy (as an alternative to a wheelchair)

1. A permanent disability or medical condition which will last longer than 6 months and significantly affects their ability to walk .
2. The user's clinical needs cannot be met by a commercially available buggy.
3. The user has a carer available to push the buggy.
4. A buggy is appropriate to the user's age and stage of development.
5. Babies and very young children can be **assessed** for a buggy when there is evidence of complex postural and needs and a recognised clinical need for 24 hour postural management.
6. A buggy will not be provided as a restraint for a child with behaviour that challenges.

Criteria for the supply of reclining back and/ or tilt

1. The user must have been assessed as a full-time user with a clinical diagnosis/ deteriorating condition for which a wheelchair with recline and/ or tilt is clinically appropriate/ beneficial.
2. The user will gain significant improvements in their posture and mobility from the provision of a tilt in space wheelchair.
3. The user requires bespoke postural support in the wheelchair and needs to sustain a rearward degree of tilt or change the angle of tilt during the day
4. The user will spend a significant period of time in the wheelchair as part of a postural management programme.
5. The user has a need to mobilise both indoors and outdoors.
6. The user's clinical needs cannot be met by another wheelchair of lower specification within the within the wheelchair service range, or in another way (such as by a posture supportive commercially available armchair).
7. There are no environmental constraints relative to using the prescribed equipment, and the carers are able to operate the system safely.

***Exceptions: Care Homes:** Care home residents will not be supplied a tilt in space /recliner wheelchair, if is solely for indoors and around grounds. Instead, care homes should supply a suitable postural supportive static armchair, to meet the residents postural/pressure needs. Residents who meet criteria need to have a named carer who will take them out in the wheelchair on a **frequent and regular** basis and be present for assessment/handover.*

Criteria for the supply of special seating for wheelchairs

1. Users who cannot maintain a safe posture when seated in a wheelchair will be supplied with the most appropriate supportive system for their mobility needs.
2. The user must use the wheelchair for a significant part of everyday as part of a postural management programme with static seating already in place.
3. The user's wheelchair needs cannot be met by a 'standard' wheelchair system.
4. Special seating can be provided for use in a private wheelchair providing user is eligible, and the seating system is practical/compatible with the private wheelchair.

Criteria for the supply of pressure distribution cushions

1. The user must be registered with the wheelchair service.
2. The user must spend long periods sitting in wheelchair, transfer to static seating being inappropriate or not possible.
3. The cushion is for wheelchair use only and not for use in static seating.
4. The prescribed cushion is determined by the user's clinical need and risk of developing pressure ulcers.
5. A cushion can be provided for a user's private wheelchairs as long a service user would meet the criteria for wheelchair provision from the service and a referral is received
6. A cushion will still be provided by the wheelchair service if the user chooses a third party personal wheelchair budget.

EXAMPLES OF EQUIPMENT NOT PROVIDED*

- Scooters
- Bikes and Trikes
- Bike attachments
- Outdoor only powered wheelchairs
- Blue tooth if this does not come as standard
- Power packs
- Power assisted wheels
- Lights and indicators for powered wheelchairs
- Non-standard powered controls
- Stair climbers
- Standing wheelchairs
- Rise and fall wheelchairs
- Full horizontal recline
- Sports wheelchairs
- Double buggies
- Wheelchair pram attachments
- Rain covers and sunshades
- Extra cushions/ cushion covers

***This list is not exhaustive**

PERSONAL WHEELCHAIR BUDGETS (PWBs)

All users who are eligible for NHS wheelchair provision are offered a Personal Wheelchair Budget (PWB), except for when:

- The user has a rapidly changing or deteriorating condition.
- There are safety concerns regarding compliance with the PWB process.

PWBs can be managed in one of three ways:

- Notional Personal Wheelchair Budget (standard NHS Provision). This enables the wheelchair user to have a basic wheelchair which will meet their identified needs.
- Notional Personal Wheelchair Budget with contribution. This option allows the wheelchair user or another agency, such as a Social Care, education or a voluntary/charitable organisation, to contribute to the PWB to either have a higher specification NHS wheelchair or add additional features to meet their wider health and wellbeing needs.
- Third Party Personal Wheelchair Budget. In discussion with the wheelchair therapist, if it is clinically appropriate, the wheelchair user can choose to use their PWB as a contribution to buy a wheelchair from an independent retailer outside of the NHS.

With a PWB, wheelchair users should expect to have:

- A personalised assessment where they are supported to identify the health and wellbeing outcomes they wish to achieve
- A personal support plan which captures their health and wellbeing outcomes
- information provided upfront about the amount of money available in their personal wheelchair budget and the options available to them locally to use it
- Information about the repair and maintenance of wheelchairs, if the option to purchase a wheelchair outside of the NHS commissioned service is taken
- Care that is better integrated, meaning that different agencies work together to support their postural and mobility needs and achieve their health and wellbeing outcomes.

The Wheelchair Service is unable to:

- Offer a PWB retrospectively to pay for a wheelchair already ordered or in use
- Make a direct payment to a patient for a standalone PWB