

# Patient transport assessment and booking centre

## Information for the public

Patient transport is a service provided for patients who are unable to attend hospital appointments by public transport or any other means including private car or minicab due to their medical condition.

This leaflet sets out answers to some common questions about the patient transport service and what you can expect from the patient transport assessment and booking centre when you contact us.

### Who provides the patient transport service?

Our patient transport service is run by DHL.

### How do I know if I can use this service?

Wherever possible, patients should make their own way to and from hospital appointments. If your medical condition affects your ability to travel independently (including with the help of friends, relatives or carers), our transport service can assess whether you meet the Department of Health and Social Care's criteria for eligibility to use this service.

### How can I get in touch with the assessment centre?

Please call 0333 240 4909, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (except bank holidays). You will be asked for a pin; if you don't have one please don't worry – simply hold for the next options.

You will have a choice to either wait until your call is answered or during busy times you may be given an option to join an automatic queue. This means you will get a call back within two hours when you are near the top of the queue.

Please be advised if your phone is engaged or you do not answer when we call back, you will be removed from the automatic queue and will not receive another call.

If you are unable to make a call, you can use your text-to-voice relay service using the number above.

A family member, carer or friend can also book on your behalf. They will need your NHS number and the date, time and location of your appointment (including the clinic name / number).

### When is the best time to call?

Our busiest days are Mondays so we would advise you to avoid Mondays if possible.

## What does the assessment involve / what can I expect on the call?

The confidential assessment lasts approximately seven minutes. Before you call, please make sure you have the following information available:

- NHS number
- date of appointment
- time of appointment
- location of appointment (including clinic name/number)

You will be asked questions about your mobility and care needs including how you manage on a daily basis and what support you may need.

You will be informed if you are eligible for patient transport after the assessment.

## What are the eligibility criteria?

Access to patient transport is based on medical need and the eligibility criteria used is in line with the Department of Health and Social Care's guidelines.

The criteria makes patient transport available to patients whose clinical condition means that travelling by any other means would be detrimental to their recovery or existing condition, such as but not limited to:

- patients who need to be transported on a stretcher
- some wheelchair patients
- some patients receiving oxygen
- patients who require paramedic services
- patients who need the support of patient transport staff during the journey

You will be reviewed at each transport request to ensure you continue to be eligible, and to make sure the most appropriate vehicle and crew support is provided.

If you visit hospital frequently or if you have a medical condition which is unlikely to change, full assessments are carried out less frequently (between four weeks and three months).

## Changes to eligibility due to COVID-19

In line with the latest national guidance on patient transport services (issued 24 September 2020), in addition to the above, the following patients may be eligible for transport:

- Patients who are defined on medical grounds as '[extremely clinically vulnerable](#)' to COVID-19. This is a category that may change over time as more is known about how COVID-19 affects patients. Patients are advised to discuss this with their GP or hospital doctor if they think they may be in this category.
- Patients suspected of having COVID-19 who need on-going essential care, for example renal dialysis and cancer treatments, and have no access to private travel
- Patients who have been discharged and need to be transported from one care setting to another, or home, if there is no alternative means of transport.

For people who are not in a priority group, we will be asking family, friends and local volunteer networks to help take them to and from hospital and other care settings. We will only do this when it is safe and possible to do so.

## **What if I am not eligible for patient transport?**

If you are not happy with the outcome of your assessment, you can appeal the decision and this will be handled by the booking and assessment centre. The decision will then be reviewed by the nurse team.

You will be given the details of how to appeal after your assessment.

## **What if I am not eligible but cannot afford any other transport?**

You may be able to get reimbursed for travel costs through the healthcare travel costs scheme (HTCS). This funding can also be issued in advance, either per journey or in a block sum, depending on the frequency of travel.

You can find more information by:

- visiting: [www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/help-with-health-costs/healthcare-travel-costs-scheme-htcs](http://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/help-with-health-costs/healthcare-travel-costs-scheme-htcs)
- visiting the cashier's office at the hospital you are visiting for your appointment.

At the Royal Free London, the cashier's offices are located at:

- Barnet Hospital, level 3  
Open Monday to Friday, 10am-12.30pm and 1-2.45pm
- Chase Farm Hospital, ground floor  
Open Monday to Friday, 9am-12 midday and 12.30-4.15pm
- Royal Free Hospital, lower ground floor  
Open Monday to Friday, 9.30am-4.50pm

You can also visit our website for more information:

[www.royalfree.nhs.uk/contact-us/getting-to-our-hospitals/help-with-travel-costs](http://www.royalfree.nhs.uk/contact-us/getting-to-our-hospitals/help-with-travel-costs)

## **What options are available to me if I cannot get patient transport?**

Transport for London offer assistance during journeys. Visit: [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk).

If you need assistance for your journey, please contact the TfL customer services team by phone on 0343 222 1234 or email: [overgroundinfo@tfl.gov.uk](mailto:overgroundinfo@tfl.gov.uk) giving, where possible, at least 24 hours' notice, especially when your journey continues beyond London Over ground. For customers who are deaf or hard of hearing, booking assistance is possible by Mincom text phone on 020 3031 9331. You can also read TfL's 'Making rail accessible' booklet here: <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/uploads/forms/making-rail-accessible-large-print.pdf>.

More information is available on our website about services such as Dial a Ride:

[www.royalfree.nhs.uk/contact-us/getting-to-our-hospitals](http://www.royalfree.nhs.uk/contact-us/getting-to-our-hospitals)

## **If you are eligible for patient transport**

### **How far in advance of my hospital appointment should I book my transport?**

Please contact the transport team on 0333 240 4909 up to four weeks ahead of your appointment date or at least two days before your appointment to give us time to arrange your transport.

### **Will you confirm my booking?**

We will contact you three days before your hospital appointment and:

- confirm that you still need transport to your appointment
- give you an opportunity to cancel your transport if you no longer need it
- give you your unique journey ID

On the day, you will receive an SMS text message or an automated message confirming the time your transport will arrive.

### **Can I bring a friend, carer or family member with me?**

Transport could be provided to an escort or carer where their particular skills and/or support are needed during the journey and where this cannot be provided by the ambulance crew. For example this might be appropriate for those accompanying a person with a physical or mental incapacity, vulnerable adults or to act as a translator. You will need to be assessed for your need for an escort or carer at the time of your booking, so please mention this. All escorts need to be booked ahead to travel with you.

If eligible, only one escort is permitted per patient, and they must be a member of your household due to COVID-19 precautions.

Please note, as part of our COVID-19 measures to keep our hospitals and community sites safe, visitors are not permitted to enter our sites unless it is essential for a patient to be accompanied.

### **Where will I get picked up from?**

When booking transport, please let us know where you would like to be picked up from.

### **When will I be collected?**

This depends on your postcode; you will be collected to allow enough time for you to arrive before your appointment. Please be ready when transport arrives as drivers cannot wait more than 10 minutes.

### **What if my transport does not arrive?**

Call the assessment centre on 0333 240 4909 and select option 1 followed by option 2.

### **How are you keeping me safe during the pandemic?**

Our transport providers are following the latest national infection and prevention control guidelines.

The new guidance issued allows certain groups of patients to travel together; please be assured that distancing measures will be put in place in vehicles and the latest infection control and prevention policies adhered to.

### **What will happen when I get to hospital?**

The transport team will ensure that you are taken to your appointment.

### **Can my GP book patient transport for me?**

No, transport should be booked by you, the patient or your carer or relative.

### **What if my appointment is cancelled / I can no longer attend my appointment?**

Please call us on 0333 240 4909 as soon as possible to reschedule your transport or cancel. Please press option 1 followed by option 2.

### **More information**

For more information about the patient transport service at the Royal Free London, please visit: [www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/non-emergency-patient-transport](http://www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/non-emergency-patient-transport)

### **Your feedback**

If you have any feedback on this leaflet or for a list of references for it, please email: [rf.communications@nhs.net](mailto:rf.communications@nhs.net)

### **Alternative formats**

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please speak to a member of staff.

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