

NON EMERGENCY PATIENT TRANSPORT POLICY.

Purpose.

To ensure that non emergency patient transport is provided for those patients who require it, that it is provided when and where required, not provided when not justified, and that it is provided in the most cost effective way.

The principal, which should apply, is that each patient should be able to reach hospital in a reasonable time and in reasonable comfort, without detriment to his or her medical condition.

A non-emergency patient is one who, whilst requiring treatment, which may or not be of a specialist nature, does not require an urgent or immediate response. A clinical need for treatment does not imply a medical need for transport.

Policy.

1. Transport will only be arranged for patients:
 - 1.1 Who have been assessed by a Medical Practitioner (a doctor, nurse, medical therapist or midwife) who considers, on medical grounds, that it is appropriate for the patient to use ambulance transport.
 - 1.2 For whom there must be no available private transport and the patient is unable due to their physical/medical condition to utilise public transport.
 - 1.3 That clinical staff must consider that the distance the patient is required to travel is excessive and the poor availability of public transport in their area would be detrimental to the patients' condition.

However, the distance and availability of public transport on their own are not grounds for authorising patient transport. Patients must always meet the medical criteria for requiring hospital transport.

2. Patients who require transport to meet social needs will not be provided with non-emergency patient transport. Some of these patients are entitled to reimbursement of travel costs. In these cases their fares will be reimbursed in line with the NHS Guidelines for the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme.
3. Escorts will be limited to patients who are visually impaired, deaf, infirm, have a mental health condition, have learning difficulties or requires the escort to act as an interpreter.

Issued by: Operational Services Manager.

Date: January 2004.

Review date: January 2006.

Hours of service.

The service is available between the hours of 9.00 a.m. and 5 .00 p.m. However every effort should be made to ensure that patient are booked appointments which finish at 4 p.m. so that the patient can be safely delivered to their address without travelling in the rush hour traffic. Out of these hours requests for transport should be made via the bed manager.

Urgent / late referrals.

Urgent or late referrals may be accepted. Urgent or late referrals can be made by phoning the transport desk with the patient's details. The transport desk staff will, dependant on current ambulance workload, determines whether they are able to take the referral and or if an alternative is available.

999 ambulances are not part of this service.**Cancellations.****Cancellation of appointment by the patient.**

The outpatient letters and appointment cards advise patients of the actions which they should take when they are unable to attend an appointment and stresses the importance of letting the hospital know as soon as possible.

Cancellation of appointment by the hospital.

The Transport Desk should be notified by telephone.

Cancellation of discharge/transfer by the hospital.

When a patients discharge is cancelled, it is the responsibility of the ward staff to advise by telephone the Transport Desk.

Patients admitted.

The Admissions office staff must check on PAS whether the patient has any Outpatient appointments, and if so advise the Transport Desk of the patients' admission.

When a patient dies.

When a department is notified of the death of a patient, a notification of death form is completed and forwarded to the Health Records Department. It is then the Health Records Departments responsibility to cancel all appointments and notify the Transport Desk of the cancellation of transport since we should aim to avoid distress to relatives.

Escorted Journeys.

Patients should only be accompanied under exceptional circumstances. If the patient wishes a friend or relative to be present at hospital, the friend or relative must make their own travel arrangements.

Patients may require an escort if:

- They are a child.
- They need excess care whilst on site e.g. incontinent, confused, or of poor sight, requiring interpretation or an understanding service.

Abortive journeys.

The Trust books numerous journeys each year, which do not take place. Staff must inform the transport desk as soon as they are aware that the patient will not be attending for an appointment or that they are already an in-patient, or that they will not be discharged. Patients who make their own way home having arrived by Transport will not be offered further transport.

Complaints:

Complaints follow the normal Trust complaints procedure. Complaints about an Ambulance Service are referred to the individual Ambulance Service via the Transport staff for explanation prior to responding to the patient.