

# **St Helens Wheelchair Service**

## **Eligibility Criteria**

## 1 Eligibility

The Wheelchair Service provides assessment of mobility needs and pressure care and postural support in a wheeled device.

To be eligible for assessment regarding the provision of a wheelchair, the person must be:

- a) A registered and or resident patient of St Helens CCG
- b) Due to an identified medical condition require a wheelchair
- c) Require the wheelchair for longer than six months or Palliative needs.

People requiring wheelchairs for short-term or infrequent use, should be referred to alternative community providers.

The Service supplies wheelchairs from a standard defined range. This range is chosen on grounds of ability to meet clinical needs, ease of maintenance, and value for money and ready availability.

The Wheelchair Service do not provide –

- Adult wheelchairs for outdoor use only
- Wheelchairs in the place of a suitable static seat
- Transit wheelchairs to residents of Nursing and residential care homes
- Powered packs or powered wheels that are retro fitted to manual wheelchairs
- Powered outdoor only wheelchairs
- Attendant controlled powered wheelchairs
- Seat risers in powered wheelchairs
- Mobility scooters
- Equipment specifically for work, education or sporting requirements
- Sunshades / canopies for buggies unless identified specific medical need
- Trays unless required for postural support as identified by wheelchair service on assessment.
- Transportation clamps or head restraints for transportation purposes

Clients who do not meet the criteria for provision of a wheelchair will be informed in writing of the reason and given information on alternative sources of wheelchair provision. Clients who wish to discuss or appeal the decision should contact the wheelchair service.

## 2 Referral process

The Wheelchair Service accepts initial referrals from a Health or Social care Professional e.g.

- IASH / IDT therapists and social workers
- Allied health professionals in community and acute services.
- DNLO and Community Nurses
- Specialist Nurse
- Practice Nurse
- General Practitioner/ consultants

Referral forms are available from the Wheelchair Service. They should include as much information as possible in order that an accurate assessment can be made of the client's eligibility. Incomplete referrals will delay triage and the assessment for the person.

### 3 Prioritisation of Referrals

Palliative referrals are given priority. There are specific cases that will be considered for prioritisation dependant on individual presenting problems and identified risk. However cases will usually be seen in the order of referral. Referrals will be triaged within 2 working days

### 4 Reviews/Re-assessments

The Wheelchair Service accepts self-referrals for clients already known to the Service. Carers or other professionals can contact the service for review if the client's condition is found to have changed

### 5 Criteria for specific wheelchairs

#### 5.1 Criteria for the provision of a Transit / Attendant Manual Wheelchair

- a) The user must have impaired mobility.
- b) The user has a carer available to push the chair.

#### 5.2 Criteria for the provision of a Self- Propelled Manual Wheelchair

- a) The user must have impaired mobility.
- b) The user must be deemed medically fit to self-propel by a relevant health professional.

### 5.3 Criteria for the provision of a Lighter Weight Wheelchair

- These can be supplied for a family carer who has a medical condition, which either precludes or is exacerbated by pushing or transporting a standard model of wheelchair.
- These will only be supplied following an assessment by a wheelchair clinician.
- It may be necessary in some cases, for further clarification of medical need to be sought from the carer's GP prior to supply.

### 5.4 Criteria for the provision of an energy efficient manual wheelchair

- Where the service users medical condition results in a reduced strength and/or major excessive activity would result in deterioration of the medical condition.
- Where the clinical and mobility needs cannot be met by the standard range of wheelchairs.

### 5.5 Criteria for the provision of an Active User Manual Wheelchair

- The user must be functionally unable to walk and need to use a wheelchair for independent mobility.
- The user must be a skilled wheelchair user who would directly benefit by having this type of wheelchair and be capable of exploiting its features or have the potential to develop these skills.
- Rigid framed wheelchairs will be considered for active users and where a client is likely to benefit from an increase in independent mobility which cannot be achieved in a standard, folding or lightweight wheelchair. The criteria for a self-propelling wheelchair must be met.
- These will be considered six months post discharge from hospital to allow the users weight to stabilize
- The Service User must be a full time user and their life style needs and ability must be such that maximum independence and mobility will be gained by such provision.

### 5.6 Criteria for the provision of a Buggy

Buggies may be provided as an alternative to a wheelchair where it best meets clinical and mobility needs.

#### 5.7 Criteria for the provision of a Tilt-in-Space Wheelchair

- These wheelchairs are provided for Service Users where the tilt facility is the only way of maintaining sitting balance within a wheelchair.
- Clients are fully dependent on the provision of a chair for postural support, positioning and comfort. Pressure care will be considered in all wheelchairs.
- Carers must demonstrate that they are able to operate the system safely, access transport and detach component parts for safety and comfort of the client.
- These wheelchairs will not be provided to overcome moving and handling issues only.

#### 5.8 Criteria for the provision of an Electrically Powered Indoor Wheelchair (EPIC)

- 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.
- The user would gain a measure of independence from the provision of such a wheelchair.
- The user is mentally and physically capable of safely operating the powered wheelchair and them/their carers are capable of maintaining it.
- The user's home\* environment must be suitable to allow the safe use of the powered chair.

#### 5.9 Criteria for the provision of an Electrically Powered Indoor/ Outdoor Powered Wheelchair (EPIOC)

- The criteria for the E.P.I.C. are met. (Home must be wheelchair accessible i.e. Level access/ramped - indoor to outdoor)
- The user must have no difficulties with visual, cognitive, spatial awareness or other higher cortical functions or medical conditions which would make them a danger to themselves, pedestrians or other road users while using the wheelchair.
- The user must comply with the DVLC requirements for motor vehicle drivers in connection with an epileptic condition or other causes of loss of consciousness.

#### 5.10 Criteria for the provision of an Electrically Powered Indoor / Outdoor Wheelchair (EPIC / EPIOC)

Electrically Powered wheelchairs are not provided for outdoor use only. Electrically Powered wheelchairs will be supplied to people:-

- Due to medical reasons are permanently immobile in the home environment.
- Who are unable to walk or self-propel in the home environment or self-propelling would be detrimental to their medical condition, (confirmed by a relevant health professional).
- Who gain independence from the provision of an electrically powered wheelchair.
- Who have the ability to comply with the DVLA requirements for motor vehicle drivers, in connection with an epileptic condition or other cause of loss of consciousness and this must be confirmed by a medical practitioner.

All applicants will be assessed and must be cognitively and physically capable of safely operating the wheelchair with the evidence available at the time of assessment. The home environment should have adequate space and charging facilities available prior to ordering/handover of the chair.

#### 6 Criteria for the provision of more than one wheelchair

- When a wheelchair is required for both upstairs and downstairs use.
- When a powered wheelchair is on issue a backup manual wheelchair will be provided.
- EPIC users prior to the provision of an EPIOC will return their EPIC chair once the new provision is deemed satisfactory.
- People who are Active Manual Wheelchair Users prior to EPIC / EPIOC provision may retain their wheelchair at the Manager's discretion until re-assessment is needed, when a total review will be completed.

#### 7 Criteria for the provision of cushions, accessories and modifications

Cushions, accessories and modifications will be provided as appropriate following assessment for clinical need; this does not include private chairs.

Cushions are provided to achieve comfort, satisfactory posture, and increased stability and to aid pressure ulcer prevention and management.

Modifications will only be performed by the Wheelchair Service for wheelchairs that have been issued by the Wheelchair Service. Modifications will not be considered for equipment purchased by Service Users, including those purchased under the Independent Voucher Scheme. (Personal health budgets from 1st April).

Pressure cushions will be provided to use in conjunction with a prescribed wheelchair, where there is a clear risk of damage to the skin, whilst the chair is being used as a mobility aid. A cushion will be provided based on clinical need from a select range used by the Wheelchair service. It should be recognised that sitting in a wheelchair for long periods is not advised and suitable static seating should also be available.

Accessories are only provided if necessary to meet clinical need. The Wheelchair Service does not provide covers, canopies, baskets and trays, transportation clamps and head restraints for transportation purposes. The Wheelchair Service will not normally fit attendant applied brakes (hub brakes) to wheelchairs that they provide. It is however recognised that there are certain cases where for individual and compelling clinical reasons, taking into consideration Health and Safety issues, these type of brakes may be considered. Hub brakes will normally be fitted to an attendant pushed wheelchair and not to self-propelled wheelchairs.

Modifications will only be provided where there is a clear clinical need following assessment by the Wheelchair Service. These will be arranged by the Wheelchair Service. Clients are not authorised to arrange any modifications to wheelchairs supplied by the Wheelchair Service and modifying the supplied wheelchair in any way may result in the wheelchair being withdrawn for safety reasons.

## 8 Criteria for Specialist Seating

Special seating will only be considered when other possibilities have been excluded. They provide postural support, which will grow with a child or accommodate the body shape of the client. Special seating is not provided for static seating systems (i.e. armchairs or school chairs). Clients referred to the Wheelchair Service who have problems maintaining their position when seated in a wheelchair will be assessed by the Wheelchair Service and may be supplied with a range of equipment with the express purpose of maintaining posture to aid mobility. This may include contoured cushions, belts or harnesses, back supports, bespoke seating or the provision of a tilt in space system.

Client needs to benefit from increased independence offered by the postural support, prevention of deformity or medical management. The home environment and transport must be suitable for the larger postural solutions and the client and carer must be aware of the issues involved with provision of postural support solutions. If appropriate the client must be able to continue with transfers.

#### 9. Criteria for the Supply of Wheelchairs to Nursing & Residential Homes

Individual Nursing and Residential Home residents must meet the Wheelchair Service Eligibility Criteria for issue of wheelchairs. Wheelchairs for communal / transit use will **not** be provided. Wheelchairs will not be considered where the main reason for use is portering within a care home. For short term or infrequent use, referrers will be directed to alternative providers. Postural support in a wheelchair will not be provided in place of suitable static seating and clients requesting postural support will only be assessed once it can be demonstrated that their static seating needs have been met.

#### 10 The NHS Voucher Scheme (changes to Personal Health budget from 1<sup>st</sup> April)

The Voucher Scheme has been introduced by the Government as a means to extend client choice in relation to the provision of wheelchairs.

A wheelchair voucher scheme is available, and complies with the requirements of the NHS Executive document (HSG (96) 53 issued in December 1996.

Applicants must be assessed as meeting the criteria for the supply of a wheelchair by the wheelchair service before they can apply for a voucher.

There are 2 options in the voucher scheme, the Partnership and the Independent Options.

The fundamental difference between the two options is that under the Partnership Option the NHS retains ownership and is responsible for maintenance and repairs, whilst under the Independent Option the user actually owns the wheelchair and therefore is responsible for maintenance and repairs.

In both the Partnership and Independent Options the user will receive a Voucher to the value of the wheelchair the NHS would prescribe.

Any wheelchair that a client wishes to purchase under the voucher scheme must be signed off by the assessing therapist in order that its appropriateness

for the client's needs is confirmed. If the chosen wheelchair is deemed to be inappropriate the Wheelchair Service has the right to withhold the voucher.

The voucher scheme is open to clients who wish to purchase either a manual or powered wheelchair if they meet the criteria for that type of chair. It does not include mobility scooters.

## 11 Definition of Terms

### 11.1 Unable to walk

Some people can walk a few yards or from room to room by holding onto furniture or a companion, or by use of a walking aid. If this causes unacceptable pain or distress, or does not allow a person to move around the home sufficiently to function independently, the "inability to walk" criteria is regarded as met. It is also regarded as met if the person is physically capable of walking about the home but this is medically contra-indicated.

### 11.2 Unable to propel – the inability to propel can be regarded as met:

- If a person can apparently propel an ordinary wheelchair in a limited way i.e. The propelling power of a person fluctuates from day to day or from morning to afternoon, or diminishes the more a person propels E.g. Clients suffering from Muscular Dystrophy, Multiple Sclerosis or Motor Neuron Disease.
- If a person can propel an ordinary wheelchair but this is medically contra-indicated.
- If a person can propel an ordinary wheelchair but is prevented from gaining access to necessary rooms in the home due to structural arrangements e.g. narrow doors, long passageways, ramps.

### 11.3 Home

Home is where a person usually resides whether it is an ordinary house or a residential/nursing home. Normally the home environment means within the building and does not include external features such as gardens, paths and summer houses, except where, in some residential homes, it is essential for a person to move from one building to another in the course of a day.