

**Eligibility Criteria for
Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services
(NEPTS)
Mid and South Essex Integrated Care system
(ICS)
April 2023**

1. Introduction

This paper outlines the arrangements for Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services (NEPTS) in accordance with the NHS England guidance published in May 2022 which builds on the Department of Health Guidance 'Eligibility Criteria for Patient Transport Services issued in August 2007.

The underlying principle is that it is the patient's responsibility to make their own way to and from hospital for patient episodes of care of all types, including outpatients' appointments, elective admissions and discharges from hospital. Most people should travel to and from hospital independently by private or public transport, with the help of relatives or friends if necessary. NHS funded patient transportation is reserved for when it is considered essential to ensuring an individual's safety, safe mobilisation, condition management or recovery.

Patients/health care professionals must explore all other options for transportation before accessing NEPTS. This includes services offered by the red cross and local voluntary transport providers and volunteers.

This document sets out the criteria for assessing eligibility for the service and will be used to determine whether NHS patients registered to a GP practice or not registered but an ordinarily resident within Mid and south Essex are entitled to NEPTS.

Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) are not required to provide transport based on a patient's financial or social need. Financial help is available to patients on low incomes who do not have a medical need and thus do not qualify for NHS funded transport. Please refer to section 7 for more information regarding the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme.

2. What is Non-Emergency Patient Transport (NEPTS)

The Department of Health defines Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services (NEPTS) as the non-urgent, planned transportation of patients with a medical need for transport, to and from a premises providing NHS healthcare and between NHS healthcare providers.

NEPTS covers journeys between the patients place of residence and healthcare facilities, and between hospitals, for non-primary care services. The patient may have been referred by a doctor, dentist or ophthalmic practitioner for non-primary care NHS-funded healthcare services – that is, diagnostics or treatment or is being discharged following NHS-funded treatment. This policy only applies to transport for patients receiving NHS treatment who are registered with a GP or an ordinarily resident in Mid and South Essex. Place of residence is defined as any address specified at the time of booking e.g., patients home, nursing home, hospice, hospital or treatment centre.

Patients will be assessed against agreed criteria to determine eligibility to access NEPTS. This can take place over the phone, with the patient/carer contacting the transport provider's call centre or this may be carried out by a health professional who is booking transport on behalf of the patient.

Booking staff can be either clinical or an appropriately trained administrative staff member, who is able to convey details of the patients medical condition.

3. Who is eligible?

Patients are eligible for NEPTS where their medical condition requires the skills or support of NEPTS staff during their journey and/or it would be detrimental to the patient's condition or recovery to travel by other means.

Patient eligibility should be assessed regularly, as the patient's condition may have improved/deteriorated since the last request.

Patients who meet the following criteria will be eligible for transport:

- Patients who are assessed as requiring transportation on a stretcher
- Inpatients requiring a transfer to another hospital for ongoing treatment/assessment and will require the assistance of NEPTS staff during the journey
- Patients who require continuous oxygen or other medical gases and are unable to self-administer during transit
- Patients who require continuous intravenous support
- Patients requiring specialised equipment during the journey
- Patients requiring monitoring during the journey
- Patients who have undergone major surgery and there is a risk of possible side effects which are likely to require assistance or monitoring during their journey
- Patients who have a medical condition or disability that could compromise their dignity or cause public concern on public transport
- Patients who have a communicable disease with which travel on public transport or in a taxi is not possible
- Patients who have been clinically determined as at risk from using public transport due to being immunocompromised and which travel on private transport or in a taxi is not possible.
- Patients who have a cognitive or sensory impairment requiring the oversight of NEPTS staff during their journey
- Patients who have dementia or another mental health condition that means they are unable to make their own way with relatives/friends and/or escorts/carers whether by private transport, public transport or a taxi (patients requiring secure transport is managed separately from NEPTS). The patient requires guidance or supervision most of the time from another person when walking out of doors in unfamiliar places.
- Patients who have a confused state of mind, learning/communication difficulties, hearing loss and/or impaired sight of a severity that they are unable to make their own way with relatives/friends and/or escorts/carers whether by private transport, public transport or a taxi. The patient requires guidance or supervision most of the time from another person when walking out of doors in unfamiliar places
- Patients who have significant reduced mobility and are unable to make their own way with relatives/friends and/or escorts/carers whether by private transport (including a specially adapted vehicle if appropriate for the journey), public transport or a taxi.

This is likely to include patients who:

- need specialist bariatric provision
- are unable to self-mobilise (require assistance to stand, find it difficult to walk a few steps with a walking aid and are a risk of falls)

- are wheelchair users and need assistance to transfer to/from their wheelchair
- Patients travelling to/from haemodialysis treatment
- Patients where a safeguarding concern has been raised by a relevant professional involved in a patient's life, in relation to the patient travelling independently

The following are **NOT** in themselves reasons for the provision of a non-emergency transport:

- The age of the patient
- The distance the patient needs to travel
- The availability of alternative (public) transport options
- The cost of travelling to an appointment

Patients who have been assessed and allocated the use of a Motability vehicle or are in receipt of the enhanced rate mobility component of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) are not entitled to NEPTS NHS funded transport unless there is an additional medical need that prevents them from using their own vehicle or allocated funding. In such cases the patient will need to be assessed and meet the eligibility criteria for NEPTS.

4. Escorts

Escorts/carers will be eligible to travel with patients who are approved for transport only where the patient has a medical need for their assistance during the journey.

Approval is not guaranteed and will depend on seat capacity on the vehicle on the day of transport. A maximum of one fully mobile escort will be allowed per patient. Where an escort is accompanying the patient, and the return journey is not required by the patient, i.e. the patient is admitted overnight, then the escort must make their own arrangements to return home.

Escorts will only be approved in the following circumstances:

- Patient has communication or sensory difficulties and would require assistance whilst travelling on the vehicle which cannot be fulfilled by the NEPTS staff
- Patient is a minor, with a physical or mental incapacity and is under 16 years of age
- Clinical escorts who are medically required to accompany the patient.
- The escort is under the care of the patient who is eligible for NEPTS. The escort cannot be left alone and no alternative care is available at that time. All support agencies have been contacted and unable to assist.

Consideration will be given to the age of minors and the number of escorts in exceptional circumstances and approved where medical need determines this as appropriate. This may require approval by the ICB.

For all other circumstances, carers, friends or relatives are to make their own way to the hospital/clinic and meet the patient there.

5. Patients who do not meet the eligibility criteria

Patients who do not meet the eligibility criteria will be advised to make alternative arrangements to attend their appointment. These can include:

- Public transport (e.g., Bus, Coach or train)
- Taxi
- Community transport or volunteer services.

A full data base of alternative travel arrangements will be maintained by the NEPTS provider.

6. Location of appointment

People referred by a healthcare professional for non-primary care NHS-funded healthcare services, and who are deemed eligible under the criteria above, will be offered access to NEPTS regardless of the geographical location of treatment. This may include transport to non-hospital settings such as community facilities and community diagnostic hubs.

NEPTS do not provide transport to primary care services including GP services, dentists, pharmacy and optician appointments. In some cases healthcare treatment can be delivered in primary care settings but the service is provided by a community or secondary care provider.

7. Wider support

Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS)

When receiving enquiries, NEPTS eligibility assessors and/or services provided by transport co-ordination hubs will consider providing people with information about the HTCS. People who are eligible for the HTCS include those who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit and those who qualify for the Low-Income Scheme or under other specified criteria.

Further information on the HTCS can be found on the ICB website:

<https://www.midandsouthessex.ics.nhs.uk/health/personalised-care/transport/>