

Agenda Item 8

		THE HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR LINCOLNSHIRE	
Boston Borough Council	East Lindsey District Council	City of Lincoln Council	Lincolnshire County Council
North Kesteven District Council	South Holland District Council	South Kesteven District Council	West Lindsey District Council

**DRAFT RESPONSE TO NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
FOR NON-EMERGENCY PATIENT TRANSPORT**

1. Medical Need

Criterion A

A patient qualifies for non-emergency patient transport, if they have a medical need, typically because they:

- require oxygen which they are unable to self-administer during transit;
- need specialised equipment during the journey;
- need to be closely monitored during their journey;
- need to be transferred to another hospital;
- have a medical condition, have undergone major surgery such as a transplant, and /or the potential side effects of treatment are likely to require assistance or monitoring during their journey;
- reside in a nursing home or hospice without access to suitable transport to healthcare treatment;
- have a medical condition or disability that would compromise their dignity or cause public concern on public transport or in a taxi, and do not have access to appropriate private transport; or
- have a communicable disease, for which travel on public transport or in a taxi is not advised, and do not have access to appropriate private transport.

Consultation Question

Do you agree with our proposed criterion on qualifying medical needs?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

Additional Comments

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire believes that the medical need criterion is sufficiently clear so that patients and their families are clear whether they would qualify.

However, the Health Scrutiny Committee notes that the consultation document (paragraph 6.5) states that only patients who meet the reasons for appointment criteria, which are:

- "the patient will have been referred by a doctor dentist or ophthalmic practitioner for non-primary care NHS-funded healthcare services, ie diagnostics or treatment; or
- The patient is being discharged from NHS-funded treatment."

The Committee believes that this definition as worded could be construed to exclude patients attending at the request of a secondary care service provider where an appointment has been given for a clinical review to follow up a previous referral and which does not necessarily involve further diagnostics or treatment. The Committee would like to see the appointment criterion reworded to address this.

2. Cognitive or Sensory Impairment

Criterion B

A patient qualifies for non-emergency patient transport, if they have a cognitive or sensory impairment requiring the oversight of a member of patient transport staff or suitably trained driver, meaning that they:

- have dementia or another mental health condition which requires the assistance of patient transport staff to ensure a safe journey;
- have a confused state of mind, learning / communication difficulties, hearing loss, impaired sight, to such an extent that they are unable to use public transport or a taxi, and do not have a carer who is able to transport them; or
- pose a risk to themselves or others through independent travel.

Note: Secure mental health transport for high-risk patients is managed separately from non-emergency patient transport.

Consultation Question

Do you agree with our proposed criterion on qualifying cognitive or sensory impairment?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

Additional Comments

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire believes that the cognitive or sensory impairment is criterion is sufficiently clear so that patients and their families are clear whether they would qualify.

3. Significant Mobility Need

Criterion C

A patient qualifies for non-emergency patient transport, if they have a significant mobility need which cannot be met through public or private transport, including the support of available family or friends or a taxi (including available mobility or assisted taxis or community transport provision). Examples are likely to include patients who:

- need to travel lying down for all or part of the journey and/or need a stretcher or sling/hoist for their journey;
- need specialist bariatric provision;
- are unable to self-mobilise (ie unable to stand or walk more than a few steps);
- have been clinically determined as at risk from using public transport due to being immune-compromised, and do not have access to appropriate alternative private transport (personal vehicle or taxi unless taxi travel advised against on clinical grounds); or
- are wheelchair users who do not have access to an appropriate alternative source of transport, do not have a specially-adapted vehicle (or are unable to use the vehicle for that journey), and they require the assistance of patient transport staff to undertake the journey.

Consultation Questions

Do you agree with our proposed criterion on qualifying significant need?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

Additional Comments

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire believes that the significant mobility criterion is sufficiently clear, subject to clarify of the definition of 'ability to self-mobilise'.

Do you have any views on the best way to define someone's ability to self-mobilise (third bullet point above), including whether and how to take into account the use of equipment and assistance?

Response

If it is not possible to satisfactorily define 'ability to self-mobilise', the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire suggests that this could be addressed by assessors, provided they have access to the relevant patient record.

4. In-Centre Haemodialysis

Criterion D

A patient qualifies for transport support, specialist transport or non-specialist transport or rapid reimbursement for their journeys to and from an in-centre haemodialysis unit. This would involve access to:

- specialist transport, when adapted vehicles or staff with particular training is required;
- non-specialist transport, when people need less support; or
- simple and rapid reimbursement for the cost of journeys where people are able to drive themselves, their family or friends can take them, or they can

The appropriate type of transport should be a shared decision, reflecting people's needs and preferences as well as the appropriate use of NHS resources. Patients should be supported to retain their independence and a personalised approach should be promoted. A survey of over 60 dialysis units indicated that about 30% of patients are likely to require specialist transport; 40% non-specialist transport; and 30% are likely to be able to travel independently if appropriately reimbursed. However, flexibility is required to ensure that patients can vary the degree of support needed.

Consultation Questions

Do you agree that all patients receiving in-centre haemodialysis patients should qualify for transport support or either specialist transport, non-specialist transport or rapid reimbursement?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
✓				

Additional Comments

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire strongly supports the principle that the transport needs of all patients receiving regular in-centre haemodialysis should qualify for the patient transport support set out in the consultation.

Do you agree with a shared-decision making model between dialysis patients and the NHS to select the appropriate mode of transport?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
✓				

Additional Comments

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire strongly supports the principle that the transport needs of all patients receiving regular in-centre haemodialysis should qualify for the patient transport support.

5. Safeguarding Concern

Criterion E

A patient qualifies for non-emergency patient transport, if there is a safeguarding concern raised by a relevant professional in relation to the patient travelling independently, which means that the patient requires the oversight of a suitably trained driver or other patient transport member of staff.

Consultation Question

Do you agree with our proposed criterion on qualifying safeguarding concern?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

Additional Comments

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire believes that the safeguarding concern criterion is sufficiently clear so that patients and their families are clear whether they would qualify.

6. Wider Mobility or Health Needs

Criterion E

A patient qualifies for non-emergency patient transport, if in the opinion of an authorised eligibility assessor, no other transport is suitable or available given the patients wider mobility or medical needs (not covered in the criteria above) and treatment or discharge would be missed or severely delayed as a consequence. Transport options which should be exhausted prior to provision of patient transport include:

- the patient’s own transport – eg the person does not have a car or would not be able to drive due to medical side-effects of treatment;
- a relative, friend or carer who could help out;
- patient booking their own taxi, including a mobility or assisted taxi – reasonable efforts should be made to book a taxi;
- public transport, including community transport, where the public transport journey is not unreasonably complex or long; and
- transport which people are entitled to as part of funded social care provision or a social security benefit.

A local area **may also choose to add a threshold to the requirement on individuals to fund taxi travel themselves, including a mobility or assisted taxi**, if other forms of private or public transport are not available or suitable, such as:

- a very high frequency of treatment; and/or
- long distances or high costs associated with proposed taxi journey

Consultation Questions

Should patients in this category be offered patient transport at the discretion of an authorised eligibility assessor?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

Additional Comments

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire accepts that whilst the proposed criteria A-E are sufficiently detailed and clear, there will be circumstances falling outside these criteria, where support with transport would be fair and appropriate.

One such circumstance is the issue of rurality. In Lincolnshire there are long distances from many towns and villages to hospital and health care sites. The cost of taxi journeys would be excessive and beyond the means of many patients. The Committee strongly supports local health systems being able to exercise discretion, within their own guidelines on whether support with transport can be offered.

Are there any other options which should be exhausted prior to the provision of patient transport?

Reply

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire would like to highlight that linked to the Lincolnshire Community Transport Forum, there are seventeen voluntary car schemes across Lincolnshire, where transport is offered to individuals for health appointments, as well as other needs. A nominal fee is charged to cover driver expenses.

7. Escorts and Carers

Criterion F

Non-emergency patient transport is available to individuals with carers/escorts when:

- the individual is under 16 years of age and is required to travel with an escort or carer;
- an escort or carer's particular skills and/or support are needed, and the person's condition needs the support of someone who knows them well, and to not have so would put them at risk of not being able to access transport; or
- they are under the care of the patient eligible for NEPTS, cannot be left alone, do not require the support of the NEPTS ambulance care assistant when travelling, and no alternative care is available at that time.

Consultation Question

Do you agree with the proposals on escorts and carers?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
✓				

Additional Comments

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire is keen that carers are supported, where possible, and believes that this criterion is sufficiently clear so that patients and their families are clear whether they would qualify.

The Health Scrutiny Committee also believes that consideration should also be given in the eligibility criteria to patients with assistance dogs of all types.

8. Other Consultation Questions

Proposal

Non-emergency patient transport services will provide better signposting to wider transport support in line with national guidance, which would include:

- eligibility assessors considering whether a person meets the criteria for the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme and seeking to facilitate access to this scheme;
- the NHS providing patients details of potential journey options, including community transport or taxi companies; and
- patients being signposted to other transport support, for example from the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance; from social care or other local transport schemes.

Consultation Question

Do you agree that transport coordination mechanisms or wider healthcare systems should be obliged to provide signposting to the Healthcare Travel Cost Scheme and information on wider transport options?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
✓				

Additional Comments

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire is strongly support of providing as much information as possible to individuals.

As stated in an answer to a previous question, there are seventeen voluntary car schemes across Lincolnshire, where transport is offered to individuals for health appointments, as well as other needs.

Proposal

This consultation will close in October 2021. Following this, the final updated published criteria will be published in April 2022. It is our ambition that newly planned services from this date onwards reflect the new criteria, and that existing services use it by April 2023.

Do you agree with our proposed timeline?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	✓			

Additional Comments

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire supports the proposed timeline, as a new contract for non-emergency patient transport service is due to begin in Lincolnshire from 1 July 2022.

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