



Patient Transport Service Update **Thursday 22 July 2021**

Cohorting patients

From Wednesday 28 July 2021, our non-emergency patient transport service (PTS) will begin to safely cohort patients who are eligible for NHS-funded transport. This is a change to our policy of conveying only single patient journeys which was introduced in March last year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cohorting procedures will be implemented according to the latest national guidance from NHS England and in consultation with Trust clinicians and infection prevention and control leads. This will enable us to convey one patient with another, but only when it is safe to do so and when social distancing of at least one metre can be maintained.

Cohorting patients will support system flow and:

- enable the rapid discharge of those people who do not need to remain in hospital;
- provide transport for patients who need to attend appointments and get to and from care settings safely and swiftly;
- support our NHS partners with their plans to deliver elective care and routine outpatient appointments.

Cohorting patients in practice

In order to ensure the safety of our patients, our staff, and our volunteers, every one of our vehicle types and configurations has been individually risk assessed. Some vehicles are unsuitable for transporting more than one patient, but for others we have identified the combination of patients that may be safely conveyed together, and which seats can be used in these situations. This information is available to all PTS staff, including those involved in the booking process, those who plan patient journeys, and our frontline teams.

We have also reviewed the questions that we use to book a patient's journey. These questions ensure that we collect the right information to assess the risk to staff and patients, and maintain safe social distancing of at least one metre.

Multiple-occupancy journeys will begin in **mid-Yorkshire** on Wednesday 28 July 2021. Shortly after that, patients will be cohorted across the whole region. Until that time, only single occupancy journeys will be carried out. This staggered approach will ensure that our processes are effective and that we are collecting the right information from patients so we are able to cohort as safely as possible.

Patients will continue to be transported as a single occupant if they:

- are confirmed or suspected of having COVID-19;
- are currently advised to isolate;
- require an escort for the journey;
- travel seated in a wheelchair;

- are currently receiving cancer treatment; or
- are exempt from wearing a face mask.

Staff travelling in the passenger area of an ambulance will continue to wear Level 2 personal protective equipment (PPE) throughout the journey.

The safety of our patients, staff and volunteers remains our highest priority and careful consideration has been made to ensure that cohorting patients will be done as safely as possible, whilst allowing us to manage the increasing demand on our services.

Facemasks

As our vehicles are considered to be a healthcare setting, all patients who travel with us must continue to wear surgical facemasks unless they have an exemption and patients who are cohorted **must** wear a surgical face mask for their entire journey.

We will continue to engage with patients about this need, but please help us by advising patients of the requirement to wear a mask, which will mean we can efficiently provide them with transport.

Managing the demand for our services

Alongside many NHS services at the moment, our PTS is facing significant challenges, given the demand we are facing for patient journeys. If you are requesting transport for a patient, or referring them to our services directly, please ensure all other options have been exhausted first, for example:

- Could a friend or family member drive them?
- Could they get a taxi, use public transport or contact a local volunteer travel scheme?
- Are they able to drive themselves?
- Are they aware of the [Healthcare Travel Costs](#) scheme?

Please help us to ensure our resources are available to those who need them the most and only request NHS-funded transport if other means have been explored.

To make a booking within seven days of a scheduled appointment, call 0300 330 2000. The PTS reservations team is available Monday to Friday between 7:00am and 7:00pm, and weekends from 8:00am to 6:00pm.

Thank you for your continued support.

If you have any queries regarding this update, please email:
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