NHS
Cheshire and Merseyside

Wheelchair Service (Halton, Warrington, St Helens and West Cheshire)

Eligibility Criteria

FINAL

Contents

Section		Page
1.	Access criteria	3
2.	Guidelines for provision of equipment	3
3.	Referral process	5
4.	Guidelines for the provision of equipment in Care Homes	6
5	Criteria for the Provision of Specific Pieces of Equipment	7
6.	Accessories	13
7.	Modifications	13
8.	Personal Wheelchair Budgets	13
9.	Appendix One – Definition of Terms	15
10.	Appendix Two – Examples of equipment not provided	18

FINAL

1. Access criteria

1.1. To be eligible for an assessment for a wheelchair the individual must:

- Be a registered patient of one of the following NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB Places: Halton, Warrington, St Helens and West Cheshire.
- Have a permanent disability or medical condition which will last longer than 6 months and significantly impairs their ability to walk. This may include long-term illnesses e.g. Parkinson's Disease, ME or CFS where a wheelchair is needed periodically due to exacerbations in their condition.
- Demonstrate that they need to use the equipment daily for mobility purposes.

2. Guidelines for provision of equipment

2.1. Equipment will be prescribed/ provided to any user with permanently impaired or no mobility and users with temporary impairment, who need a wheelchair on a long-term basis (for more than 6 months).

2.2. Prescription decisions are made following an assessment by qualified personnel within the Wheelchair Service and are based on clinical (postural and support and pressure distribution) /mobility needs, user category and anticipated usage. It is not always possible to accommodate personal preference, e.g. colour, a specific manufacturer etc.

2.3. Priority for assessment/ provision will be given according to clinical need/ risk. All terminally ill users will be treated as urgent and prioritised accordingly.

2.4. All equipment prescribed/ provided is from a selected range of equipment used by the wheelchair service, which is regularly reviewed/ updated.

2.5. Each user is prescribed/ provided with only one set of equipment, however secondary provision maybe considered in the following circumstances: To facilitate mobility upstairs, when there is no possibility of transferring the primary equipment upstairs. Any secondary item/s may not necessarily be the same model/s as the primary item/s. e.g. A basic type of manual wheelchair will be provided as a back-up for a powered wheelchair.

2.6. Accessories will only be prescribed/provided to meet clinical need, and at the discretion of the wheelchair service.

2.7. Wheelchairs/accessories are not exclusively prescribed/provided for any (or any combination) of the following:

- School/ college use

- Work use
- Occasional/social use/outdoor transit only
- Sporting activities
- Static seating
- Vehicle transportation purposes – It is advisable that where a client can physically transfer to a car seat, a wheelchair should not be used for transportation
- Moving and handling purposes
- Powered outdoor only mobility

2.8. Wheelchairs will not be provided as a walking aid or as an alternative to an appropriate static seat.

2.9. Self-propelling wheelchairs will only be prescribed/ provided to users who are able to self-propel safely with no medical contraindications to this activity. Provision must provide the user with increased function and independence. Self-propelling wheelchairs will not be prescribed/ provided for the benefit of the attendant only.

2.10. The user must be within the manufacturers specified weight and size limits for **any** prescribed item.

2.11. Buggies will only be supplied, as an alternative to a wheelchair, if a child meets the access/ eligibility criteria for the provision of wheelchairs and it is both clinically and age appropriate. Provision is limited to single buggies (there is no double buggy product available).

2.12. Mobility equipment is not provided for the purpose of managing behaviours that challenge if a child can walk.

2.13. As all young children require a buggy/ pushchair until walking age, a specialist buggy will only be considered if their postural and mobility needs cannot be met by a commercially available buggy/ pushchair and/or the child is too small for a standard wheelchair. Where commercially available, it is the responsibility of the parent/ guardian to provide the buggy/ pushchair.

2.14. Powered mobility driving assessments are based on users driving ability/road safety awareness as applicable, including user compliance with DVLA requirements. Certain limitations on use may be added as part of the conditions of loan.

2.15. Outdoor powered driving assessments are based on the Highway Code and wheelchair service driving assessment form. Driving assessments will be carried out at the user's permanent address, although it may be necessary to carry out further assessment at another location. Users will be judged on their own road safety awareness and ability to safely control the powered wheelchair.

FINAL

2.16. Attendant controlled powered wheelchairs are only prescribed/ provided where it is clinically appropriate and are only provided to full-time users who meet the criteria for powered provision, for use around their home. They are supplied for use by the main carer who is named on the conditions of loan; this is expected to be a constant family member/advocate actively involved delivering the user's care. The named carer must ensure that any other carer who will operate it has been trained and assessed safely to do so. If/when the named carer is no longer involved the attendant controls will be removed. Attendant controls are not provided for use in multiple care settings.

2.17. Individuals who wish to fit power packs should ensure the equipment is compatible and be fitted by a suitable qualified individual, preferably the supplier of the power pack. The purchase of the power pack, fitting and maintenance costs are borne by the user.

2.18. If a user has an energy-efficient wheelchair from the service and their condition deteriorates and a powered wheelchair is provided, the energy-efficient wheelchair will be replaced with a basic attendant pushed manual model.

2.19. Belts and harnesses are supplied for postural support/positioning only. They will not be provided as a restraint for users e.g. for behaviours that challenge.

2.20. Cushions will be supplied to all wheelchairs to assist with comfort, stability, postural management and pressure ulcer prevention and management.

2.21. Equipment will only be handed over if the user and/ or named carer agrees to the conditions of loan. Any breach of these conditions may result in withdrawal of equipment.

2.22. Equipment will only be replaced when it no longer meets the user's assessed clinical need and/ or is beyond economical repair. New provision will be based on current eligibility criteria.

2.23. Items of equipment new to the service will not be provided until appropriate staff in the wheelchair service and/ or authorised repairers have received sufficient and appropriate training in prescription and maintenance.

3. Referral Process

3.1. New Referrals

3.1.1. The Wheelchair Service will accept referrals from:

- Primary Care Professionals/GPs
- Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists
- Community Nurses (District Nurses/Community Matrons/Rapid Response Team

- Rehabilitation Teams
- School Nurses
- Community Paediatricians
- Hospital In-Patient Teams
- Consultants
- Appropriately qualified Social Care staff
- Other allied health professionals

3.1.2. This list is not exhaustive.

3.1.3. Self-referrals/referral to the Service does not guarantee acceptance of eligibility and assessment.

3.1.4. Referral forms are available directly from the Wheelchair Service and on the Trust website. Completed referral forms should include as much information as possible in order that a decision can be reached regarding the client's eligibility for assessment.

3.1.5. The outcome of triage will be communicated to the referrer. Incomplete referrals will be returned which will delay triage.

3.2. Reviews/Re-assessments

3.2.1. The Wheelchair Service accepts self-referrals for clients already known to the Service.

3.2.2. Carers or other professionals can contact the service for review if the client's condition is found to have changed.

3.3. Prioritisation of Referrals

3.3.1. Referrals are added to the waiting list in date order. There are specific cases that will be considered for prioritisation dependant on individual presenting problems and identified clinical risk. Referrals for clients receiving palliative care are given priority.

3.3.2. The service aims for referrals to be triaged within 2 working days.

4. Guidelines for the Provision of Equipment in Care Homes

4.1.1. Residents of care homes are entitled to an assessment for a wheelchair if they meet the eligibility criteria. This includes self-propelling, tilt in space and electrically powered wheelchairs.

FINAL

4.1.2. Care homes are expected to provide standard transit wheelchairs for transferring and transporting residents around the home to socialise, access meal facilities or access the immediate care home environment/ grounds of the home, hospital appointments.

4.1.3. In certain cases, residents will need to have a named carer who will be taking them out and this person must be present for assessment/handover of equipment.

4.1.4. The wheelchair service is unable to provide:

- Standard transit wheelchairs for portering around the home and its grounds.
- Wheelchairs as a substitute for the provision of an armchair or dining room chair (static seating)
- Wheelchairs as a means of controlling behaviour
- Wheelchairs for use by multiple residents.
- Pressure redistribution cushions for use in armchairs/standard transit wheelchairs, which are available via alternative routes, i.e District Nursing.

4.1.5. Care homes must ensure any resident with a wheelchair on issue complies with the wheelchair service conditions of loan and:

- The wheelchair is available for any repair or maintenance.
- The wheelchair is stored safely on the premises.
- Report any concerns about the wheelchair to the wheelchair service.
- Notify the wheelchair service if the user no longer requires the NHS wheelchair.

4.1.6. The wheelchair remains the property of the NHS wheelchair service and should not under any circumstances be used for another resident.

5. Criteria for the Provision of Specific Pieces of Equipment

5.1.1. Users must meet the access criteria and guidelines detailed above for the provision of NHS wheelchairs and associated accessories.

5.1.2. The NHS wheelchair service endeavours to provide a range of high-quality equipment to meet the users' varied and diverse needs and facilitate independence and choice.

5.1.3. To maximise cost effectiveness and ensure equity of provision, the wheelchair service follows the criteria below for the provision of specific equipment.

FINAL

5.2. Criteria for the supply of a standard transit wheelchair

5.2.1. The user must have physical impairment which significantly affects their ability to walk.

5.2.2. The user has a named carer who is willing and able to push the wheelchair.

5.2.3. The user must demonstrate that they will use their wheelchair for daily mobility purposes.

5.3. Criteria for the supply of a standard self-propelling wheelchair

5.3.1. The user must have physical impairment which significantly affects their ability to walk.

5.3.2. The user must be deemed medically fit to self-propel by an appropriate medical professional.

5.3.3. Self-propulsion should not adversely affect or be detrimental to the user's medical condition.

5.3.4. Provision must provide the user with an increase in functional independence.

5.3.5. The user must demonstrate that they will use their wheelchair for essential activities of daily living at home and/ or going out at least three times a week to access essential services/ facilities in the community, such as day care, health appointments, work/education/ volunteering, or undertake food shopping.

5.4. Criteria for the supply of an energy-efficient wheelchair

5.4.1. The criteria for a self-propelling wheelchair are met.

5.4.2. The user's clinical and mobility needs cannot be met by another wheelchair of standard specification within the wheelchair service range.

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5.5. Criteria for lighter weight wheelchairs

5.5.1. Lightweight self-propelled wheelchairs may be indicated where a client has reduced activity tolerance and cannot propel a standard wheelchair. Consideration for a lightweight wheelchair will only be made after it has been demonstrated that a standard, self-propelled wheelchair is unsuitable.

5.6. Criteria for the supply of an active user wheelchair

5.6.1. The user must be unable to walk and need to use a wheelchair daily for independent mobility.

5.6.2. The user must be a skilled wheelchair user who would directly benefit by having this type of chair and capable of exploiting its features or have the potential to develop these skills.

5.6.3. The user must have been assessed as a full-time user who is highly active.

5.6.4. The user must demonstrate adequate control of static and dynamic stability of the wheelchair necessary for their likely environment and planned use.

5.6.5. 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.

5.6.6. These will be considered six months post discharge from hospital to allow the users time to fully consider their longer-term wheelchair mobility requirements.

5.7. Criteria for the supply of electrically powered indoor wheelchairs (EPIC)

5.7.1. 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.

5.7.2. The user would gain a measure of independence from the provision of such a wheelchair.

5.7.3. The user is mentally and physically capable of safely operating the powered wheelchair and they/their carers can maintain it.

5.7.4. The user must have been assessed as a full-time user.

5.7.5. The user's home environment must be compatible with the use of a powered wheelchair, including sufficient space for moving the wheelchair (with footplates on) around the home and suitable space with a power supply for charging batteries overnight.

5.7.6. The user has demonstrated that they have mental capacity, and dexterity to operate EPIC safely and responsibly on their own without physical assistance and verbal instruction or demonstrated that they are able to compensate for any sensory or physical impairment.

5.7.7. The user has obtained medical approval to use a powered wheelchair from their GP or consultant.

FINAL

5.8. Criteria for the supply of an electrically powered indoor/outdoor chair (EPIOC)

5.8.1. The criteria for the EPIC are met, and their home must be wheelchair accessible; they must have safe and easy access to the outside environment, and any ramps must be fixed in place.

5.8.2. Following clinical assessment, the user must be able to demonstrate that the EPIOC will significantly improve their quality of life/independence greater than that supplied by the EPIC.

5.8.3. The user must have safely used an EPIC and have successfully undertaken an outdoor driving assessment with the wheelchair service prescribing the equipment.

5.8.4. The user must be free from medical conditions (e.g. visual, cognitive and visuospatial disturbances) likely to make independent powered wheelchair control unsafe for themselves, pedestrians or other road users with whom they will come into contact in the public domain.

5.8.5. The user must be free from conditions causing loss of consciousness and/or epileptic seizures within the last 12 months and be compliant with DVLA requirements.

5.8.6. The user must have an adequate field and acuity of vision to be safely aware of outdoor environment as identified at clinical assessment.

5.8.7. The user can autonomously control the prescribed powered wheelchair outdoors.

5.9. Criteria for the supply of Electrically Powered Attendant Controlled Wheelchair (EPAC)

5.9.1. The criteria for the supply of a transit wheelchair are met.

5.9.2. The named carer is unable to push the wheelchair because of their age, infirmity or local topography makes the use of an ordinary wheelchair extremely arduous or there is significant size/weight disparity between the wheelchair user and the care.

5.9.3. The named carer is physically and mentally fit to control the powered wheelchair and comply with ethe manufacturer's guidelines for the safe use of equipment.

5.9.4. The user/carer will derive some significant improvement in quality of life from using such a piece of equipment.

FINAL

5.9.5. The environment in which the wheelchair will be used is compatible with its use.

5.10. Criteria for the supply of a dual controlled powered wheelchair (EPIC and EPIOC)

5.10.1. The user must be a full-time wheelchair user who fulfils the criteria for EPIOC provision but due to other factors can no longer independently operate a powered wheelchair.

5.10.2. The named carer (the main carer who is a constant family member/ advocate actively involved in delivering the user's care) is physically and mentally fit to control the powered wheelchair and able to comply with the manufacturer's guidelines for the safe use of the equipment and specific conditions associated with attendant controls.

5.10.3. The user will derive some significant improvement in quality of life from using such a piece of equipment.

5.10.4. Only users with a deteriorating condition can be considered for an EPIOC with dual controls to prevent the powered wheelchair being withdrawn when they can no longer operate it.

5.10.5. Dual controls can be added to a child's powered wheelchair during the learning process.

5.11. Criteria for the supply of a buggy (as an alternative to a wheelchair)

5.11.1. Have a permanent disability or medical condition which will last longer than 6 months and significantly impairs their ability to walk. This may include long-term illnesses e.g. ME or CFS where a wheelchair is needed periodically due to exacerbations in their condition.

5.11.2. The user's clinical needs cannot be met by a commercially available buggy.

5.11.3. The user has a carer available to push the buggy.

5.11.4. A buggy is appropriate to the user's age and stage of development.

5.11.5. Child must be over 36 months unless there is evidence of complex postural needs and a recognised clinical need for postural management.

5.11.6. A buggy will not be provided as a restraint for a child with behaviours that challenge.

FINAL

5.12. Criteria for the supply of reclining back and/or tilt in space

5.12.1. The user must have been assessed as a full-time user with a clinical diagnosis/ deteriorating condition for which a wheelchair with recline and/ or tilt is clinically appropriate/ beneficial.

5.12.2. The user will gain significant improvements in their posture and mobility from the provision of a tilt in space wheelchair.

5.12.3. The user requires bespoke postural support in the wheelchair and needs to sustain a rearward degree of tilt or change the angle of tilt during the day.

5.12.4. The user will spend a significant period of time in the wheelchair as part of a postural management programme.

5.12.5. The user has a need to mobilise both indoors and outdoors.

5.12.6. The user's clinical needs cannot be met by another wheelchair of standard specification within the within the wheelchair service range, or in another way (such as by a posture supportive commercially available armchair).

5.12.7. There are no environmental constraints relative to using the prescribed equipment, and the carers can operate the system safely.

5.13. Criteria for the supply of special seating for wheelchairs

5.13.1. Users who cannot maintain a safe posture when seated in a wheelchair will be supplied with the most appropriate supportive system for their mobility needs.

5.13.2. The user must use the wheelchair everyday as part of a postural management programme with static seating already in place.

5.13.3. The user's wheelchair needs cannot be met by a 'standard' wheelchair system.

5.14. Criteria for the supply of pressure distribution cushions

5.14.1. The user must be registered with the wheelchair service and have an NHS issued wheelchair.

5.14.2. The cushion is for wheelchair use only and not for use in static seating.

5.14.3. The prescribed cushion is determined by the user's clinical need and risk of developing pressure ulcers.

5.14.4. A cushion will still be provided by the wheelchair service if the user chooses a third-party personal wheelchair budget.

FINAL

6. Accessories

6.1. Accessories are only provided if essential to meet clinical needs.

6.2. The Wheelchair Service does not provide rain covers, sun canopies, baskets, table trays, transportation clamps and head restraints for transportation purposes.

6.3. The Wheelchair Service does 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 types of brakes may be considered. Hub brakes will normally be fitted to an attendant pushed wheelchair and not to self-propelled wheelchairs.

7. Modifications

7.1. Modifications will only be undertaken by the Wheelchair service for wheelchairs that have been issued by the Wheelchair service.

7.2. Modifications will only be provided where there is a clear clinical need following assessment by the wheelchair service.

7.3. Clients are not authorized to arrange any modifications to wheelchairs that have been supplied by the wheelchair service and modifying the supplied chair may result in the wheelchair being withdrawn for safety reasons.

8. Personal Wheelchair Budgets

8.1. All users who are eligible for NHS wheelchair provision are offered a Personal Wheelchair Budget (PWB), except for when:

- The user has a rapidly changing or deteriorating condition.
- There are safety concerns regarding compliance with the PWB process.

8.2. PWBs can be managed in one of three ways:

- Notional Personal Wheelchair Budget (standard NHS Provision). This enables the wheelchair user to have a basic wheelchair which will meet their identified needs.
- Notional Personal Wheelchair Budget with contribution. This option allows the wheelchair user or another agency, such as a Social Care, education, or a voluntary/charitable organisation, to contribute to the PWB to either

FINAL

have a higher specification NHS wheelchair or add additional features to meet their wider health and wellbeing needs.

- Third Party Personal Wheelchair Budget. In discussion with the wheelchair therapist, if it is clinically appropriate, the wheelchair user can choose to use their PWB as a contribution to buy a wheelchair from an independent retailer outside of the NHS.

8.3. With a PWB, wheelchair users should expect to have:

- a personalised assessment where they are supported to identify the health and wellbeing outcomes they wish to achieve.
- a personal support plan which captures their health and wellbeing outcomes.
- information provided upfront about the amount of money available in their personal wheelchair budget and the options available to them locally to use it.
- information about the repair and maintenance of wheelchairs, if the option to purchase a wheelchair outside of the NHS commissioned service is taken.
- care that is better integrated, meaning that different agencies work together to support their postural and mobility needs and achieve their health and wellbeing outcomes.

FINAL

9. Appendix One - Definition of Terms

9.1.1. Unable to Walk

9.1.2. 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. The assessing clinician will determine if the criteria are met.

9.2. Unable to Propel

9.2.1. 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 Neurone Disease.
- 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.

9.3. Home Environment

9.3.1. Home is where a person usually resides, whether it is an ordinary house or a residential/nursing home.

9.3.2. When considering the home environment clinical assessment will be undertaken of the indoor/outdoor environment.

9.4. Transit/Attendant Pushed Wheelchairs & Self-Propelled Manual Wheelchairs (inclusive of Buggy's)

9.4.1. A transit/attendant pushed wheelchair is a chair which requires an identified attendant to manoeuvre the chair with the client in it, as the client is unable to use a self-propel or powered wheelchair due to cognitive, physical or visual reasons.

FINAL

9.5. Lightweight Manual Wheelchairs

9.5.1. Lightweight self-propelled wheelchairs may be indicated where a client has reduced activity tolerance and cannot propel a standard wheelchair.

9.6. Energy Efficient/ High Performance/Active User Manual Wheelchairs

9.6.1. These self-propelled wheelchairs will be considered when the client is unable to maintain independent mobility in a standard wheelchair and a significant increase in their level of independence can by demonstrated by the use of such a wheelchair.

9.7. Tilt-in-Space Wheelchairs

9.7.1. A tilt in space wheelchair will be provided when the client has significant postural needs that cannot be met in a wheelchair that does not tilt nor by the use of fixed recline or ramping cushions.

9.8. Electrically Powered Indoor Wheelchair (EPIC)

9.8.1. An EPIC is a powered wheelchair limited to 2mph and for indoor use and within home grounds (not beyond the garden gate), so long as this is wheelchair accessible. It may be appropriate for use within certain specified areas such as Day Centres.

9.9. Electrically Powered Indoor/Outdoor Wheelchairs (EPIOC).

9.9.1. An EPIOC is a Class 2 vehicle which is limited to 4mph. For use outdoors along pavements and to crossroads. Basic Highway Code rules apply, with reference, when no accessible pavements are accessible.

9.10. Electrically Powered Attendant Controlled Wheelchair (EPAC)

9.10.1. An EPAC can be the same wheelchair as an EPIOC, but the controller is at the rear of the wheelchair for the attendant to operate.

9.11. Dual Operated Electrically Powered Indoor/Outdoor Wheelchairs

9.11.1. A dual operated wheelchair is basically an EPIOC with controllers fitted for the occupant and attendant, but they cannot be used at the simultaneously.

FINAL

9.12. Special Wheelchair Seating

9.12.1. Clients who are unable to maintain normal posture when using a wheelchair will be provided with additional devices to help maintain optimum posture. This may include the provision of a bespoke, custom manufactured seating system which interfaces with a wheeled frame.

FINAL

10. Appendix Two - Examples of equipment not provided.

10.1. This is not an exhaustive list there may be other items of equipment that are requested but not supplied by Wheelchair Services.

- Scooters
- Bikes and Trikes
- Bike attachments
- Outdoor only powered wheelchairs
- Bluetooth if this does not come as standard
- Power packs
- Power assisted wheels
- Lights and indicators for powered wheelchairs
- Non-standard powered controls
- Stair climbers
- Standing wheelchairs
- Rise and fall wheelchairs
- Full horizontal recline
- Sports wheelchairs
- Double buggies
- Rain covers and sunshade
- Manual or powered elevating leg rests (ELR's) for the purpose of reducing swelling in lower limbs, and will only provide where there are restrictions in joint range of movement
- Electric powered back recline, except where a specific clinical need has been identified by a wheelchair service clinician
- Headrests/head supports for transport or behaviours that challenge
- Second cushions (exceptions may apply)
- Spare covers (exceptions may apply)

10.2. The NHS wheelchair service only prescribes items which are deemed to meet clinical and mobility needs based on the eligibility criteria and guidelines set by the commissioners of the service.

10.3. Accessories will only be prescribed/provided to meet clinical need, and at the discretion of the wheelchair service.

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