

Wheelchair and Specialist Seating Service

Eligibility Criteria

November 2023

Version 6.0

This document remains valid whilst under review

| TARGET AUDIENCE (including temporary staff) | |
|--|---|
| People who need to know this document in detail | Staff working within the Wheelchair Service, wheelchair prescribers and commissioners |
| People who need to have a broad understanding of this document | Staff who refer to the Wheelchair Service |
| People who need to know that this document exists | Staff who refer to the Wheelchair Service |

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Approved by: Wheelchair SMT

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VERSION CONTROL

| Record of Changes | | |
|-------------------|---------|--|
| Date | Version | Changes / Comments |
| 01/01/2016 | 1.0 | Documents combined across the Trust |
| 08/10/2014 | 2.0 | Amendment to 6.1 |
| 04/09/2016 | 3.0 | Review – revised draft document sent out for consultation to the wheelchair teams |
| 6/10/2016 | 4.0 | Comments on the draft document incorporated for final version |
| 21/11/2022 | 5.0 | Revision of criteria for provision of attendant propel wheelchairs for people over 150kg Revision of high-performance wheelchair section for clarity Removed some reference to age in children's section Clarification made to the EPIOC criteria – addition that a person must have a medical condition which prevents them from walking Updated Care Homes policy for Brighton & Hove added Voucher Scheme section and all references to it replaced with Personal Wheelchair Budgets |
| 02/11/2023 | 6.0 | The term “to operate” was removed from 6.5 |

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1.0 Accessing the service

- 1.1 The Wheelchair Service will supply, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria as follows, a wheelchair to any person who has a long-term mobility need (defined as 6 months or over) and has a GP in the service catchment area. If the clinical needs of the person change and they no longer need the wheelchair, it may be withdrawn; wheelchairs are issued to clients on a loan basis.
- 1.2 People from outside the Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust area will be treated in accordance with *'Who Pays? Establishing the Responsible Commissioner'* and other Department of Health guidance relating to patients entitled to NHS care.
- 1.3 The Wheelchair Service does not loan out equipment for temporary or short-term use for less than 6 months, except in the case of palliative care.
- 1.4 Referrals will be accepted if the client meets the criteria in (1.1) on the correct referral form which is completed fully. The Wheelchair Service will return referrals where there is insufficient information to process the referral.
- 1.5 Self-referrals can be accepted once a client has been registered with the service.
- 1.6 NHS wheelchairs are not provided for the following:
 - Work use only (funding can be sourced from the 'Access to Work' scheme)
 - Rehabilitation purposes only
 - Sporting activities only
 - In place of suitable static seating
 - Electrically powered wheelchairs for outdoor use only
 - Electrically powered attendant controlled only wheelchairs
 - School use only
- 1.7 All clients must abide by the Conditions of Loan and will be asked to sign a copy at handover.
- 1.8 Clients whose level of functioning is not supported by their medical history may be referred to a Rehabilitation Consultant for a medical review. Following this review, the Consultant will decide, in collaboration with the wheelchair team, whether there is sufficient medical evidence to indicate the need for provision.
- 1.9 All clients who meet the criteria will be offered provision of a Personal Wheelchair Budget for wheelchairs and buggies where appropriate. Referrals will be treated in the same way as (1.4).

2.0 Standard attendant pushed wheelchair

- 2.1 Attendant pushed wheelchairs are loaned for indoor and outdoor use.
- 2.2 Referrals for standard attendant pushed wheelchairs are only accepted for individual use.
- 2.3 Attendant pushed wheelchairs are only supplied to Care Homes if an individual fulfils the criteria in section 12.
- 2.4 Attendant pushed wheelchairs will not be supplied for hospital use only.
- 2.5 As standard, the service can provide manual wheelchairs with an occupant weight limit of up to 160kg. Therefore, clients who weigh over 144kg (a margin of 10%) are ineligible for the direct provision of a wheelchair and will be assessed for a specialist bariatric model subject to the waiting list.
- 2.6 There are additional risks to carers pushing heavier clients in attendant pushed wheelchairs, and these will be discussed with the client and carers. Risk factors that will be considered include the intended use of the wheelchair (e.g. indoors on flat surfaces or outdoors on cambered/inclined surfaces), the ability of the client to self-propel, the physical ability of the attendant to push the wheelchair and the relative proximity of client weight to the wheelchair weight limit. In some cases a self-propelling wheelchair may be easier to manage for heavier clients even where the client is likely to do little to no self-propelling.

3.0 Standard manual self-propelling wheelchair

- 3.1 A standard manual self-propelling wheelchair is loaned to enable the occupant to move around independently or for ease of pushing the occupant.
- 3.2 A standard self-propelling wheelchair will be supplied if the client is an occasional user and has an environment compatible with this provision.
- 3.3 Wheelchair weight will be considered for individuals who drive and lift the wheelchair provided in and out of their car independently.
- 3.4 In some instances, medical approval may be sought before the provision of a self-propelling wheelchair is made. This may happen where there may be contra-indications to the client self-propelling.
- 3.5 A standard self-propelling wheelchair will be provided if it is unlikely that it will need modification or reconfiguration.
- 3.6 Where modification or reconfiguration is likely, a standard configurable wheelchair will be provided (e.g., Action3).
- 3.7 As standard, the service can provide manual wheelchairs with an occupant weight limit of up to 160kg. Therefore, clients who weigh over 144kg (a margin

of 10%) are ineligible for the direct provision of a wheelchair and will be assessed for a specialist bariatric model subject to the waiting list.

- 3.8 Clients may wish to upgrade their provision by means of the Personal Wheelchair Budget (See section 18).

4.0 High-performance manual wheelchairs

- 4.1 A high-performance manual self-propelling wheelchair may be considered where a client meets the following criteria:

- The client is a full-time wheelchair user with a requirement to use the wheelchair daily to increase mobility and independence, leading to improved quality of life and greater interaction with their environment. Clients who are undertaking or have the potential to undertake rehabilitation will be considered once they have reached their maximum potential in their mobility.
- The client is unable to walk indoors and outdoors as a result of a medical condition.
- The client is able to demonstrate a significant increase in their level of skills and independence through this provision compared with a standard self-propelling wheelchair, whilst not compromising their seating/postural needs (see 4.6).
- The client is able to demonstrate a high level of competency and dexterity to manoeuvre a high performance wheelchair.

- 4.2 Where a client meets the above criteria, the weight of the wheelchair will be considered for individuals who drive and lift the wheelchair in and out of their car independently.

- 4.3 Requests will be considered on an individual basis.

- 4.4 The high-performance wheelchair will be issued in place of, not in addition to, a standard wheelchair.

- 4.5 High performance wheelchairs will not be issued as back-ups to powered wheelchairs.

- 4.6 It is not always possible to meet a client's postural/seating needs in a high-performance wheelchair even if they meet the eligibility criteria above. In this case a discussion with the clinician would be held to agree what wheelchair provision would be most suitable.

- 4.7 The Wheelchair Service has a set range of high-performance wheelchairs. Clients who wish to have a wheelchair outside of this range may opt to use a Third-Party Personal Wheelchair Budget.

- 4.8 In some instances, medical approval may be sought before the provision of a high-performance wheelchair is made. This may happen where there are contra-indications to the client self-propelling.

5.0 Children's buggies and wheelchairs

- 5.1 The Wheelchair Service will endeavour to meet the child's clinical needs when they have long-term mobility impairment. It is reasonable to expect parents to provide a pushchair for their children up to the age of 2½. However, children with mobility impairment beyond this age may continue to need a buggy or wheelchair on clinical grounds.
- 5.2 Pushchairs / buggies (that do not provide postural assistance) will be provided for children over 2½ years of age who do not require postural support.
- 5.3 Buggies will be provided for young children who cannot be accommodated in standard commercial buggies due to specific postural needs. The Wheelchair Service may request that such referrals are made by specialist paediatric services.
- 5.4 A wheelchair will be provided for children over 5 years old (as this is deemed more developmentally appropriate), and for younger children whose needs can be better met by a wheelchair.
- 5.5 One buggy or wheelchair will be provided per child, to be used in all environments e.g. home and school.
- 5.6 Double buggies will only be provided when both children are registered with the service, have a specific clinical need and where appropriate equipment is available to suit.
- 5.7 Rain covers / sunshades and other accessories are not supplied for buggies or special pushchairs unless there is a specific clinical need. They may be purchased by the client's family/next of kin at NHS price point through a Notional With Contribution Personal Wheelchair Budget to fit the equipment issued.
- 5.8 Children with postural needs will be assessed by a therapist and may be referred to a specialist clinic for further assessment.
- 5.9 The provision of wheelchairs and buggies to children with behavioural needs will be carried out in line with the Wheelchair Service's Procedure for the Provision of Buggies and Wheelchairs for Behavioural Control.
- 5.10 If seating is requested specifically for school use, the Wheelchair Service may be approached for information, but not for funding. Joint funding from Education should be considered if the wheelchair provided also meets the child's stated educational need.

6.0 Electrically powered wheelchairs

Clients must meet the following criteria before they can be considered eligible for the provision of an electrically powered indoor only (EPIC) or indoor/outdoor (EPIOC) powered wheelchair:

- 6.1 Be a full-time wheelchair user with a requirement to use the wheelchair daily to increase mobility and independence, leading to improved quality of life and greater interaction with their environment. Clients who are undertaking or have the potential to undertake rehabilitation will be considered once they have reached their maximum potential in their mobility.
- 6.2 Be unable to walk indoors as a result of a medical condition.
- 6.3 Be unable to self-propel a manual wheelchair indoors or their ability to self-propel is contra-indicated on medical grounds. Indoors means within a private home, it does not include communal areas.
- 6.4 Have a residential environment, which is compatible with the use of a powered wheelchair at the point of referral, including adequate space for the movement of the wheelchair including footplates and an appropriate area with a power supply to charge the wheelchair. Powered wheelchairs must not be stored outside the home environment or where they impede emergency access.
- 6.5 Be medically fit to adequately maintain and charge (or have a carer who will take on this role) a powered wheelchair. The opinion of the client's GP will be sought.
- 6.6 Able to control a powered wheelchair independently and safely within their home environment and outdoors if applicable.
- 6.7 Where a wheelchair is to be used outdoors or in other public environments, the client must also:
 - Have not had an epileptic fit, seizure or other loss of consciousness for one year.
 - Have no problems with visual, cognitive, visual-spatial or other higher cortical function or other medical conditions that would place themselves, others and / or road users at risk.
 - Be able to demonstrate during assessment the insight, capacity, competency and dexterity to operate a powered chair responsibly and independently.
 - Be able to pass a proficiency test to demonstrate ability to operate a powered wheelchair safely and independently in environments as identified and agreed between the therapist and client. As recommended by RoSPA (The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents)
 - Have a local environment which is accessible to the EPIOC and compatible with its use.
- 6.8 Only one powerchair per client will be issued.
- 6.9 Class 3 powerchairs are not provided by the service. Class 3 powered wheelchairs, are intended primarily for outdoor use and uneven terrain, and have a maximum speed of 12km/h. They have two speed settings for pavement

or road use, have lights as standard, and a flashing yellow beacon for use on dual carriageway roads where permitted.

- 6.10 Young children may demonstrate competency by passing the driving proficiency test. The age of the child will be taken into account. Supervision by a responsible adult is still strongly recommended and attendant controls may be considered.
- 6.11 Clients may be issued firstly with an indoor-only powerchair so that they can gain confidence and competency in driving. The therapist will discuss a timeframe for their outdoor driving assessment which may be subject to a waiting list.
- 6.12 New to area clients of powered indoor / outdoor wheelchairs may require new GP fitness to drive documentation.
- 6.13 The Wheelchair Service is not funded to provide seat risers but where technically possible and clinically suitable, clients may use a Notional with Contribution Personal Wheelchair Budget to pay the Wheelchair Service for the cost of providing and maintaining a riser.
- 6.14 Clients wishing to drive a vehicle from their powered wheelchair should speak to the Wheelchair Service for further details.
- 6.15 Provision for people weighing over 150kg will be subject to an individual risk assessment.

7.0 Accessories and modifications

- 7.1 Accessories and modifications are only supplied in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- 7.2 Referrals for accessories or modifications are accepted from all parties and may be provided where there is a clear clinical or functional need.
- 7.3 Accessories and modifications can only be provided if they are compatible with the wheelchair / buggy.
- 7.4 Trays may be provided for postural needs.
- 7.5 The Wheelchair Service may issue optional prescription accessories where the client covers the cost through a Notional with Contribution Personal Wheelchair Budget, e.g.:
 - Powered elevated leg rests
 - Powered seat risers
 - Non-clinical accessories such as rain covers, sunshades, shopping baskets.

8.0 Cushions

- 8.1 Cushions will be supplied for comfort, postural support and pressure relieving requirements for wheelchair use only.
- 8.2 Cushions are supplied in accordance with the client's clinical need.
- 8.3 Cushions will still be provided by the Wheelchair Service, where appropriate, if a client chooses to opt for a Personal Wheelchair Budget.
- 8.4 Cushions will be provided for private wheelchairs, but the following conditions must be met:
 - i) The client must be eligible for a wheelchair from the Wheelchair Service.
 - ii) The type of cushion issued will be determined by a therapist in the Wheelchair Service.
 - iii) A second cushion will not be provided for a private wheelchair where a cushion has already been provided for the NHS wheelchair.
- 8.5 Where a cushion is issued, the client must follow the procedures on care, usage, maintenance and review procedures.
- 8.6 Cushions will not be provided for static seating (e.g. armchairs).

9.0 Custom contour seating / specialist seating systems

- 9.1 The client must be eligible for a wheelchair for mobility purposes from the Wheelchair Service and this should be the primary reason for referral (i.e., specialist seating for use within the wheelchair, not specialist seating to replace an armchair need, or purely to provide school seating or a transport system).
- 9.2 Registered care homes should demonstrate that individual assessments for specialist armchairs and / or tilt-in-space wheelchairs have been completed, the armchair / wheelchair has been provided for the client and subsequent clinical evidence as to why the equipment is not meeting the client's needs.
- 9.3 The client should require the wheelchair with specialist seating as part of their daily routine on a long-term basis, and therefore be able to benefit from the positioning / postural control that the seating gives.
- 9.4 The client's environment should be able to accommodate the seating and wheelchair base required.
- 9.5 Children attending the clinic should always be accompanied by their parents and / or carer, the referring therapist and any other relevant person closely involved with the child.
- 9.6 Only one seating system per client will be provided.

- 9.7 Specialist seating can be provided for private wheelchairs providing the wheelchair is deemed appropriate by the Wheelchair Service.
- 9.8 The local Wheelchair Service must consider and approve any recommendation from an external Specialist Seating Service prior to any action.
- 9.9 Specialist seating will not be provided as an alternative to appropriate static seating.

10.0 Tilt-in-space wheelchairs

- 10.1 Manual tilt-in-space wheelchairs will only be provided where the client requires postural support and regular changes of position. The environmental constraints will be considered when prescribing this type of wheelchair.
- 10.2 Tilt-in-space wheelchairs will not be issued in nursing homes, care homes or residential homes unless there are postural issues that are part of a 24-hour postural management plan and the client is taken off the premises several times a week. Tilt-in-space wheelchairs will not be provided in lieu of the client not having an appropriate static seat.
- 10.3 Clients moving into nursing homes from their own homes with tilt-in-space wheelchairs will be able to retain access to the Wheelchair Service's maintenance contractor for repair provision whilst the wheelchair remains economically viable for repair. Re-provision will not necessarily occur should the client's clinical needs change significantly.
- 10.4 Hospitals and rehabilitation units including community rehabilitation are expected to supply their own tilt-in-space wheelchairs.
- 10.5 The client must have significant postural needs which cannot be accommodated in any other wheelchair.
- 10.6 The client must be able to gain significant improvements in their posture and mobility from the provision of a tilt-in-space system.
- 10.7 A standard wheelchair which can be set up in a fixed tilted position should be considered as the first option where a client needs to sit in a tilted position.
- 10.8 A client is not eligible for a tilt-in-space system if a postural supportive armchair only is required to meet their needs and / or the client is continuing to make progress in their posture.

11.0 Loan of more than one wheelchair

- 11.1 The supply of more than one wheelchair will be agreed on a case-by-case basis when a wheelchair is required both upstairs and downstairs and where there is no provision for a through floor lift or other appropriate equipment to move the wheelchair between floors. If a through floor lift is subsequently fitted in the home, the second wheelchair should be returned.

- 11.2 If a high performance wheelchair is on loan, a second standard wheelchair will only be provided to fulfil the above requirement.

12.0 Care homes criteria

These criteria include all types of care homes.

- 12.1 Wheelchairs will be provided to clients in care homes to enable the client to become independently mobile and therefore increase their personal and functional ability.
- 12.2 Brighton and Hove: Attendant pushed (transit) wheelchairs will not be issued if a person can sit adequately supported in a standard attendant pushed wheelchair and an armchair and has no special seating needs. West Sussex: Attendant pushed (transit) wheelchair will be issued to those living in Residential Care Homes provided they meet the eligibility criteria.
- 12.3 It is the responsibility of the care home in which the client resides to provide and maintain the following equipment:
- Attendant pushed type wheelchairs of any description.
 - Pressure relieving cushions to fit the above style wheelchairs.
 - Standard accessories, for example (but not limited to): ELRs, hemi-armrests, angle-adjustable footplates, stump boards, calf panels, unifits.
 - Non-customised special seating e.g., riser armchairs, recliner armchairs and postural armchairs.
- 12.4 It is the responsibility of the Wheelchair Service to provide where appropriate following assessment:
- Self-propelled wheelchairs where there is significant and measurable increase in the client's independence.
 - Electrically powered wheelchairs where client is eligible.
 - Custom contoured (bespoke) seating where clinically necessary.
 - Pressure relieving cushions and accessories for a wheelchair provided by the Wheelchair Service.
- 12.5 It is the responsibility of the client and the care home to ensure that all Conditions of Loan are adhered to, that the equipment is used in the manner prescribed and to request reassessment when required.

13.0 Attendant controls for powered wheelchairs

- 13.1 The Wheelchair Service does not provide powered wheelchairs fitted with dual attendant controls other than under exceptional circumstances e.g. where the client has a rapidly deteriorating condition. Clients wanting this feature but not meeting the criteria may wish to fund an attendant control through a Notional with Contribution Personal Wheelchair Budget.

- 13.2 The client should be able to use the main control box themselves and the attendant control is not the only control on the powerchair.
- 13.3 The dual control must enhance the safety and hence the scope of use (e.g. a young child who would not be safe crossing the road).

14.0 Power-packs

- 14.1 The Wheelchair Service does not issue power-packs.
- 14.2 It should be noted that not all wheelchairs are compatible with power-packs. It is the responsibility of the client to check whether their wheelchair is compatible and seek permission from the Wheelchair Service to fit a power pack.

15.0 Headrests

- 15.1 Headrests will be provided to a client only when clinically necessary.
- 15.2 The Wheelchair Service does not supply head rests or restraints for transport.
- 15.3 A wheelchair head rest or restraint for transport is part of the Wheelchair Tie-down and Occupant Restraints System (also known as WTORS). The Wheelchair Service does not provide wheelchair tie-down and occupant restraint systems and therefore does not provide head rests or restraints for transport. It is the responsibility of the transport provider to provide wheelchair tie-down and occupant restraints systems as required, including head rests and restraints for transport.
- 15.4 The Wheelchair Service will endeavour to provide wheelchairs that are compatible with wheelchair tie-down and occupant restraints systems if they are made aware of this need at the time of assessment.

16.0 Hub-brakes

- 16.1 Hub-brakes are provided by the Wheelchair Service for non-powered wheelchairs where there is a considerable risk to safety or the seating system is exceptionally heavy.

17.0 Personal Wheelchair Budgets

- 17.1 The Wheelchair Service will provide a suitable wheelchair from the Wheelchair Service preferred range for eligible clients. If a client wishes to choose an alternative wheelchair, they may wish to use the Personal Wheelchair Budget scheme. The scheme includes Notional, Notional with Contribution, and Third Party options. Further information is available in the Personal Wheelchair Budgets booklet.
- 17.2 A Personal Wheelchair Budget will be offered to all clients who are eligible for the scheme.

- 17.3 Clients will be assessed by a Wheelchair Service therapist as part of the Care and Support Plan to determine their needs.
- 17.4 The Personal Wheelchair Budget will represent the cost of the wheelchair that the Wheelchair Service would supply.
- 17.5 Personal Wheelchair Budgets can only be used towards equipment that the Wheelchair Service considers safe and suitable for the client.
- 17.6 Third Party Personal Wheelchair Budgets can only be used towards equipment from reliable and reputable suppliers (at the discretion of the Wheelchair Service).
- 17.7 Personal Wheelchair Budgets are not available retrospectively.
- 17.8 Personal Wheelchair Budgets will not be provided for specialist seating.
- 17.9 The budget period is a minimum of 5 years for adults (aged 18+) and 3 years for children (aged 17 and under). Clients may be offered a reassessment if their clinical needs change significantly before the end of the budget period.

18.0 Conditions of Loan

- 18.1 All equipment issued is on a loan basis and remains the property of the Wheelchair Service. In the event that the client's needs change and they become ineligible for a wheelchair under these criteria, or in the event that a client breaches the conditions of loan as agreed at handover, the Wheelchair Service is entitled to request the return of the wheelchair and any associated equipment.

19.0 Appeals process

- 19.1 In the event that a client wishes to challenge their interpretation of this eligibility as applied to their assessment, they should contact the Wheelchair Service for further discussion.

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES

Brighton & Hove Care Home and Equipment Policy, September 2018



Brighton Hove Care
Home Equipment Poli

West Sussex County Council and NHS, Nov 2013. *Provision of Equipment for Adults in West Sussex Registered Care Homes.*



Care Home Matrix
Provision of Equipmer

Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust, August 2021. *Procedure for the provision of buggies / wheelchairs for behavioural control for children/ young people aged 16 and under.*



Provision of
buggies and wheelc