

What if my request for an escort is declined and I am unhappy?

Patients now have the opportunity to provide supplementary information in support of their application for a funded escort, should the funding have been initially declined. You can do this by contacting the Patient Travel office requesting a copy of the 'Further Information Form'.

If a request is declined, patients clearly still have the option of arranging to take an escort independently.

Further information

If you remain unhappy, you can make a complaint to NHS Western Isles by contacting:

Complaints Officer, NHS Western Isles
Health Board Offices, 37 South Beach, Stornoway, HS1 2BB
Email: nhswi.complaints@nhs.net

We are listening - how did we do?

We welcome your feedback, as it helps us evaluate the services we provide. If you would like to tell us about your experience:

- speak to a member of staff
- visit our website www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk/feedback or share your story at: www.careopinion.org.uk or tel. 0800 122 31 35
- Tel. 01851 704704 (ext 2408) on a Tuesday and Friday afternoon between 1pm and 4pm.

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Disclaimer

The content of this leaflet is intended to augment, not replace, information provided by your clinician. It is not intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Reading this information does not create or replace a doctor-patient relationship or consultation. If required, please contact your doctor or other health care provider to assist you interpret any of this information, or in applying the information to your individual needs.

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Bòrd SSN nan Eilean Siar
NHS Western Isles

Information for Patients

Approval process for NHS-funded escorts



Information for patients who are travelling for an appointment with regard to approval/funding of escorts

Introduction

In certain cases, patients travelling off island require an escort to accompany them. The majority of Health Boards across Scotland only fund patient travel on a means tested basis, with only Boards covered by the Highlands and Islands Travel Scheme (Western Isles, Highland, Orkney and Shetland) providing financial assistance to patients and eligible escorts regardless of income. The NHS Western Isles Patient Travel Policy sets out the criteria by which funding of escorts is approved - which is strictly based on clinical need.

A new system for approving requests for NHS-funded escorts is being introduced, to ensure that an equitable system is delivered across the Western Isles.

There is no change to the criteria for approving a funded escort or to the Patient Travel Policy. However the decision with regard to whether or not an NHS funded escort is required, and therefore approved, will be made by the NHS Western Isles Medical Director, with advice from GPs, rather than by individual GP Practices.

What does that mean in practice?

Historically, it has been the responsibility of GP Practices to make the decisions regarding approval of funding for patient escorts, and there has been a significant variation between the GP Practices in the percentage of patients receiving approval for funded escorts. Certain practices also indicated that they no longer wished to provide this service, and would rather that it was carried out centrally.

Under the new system, GPs will provide clinical information to the Medical Director regarding escort requests, and the decision as to whether or not a funded escort is approved will be made via the Medical Director's office.

The new system was piloted in two GP practices – Langabhat (from March 2017) and Broadbay (from May 2017), and feedback from both the GP Practices and from the patient travel office has been positive. The new process was introduced to the three remaining GP Practices in Lewis and Harris in April 2018. It is intended to implement the new process in the Uists and Barra in or before July 2018.

What if I need an escort?

It is important to stress that, where escorts are clinically required, we will continue to fund them in line with our policy. That has not changed.

However, we must ensure that the criteria are applied in a fair way. This will ensure that those patients who require an escort will continue to receive financial assistance, but it will also mean that those who do not meet the criteria will not receive NHS funding for an escort. We understand and acknowledge that in some cases, this will be disappointing. However, there is a limited budget for patient travel, which is under significant pressure, and we must ensure that the money available is spent appropriately.

What are the criteria that my application will be assessed against?

A summary of the criteria is below:

1. Patient is under 16 years of age.
2. Patient has a Guardianship order or has an Incapacity Certificate or is a young person under the age of 26 who is Looked After. (An Incapacity Certificate is a certificate provided by a healthcare provider to allow treatment to be given for patients who are unable to make these decisions independently. Your main carer should be aware of this).
3. Patient is undergoing a procedure that will require assistance on the return journey (e.g. major surgical procedure or joint replacement, medical therapy that causes significant side effects).
4. Patient has a significant physical or mental disability that would require assistance with travel (e.g. administration of medication by an escort, assistance with baggage, toileting etc. (although please note if a patient is able to travel with the support of airport ground crew/ use of a taxi then an escort is not required)).
5. Patient is attending an appointment that involves training in self-management that a carer or relative will be undertaking on their return home.

(This list is not exhaustive and exceptional circumstances may also be considered. Social, emotional fear of flying or pregnancy are not considered reasons for a funded escort.)