

Your Wheelchair Service



This booklet aims to answer questions about what happens when you are referred to the wheelchair service, as well as when you attend appointments. If your question is not answered, please get in touch and we will be happy to help.



YOUR JOURNEY THROUGH THE WHEELCHAIR SERVICE:



Referral

Who can refer me?

Referrals are accepted from a number of professional sources, including:

- GPs
- Physiotherapists and occupational therapists
- Qualified social work staff
- Nurses

If you already have a wheelchair but feel it needs reassessing, you can self-refer yourself to our service.

What happens when I am referred to the wheelchair service?

Within 48 hours of receipt, a member of our clinical team will review the referral information sent to us by your referrer. They will assess

how urgently you need to be seen, and how best we can meet your clinical need. We will send a written confirmation that we have received your referral, and later contact you to book your appointment.

Invitation to clinic

How long do I have to wait to be assessed?

This depends on the prioritisation of your case, as well as the details of your referral. After the clinician has reviewed your case, a member of the Opcare administration team will invite you to our clinic.

We typically aim to assess all referred patients within 6 weeks, but are often able to do so sooner. We try to offer a variety of different options when booking your clinic appointment; we will offer you at least three options over a two or six week period, depending on the severity of your condition.

We will contact you two days before your appointment to remind you and answer any queries you have about reaching the clinic.

Assessment

How long will the appointment be?

Assessments usually take 1.5 hours, although some are longer and some are shorter. We will do our best to estimate the length of time your appointment will take, but cannot make any guarantees.

Who can come to my assessment?

If you do not wish to attend your assessment alone, you are welcome



to bring a chaperone, carer, family member, or friend along with you.

The clinic staff are unable to provide personal care during your visit. If you think you will need such care, including toileting, please have someone come with you who can assist with personal care. Remember to bring with you any medications that you will need during the time that you are at the clinic.

Do I need to bring anything to the appointment?

Please bring the following:

- Contact details of any therapists or consultants that are involved in your care
- The height of bed, armchair and toilet, and the width of your narrowest doorway
- Details of any current medication that you are taking
- Any transfer aids, i.e. a hoist sling or transfer board, if used
- Any splints or braces, if used

Please wear loose clothing as it is more suitable when we assess your posture.

Who will assess me?

Clinics are led by wheelchair therapists (typically occupational or physiotherapists) and rehabilitation engineers.

We also work closely with therapists from other services, including: adult social care, hospital and intermediate care teams. Please inform your local therapist if you would like them to attend your assessment.

What happens at the appointment?

The wheelchair therapist will discuss your medical history to establish how and where the equipment will be used. Your posture and your ability to sit will also be assessed to determine the best equipment for you, and measurements may be taken to ensure we provide the right equipment first time round. The therapist will also discuss your goals and objectives.

Where possible, equipment will be trialled at this initial appointment; however, we do not always have every size of each piece of equipment in stock. If further appointments are required to try out equipment, we will arrange this with you.

Following this assessment, and in agreement with you, we will either issue or order your equipment. Your therapist will discuss their recommendations on the best equipment for you. If you have an existing wheelchair, it may be possible to alter the equipment to better suit your requirements.

If your equipment is not available at the time of assessment then your therapist will write a prescription to order the exact wheelchair you need. We will indicate at the point of assessment when we expect the equipment to be ready, and if anything changes in the meantime we will let you know.

A date for handing over the equipment will be discussed during your assessment, and confirmed shortly after.

What if I am unable to attend the appointment?

We ask that patients support us by cancelling any appointments that they are unable to attend at the earliest opportunity. If you are unable to attend due to sickness or other significant unforeseen circumstances, please try to let us know prior to your appointment, or as soon as you are able to do so.

Failure to attend a pre-arranged appointment, or cancellation with less than 24 hours of notice, may result in discharge from the service.

Please refer to the 'What happens if I cannot attend my appointment?' section on our website for more information.

What if I have an infectious disease?

If you have an infectious disease, such as chicken pox or MRSA, please contact us to discuss whether you should still attend your appointment. Please cancel your appointment if you have had any diarrhoea or vomiting within the 48 hours prior to your appointment.

What type of wheelchair will I get?

The type of wheelchair you will receive depends on a number of factors, such as:

- How often you will use your wheelchair
- Whether the wheelchair is required for indoor or outdoor use, or both
- If you require any postural support
- Your individual specific needs

All of these factors will be discussed during your assessment. We work to regional eligibility criteria which determine the type of wheelchair, timescales and funding levels. This will be explained to you at your assessment, and we will discuss different equipment options with you.

Will my wheelchair be comfortable?

Your comfort and independence is our primary concern; our team will do everything they can to ensure you are as comfortable as you can be. However, it is possible that sitting in the same position for long periods can sometimes cause discomfort. There are a number of things we can do to help if you are uncomfortable. For example:

- Trying an alternative cushion
- Adjusting your wheelchair
- Adding a headrest
- Adjusting footrests, headrests, armrests or backrests

If at any point you feel your wheelchair is not fully supporting you or meeting your needs, please speak to your therapist who will be able to assist.



Does the equipment cost me anything?

There is no charge for the equipment we provide.

Can I have different equipment to the recommended prescription?

The service has a core range of equipment which can be provided to meet your assessment needs.

If you do not want the equipment that the NHS can provide free of charge, you may be eligible to use your Personal Wheelchair Budget for a top-up or alternative wheelchair, or access the third party scheme. There may be financial implications if you choose one of these options.

Please ask your therapist for more information on Personal Wheelchair Budgets.

Handover of equipment

How long does it take to get the equipment?

This is dependent on whether we have the equipment in stock. Some equipment is ready to issue at, or soon after, the first appointment. However, if equipment needs to be ordered, particularly if from more than one supplier, it can take up to 12 weeks to arrive. You may need more than one appointment to trial equipment before it can be ordered.

After we have handed over your equipment, we will be back in touch after a month or two to check how you are doing. This will help us identify if any adjustments need to be made to the equipment to better suit your needs.

Will I get training on how to use my wheelchair?

Yes, you will be given full training on how to use your equipment. We also provide manufacturers' instruction manuals and leaflets with all of our equipment, along with any information on how to maintain your wheelchair and what to do if something goes wrong.

After the handover

What if I think my wheelchair requires a repair?

We can carry out repairs to your NHS wheelchair. Please call us to arrange the repair.

What if I think I require a review, or if my clinical needs change?

Please contact our service so we can address your concerns.

Where can I provide feedback about the service?

Our website features a live feedback form, where you can share your views. This information is analysed on a monthly basis, and relevant improvements are made to the service where possible.

Please do also share with us the aspects we are getting right and doing well! This will help to ensure that all of our patients receive the same treatment.