

Frequently Asked Questions for the Provision of an NHS Powered Wheelchair (Adults)

Information for Service Users

Issue 2: 01/04/2024

ESX168



Introduction

This guide aims to answer the commonly asked questions in relation to the criteria and provision of a powered wheelchair. There are links to other organisations that can also offer advice in relation to powered wheelchairs. If you do not find the answer to your question, please contact the Wheelchair Service. There is more information on our website.

There is a separate guide for children.

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Please call the Wheelchair Service if you would like to discuss eligibility or any aspect of referring to the service.



The referral form can be found on the website: rosscare.co.uk/east-sussex-wcs

If you would like to discuss any aspect of powered wheelchair provision or if you have any other questions, please contact the Wheelchair Service via the contact us page on our website.

Referral for a Powered Wheelchair

If you are not known to the Wheelchair Service, a referral for a powered wheelchair assessment will only be accepted from a Healthcare Practitioner. This may be your GP, or Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist.

There are many factors that need to be considered as part of an assessment for powered wheelchair. A powered wheelchair can provide independent mobility but generally it is important that you maintain your ability to walk for as long as possible. Therefore, all efforts to improve and maintain your mobility should be explored prior to consideration of a powered wheelchair. This may be a review or issue of a walking aid or an exercise or therapy programme.

You can refer yourself to the Wheelchair Service for an assessment for a powered wheelchair if you are already known to the Wheelchair Service and are in receipt of a manual wheelchair. As part of this process, we require that relevant medical information has been obtained from your GP or Consultant. We advise that you consider discussing a powered wheelchair with a Healthcare Practitioner before referring yourself to the Wheelchair Service.

There may be times when the use of a powered wheelchair is indicated earlier but this should be decided between yourself, the Physiotherapist and the Wheelchair Service. The use of a powered wheelchair is not an admission that you have “given up” on other mobility options.

Why are you asking if I have seen a Physio?

A Physiotherapist will be able to assess, identify and advise the most appropriate intervention for you at the time. Often during and after a period of illness, muscles can lose strength and a period of intervention may be required to build up your strength.

The Wheelchair Service has Physios; why can't they assess me for a walking aid?

The Wheelchair Service is not commissioned to assess for and loan mobility aids other than wheelchairs or postural seating for the wheelchairs they provide. It is also important that you are assessed for a mobility aid by a Physio that specialises in that area.

I am receiving rehab; why can't you provide me with a powered wheelchair now?

Your needs for a wheelchair may change during the period that you are receiving rehabilitation. During this time, your Therapists will keep in touch with the Wheelchair Service and contact us when you have reached your rehab potential.

Medical Considerations - Contacting Your GP

Why are you asking if I have had any seizures or if I lose consciousness?

A powered wheelchair is a heavy piece of equipment that moves under power and therefore can be potentially dangerous if used in some circumstances. We require your GP to confirm that there are no safety implications for you and those around you in relation to your using a powered wheelchair.

Why do you need to know what medication I am taking?

It is best practice to consult with the Healthcare Practitioners that know you and your medical history and medication. Your GP is best placed to advise on this. The Healthcare Practitioner referring you will complete this check with your GP as part of your referral to us.

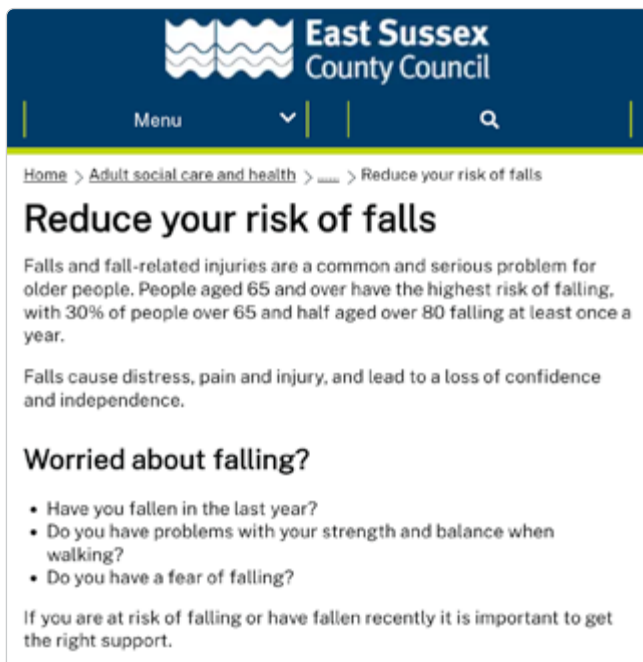
Falls

I am falling in my home; can I have a powered wheelchair?

If you are experiencing falls, it is important that the cause of the falls is identified first. You can contact Health and Social Care Connect (HSCC) on 0345 60 80 191 or click on the link below:

1space.eastsussex.gov.uk/Services/2340/Health-Social-Care

For further advice on Fall prevention from East Sussex County Council and the NHS please visit the following links: www.nhs.uk/conditions/falls/prevention/ and www.eastsussex.gov.uk/social-care/health-advice/falls-guide/



The screenshot shows the East Sussex County Council website. The header includes the council logo and name. Below the header is a navigation menu with a search icon. The main content area is titled "Reduce your risk of falls" and includes a breadcrumb trail: Home > Adult social care and health > Reduce your risk of falls. The text explains that falls are a common and serious problem for older people, with 30% of people over 65 and half aged over 80 falling at least once a year. It also states that falls cause distress, pain, and injury, leading to a loss of confidence and independence. A section titled "Worried about falling?" lists three bullet points: "Have you fallen in the last year?", "Do you have problems with your strength and balance when walking?", and "Do you have a fear of falling?". At the bottom, it notes that if you are at risk of falling or have fallen recently, it is important to get the right support.



The screenshot shows the NHS website. The header includes the NHS logo, a search bar, and a "My account" link. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for "Health A-Z", "NHS services", "Live Well", "Mental health", and "More". The main content area is titled "Prevention Falls" and includes a breadcrumb trail: Home > Health A to Z > Falls. The text explains that there are ways to reduce the risk of having a fall, including making simple changes to your home and doing exercises to improve your strength and balance. It also notes that if you have fallen in the past, making changes to reduce your chances of having a fall can also help you overcome any fear of falling. At the bottom, it states that some older people may be reluctant to seek help and advice from a GP and other support services about preventing falls because they believe their concerns will not be taken seriously.

Use of a Manual Wheelchair

I can walk indoors but feel that I need a powered wheelchair to make it easier for me to get about outdoors. Why have I been declined?

It is important that you maintain your ability to walk where it is safe and functional for you to do so. We aim to provide wheelchairs that enable you to be as independent as possible. This may involve the wider team that support you in the community. If you use a manual wheelchair, there may be adjustments that can be made to enable easier use. We will as part of the assessment, review how you are managing to use your manual wheelchair or if you don't currently have a wheelchair, consider a manual wheelchair in the first instance.

We will always consider how you manage your mobility (and posture and pressure needs) over waking hours. All elements are considered to ensure that the provision or non provision of a powered wheelchair is the right decision for you and at the right time.

Many people find a powered wheelchair allows them to go further outside. We can offer signposting information as to where you can purchase a powered wheelchair for outdoor only use (see later in this guide). If you choose to purchase a powered wheelchair, we would always recommend that you seek advice from a Therapist prior to making any purchase.

Home Environment

Why do you need to assess my home?

We need to ensure that your home environment is suitable for the safe use of a powered wheelchair. We will assess the access around and into your home, identify any internal risks e.g., an open staircase. You must be able to access all relevant facilities required for daily living.

We will also review other aspects of your home, such as the type of flooring. It is much easier to propel or drive a wheelchair over a laminate floor than over a thick pile carpet.

I have been told my home is not suitable for using a powered wheelchair; why is this?

You need to have adequate space in terms of door widths and turning space within rooms. If you do not have ramped access, you will not be able to move in and out of your home safely.

We would consider your overall eligibility before advising you to pursue any alterations to your home. You may be eligible to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). To find out more about a DFG (Disabled Facilities Grant) visit: www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants

I am on the waiting list to be rehoused; when can I reapply for a powered wheelchair?

Once you have moved, please contact the Wheelchair Service. If you have been referred before for a powered wheelchair, you can refer yourself back to us. If you are requesting a powered wheelchair for the first time, you will need to be referred by a Healthcare Practitioner.

Controlling a Powered Wheelchair

I have never used a powered wheelchair; will this be taken into consideration when you assess me?

Yes, many service users have not used a powered wheelchair before or never driven a car. You will be given a full demonstration on how to use the powered wheelchair as part of your assessment. There are times when a service user is not deemed safe to use a powered wheelchair and it will not be provided but we will endeavour to complete a full assessment before this decision is made. The speed and manoeuvrability of the powered wheelchairs can be adjusted to suit your specific needs.

I do not have the use of my hands; can I still apply for a powered wheelchair?

There are various ways to control a powered wheelchair. You will receive a full assessment to determine the easiest method for you. It is possible to drive a powered wheelchair with only minimal movement.

I am no longer able to use my powered wheelchair; what happens next?

You can request a review at anytime. When your powered wheelchair was issued to you, you will have signed a Conditions of loan document. It is your responsibility to advise the Wheelchair Service if your needs change and you are having difficulty or are unable to use your powered wheelchair safely. We will reassess you and will make any adjustments to enable you to continue to safely use your powered wheelchair.

In some circumstances, you may decide or we may decide with you that the continued use of a powered wheelchair is not appropriate. We will not remove a powered wheelchair without consultation with your wider care team and any other Healthcare Practitioners involved in your care. We have a duty of care on behalf of the NHS, to ensure that you and those around you are not put at risk.

I cannot operate a powered wheelchair; why can't you provide a powered wheelchair that someone else drives for me?

We are commissioned to provide powered wheelchairs for independent mobility. We are therefore unable to provide a wheelchair that will be operated by someone else.

Controlling a Powered Wheelchair (continued)

I can drive my powered wheelchair inside my home, but I have been told I cannot have an attendant control fitted for my partner to use the wheelchair outside; why is this?

The Wheelchair Service is commissioned to assess and provide powered wheelchairs for you to use without help (Independent). You will be assessed to decide if you are safe to use the powered wheelchair independently outside of your home as well as inside your home. If it is deemed that you are not safe outside, you should be assisted to use your manual wheelchair when outside of your home.

I only want to use a powered wheelchair outside; why have I been declined an assessment?

The provision of a powered wheelchair is to meet your full-time mobility needs. The need for a powered wheelchair needs to be your only means of moving yourself around your home. We are not commissioned to provide powered wheelchairs that will only be used outside of the home.

Assessment Process

How will I be assessed for a powered wheelchair?

Once your referral has been received, we will contact you to discuss your needs in more detail. This may include a video appointment to review your home environment. In some instances, we will need to visit you at home. If appropriate, you will be placed on the waiting list for an appointment at the Wheelchair Service. Your appointment letter will explain what to expect when you come to the Wheelchair Service clinic.

Please see the website for more information:

www.rosscare.co.uk/east-sussex-wcs



How long will it take to get my powered wheelchair?

The time it takes to be assessed and to receive a powered wheelchair will vary depending on any additional requirements you have, if your environment requires any alterations and if you require further assessments. Delivery times will also be dependent on stock availability.

Types of Powered Wheelchair and Features that the Wheelchair Service Provides

The Wheelchair Service follow a criteria for provision that has been set by the Commissioners under guidance from NHS England.

There is a core range of powered wheelchairs that we provide. This is called the equipment matrix. This range has been carefully reviewed and selected to ensure that we can meet a wide range of clinical needs. The matrix enables the Wheelchair Service to hold some models in stock and a range of spare parts in order for us to be able to repair the wheelchairs as soon as possible.

In most instances, the wheelchair that is offered free by the NHS will meet your needs and you will be happy to accept it, however there may be other features that you would like. The Wheelchair Service aims to meet your clinical needs but not every "want". This section explains what we are able and not able to provide with alternative options that may be available to you.

The table at the end of this section (pages 7-8) summarises the powered equipment that we do and don't assess for and provide.

I don't like the wheelchair that has been prescribed for me; do I have any other options?

If you meet the eligibility for provision of a powered wheelchair you may also be eligible to access the personal wheelchair budget scheme (PWB). You can talk to your therapist about the options on the scheme at your assessment appointment. A PWB cannot be issued retrospectively. You will need to have an assessment and any alternative choice you make has to be authorised by the Wheelchair Service before you order or purchase a wheelchair.

Talk to your Therapist at your appointment about the options that may be available for you. Please see the website for more information on the PWB scheme:

www.rosscare.co.uk/pages/personal-wheelchair-budget-overview



The following pages explain what we are able and not able to provide with alternative options that may be available to you.

What Types of Powered Wheelchair Does the Service Provide?

There may be some options that can be considered under the Personal Wheelchair Budget (PWB) scheme. See our website for information on the PWB scheme. This scheme only applies to service users that meet the criteria for provision.

✓ Do provide

Rear wheel drive (RWD) powered wheelchairs



Mid wheel drive (MWD) powered wheelchairs



✗ Don't provide

Scooters



Foldable powered wheelchairs



Manual wheelchairs with power add on

Converting a manual wheelchair to a powered wheelchair



Power assist wheels



What Features Does the Service Provide?

✓ Do provide

Joysticks and head switching



Tilt in space for postural support



Elevating leg rest (ELR) for reduced knee flexion



Powered recline (only in exceptional circumstances)



✗ Don't provide

Attendant-only powered controls



Tilt in space for resting or sleeping



Powered elevating leg rest (ELR)



Seat risers or stand-up powered wheelchairs



Power packs



Please see additional guidance on our website for advice on what can and cannot be fitted to a wheelchair provided by the Wheelchair Service.

Other Questions

I would like a scooter; why can you not provide me with one?

The Wheelchair Service is commissioned to provide powered wheelchairs only. This does not include scooters. If you receive the enhanced mobility element of PIP (Personal Independence Payment) you may be eligible to access the Motability Scheme. You may be able to use your allowance to hire a scooter. There are links to the Motability scheme later in this guide.

Why do you not provide powered elevating leg rests?

Standard elevating leg rests are provided only to accommodate reduced knee flexion (i.e. inability to bend your knees). They are not effective in reducing leg oedema (swelling) and will not be provided for this purpose. The use of powered elevating leg-rests is not related to a mobility need. Inappropriate use of elevating leg rests can impact negatively on the management of your posture and pressure care needs.

Please discuss this with your Therapist at your appointment as you may be able to access the Top-Up PWB option for this feature.

If you feel that your question has not been answered, please use this space to write down any questions that you may like to ask the Wheelchair Service. Contact details are below:

Eastbourne

Units 8 and 9, Alder Close,
Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN23 6QF

0333 003 5619

eastsussexwheelchairservice@rosscare.co.uk

Ineligibility for provision of a powered wheelchair

I have been advised I don't meet the criteria, where can I get a powered wheelchair?

There are various other routes that we can signpost you to if you do not meet the Wheelchair Service criteria for provision of a powered wheelchair.

We can refer you to our CHEO (Community Health Engagement Officer) who will be able to support you to explore other options and provide information on charity funding or other funding options for private purchases.

Signposting information



Please see the links below for further advice and information on purchasing a powered wheelchair. There are additional resources for children, please see the children's powered guide and section on our website.



Motability



ShopMobility UK

Which?

Living made easy

NHS guide to buying a scooter or powered wheelchair

www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/care-services-equipment-and-care-homes/walking-aids-wheelchairs-and-mobility-scooters

Motability

The Motability Scheme enables anyone in receipt of a qualifying mobility allowance to use their mobility allowance to lease a car, scooter, powered wheelchair or Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV).

www.motability.co.uk/c/everyday-freedom

Shop Mobility UK

Shop Mobility UK is a nationwide network of centres that hire out mobility equipment to the public. This equipment includes manual wheelchairs, powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters so people with restricted mobility can enjoy independence outdoors.

www.shopmobilityuk.org

WHICH Guide

You can read about the different types of wheelchair that are available to purchase, with guides and tips on choosing a powered wheelchair.

www.which.co.uk/later-life-care/home-care/out-and-about/choosing-a-wheelchair-awudm6w9jbkz

The Disabled Living Foundation

The Disabled Living Foundation are also a good resource with guidance on how to choose a powered wheelchair.

www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk

ESX168 FAQ's for the provision of an NHS powered wheelchair

Issue 2: 01/04/2024