



# Kent and Medway Wheelchair Service

Eligibility Criteria for the Provision of NHS Wheelchairs

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## 1. Introduction

The wheelchair service provides buggies and wheelchairs for children, young people and adults with a long term (over six months) disability or illness to enable them to become independently mobile.

## 2. General eligibility criteria

In order to be eligible for assessment and prescription of a wheelchair all service users must fulfil ALL of these elements:

- 2.1 Have a long term mobility condition (defined as 6 months or longer) and require a wheelchair for permanent use because they are unable to functionally walk and their condition significantly impacts on their activity levels and participation in daily living. Shorter loan periods will be considered for individuals with a prognosis of less than 6 months' life expectancy.
- 2.2 Will use the wheelchair for mobility purposes on a frequent basis, defined as more than 4 hours per day, 3 days per week
- 2.3 Be permanently registered with a General Practitioner (GP) within the catchment area of the Kent and Medway CCG
- 2.4 Be aged 36 months or older
- 2.5 Live in a home environment which is compatible with the safe use of the wheelchair
- 2.6 Can demonstrate that, where their wheelchair is used in transport, Best Practice Guidelines [1] are followed.
- 2.7 Meet the other specific eligibility criteria set out in this document
- 2.8 Agree to the Terms and Conditions of Loan (available on request)

Individuals new to the wheelchair service must be referred by their GP, registered Community Nurse, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist or other registered allied health care professional using the correct referral form. The form must be fully completed.

Existing service users can re-refer themselves directly by phone or in writing but only for replacement/review of the same category of wheelchair. Requests for powered wheelchairs are only accepted from a health professional or GP.

Eligible service users who require a new or replacement wheelchair or buggy may be offered a Personal Wheelchair Budget (see section 13).

Whenever possible the wheelchair service will try to take into account the assessed needs of the parent or key carer however the primary focus will be on the service user and their mobility, postural and pressure care clinical needs.

### 3. Exclusions

The wheelchair service does NOT supply equipment for:

- 3.1 Transit only use in a care home setting as these are the responsibility of the care home to provide
- 3.2 Use as static seating
- 3.3 Behaviour management where the service user does not meet the relevant eligibility criteria
- 3.4 Temporary use during rehabilitation
- 3.5 Use solely in a work, school or other educational establishment or environment as these are funded via other sources e.g. Access to Work
- 3.6 Sporting activities
- 3.7 Emergency / evacuation purposes

The wheelchair service does NOT supply:

- 3.8 Trikes
- 3.9 Mobility scooters
- 3.10 Class 3 powered wheelchairs
- 3.11 Electrically powered wheelchairs for outdoor use only
- 3.12 Powered wheelchairs with dual control for attendant only use
- 3.13 Power-assist devices for manual wheelchairs
- 3.14 Lap straps, chest harnesses and head supports for transport use only
- 3.15 Non-clinical accessories such as rain covers, sunshades, , trays
- 3.16 Vehicle docking stations
- 3.17 Alternating air pressure cushions (dynamic pressure cushions)
- 3.18 Pressure relieving cushions for use in static seating or arm chairs

The wheelchair service has an approved equipment list from which wheelchair service clinicians prescribe. This can be viewed on the wheelchair service website.

### 4.0 Manual Wheelchairs

#### 4.1 Standard attendant pushed wheelchairs

These are manual wheelchairs which are pushed by a carer and are also known as transit or attendant-propelled wheelchairs. These wheelchairs are provided to service users who are unable to mobilise independently and who:

- 4.1.1 Satisfy the general eligibility criteria in section 2 (see page 2)
- 4.1.2 Have a regular carer or family member available who can safely manage the use of the wheelchair
- 4.1.3 Have a suitable indoor space to store the wheelchair when not in use.

## 4.2 Standard manual self-propelled wheelchairs

These are wheelchairs that allow the user to move or propel themselves along by pushing rims fitted on the rear wheels. Self-propelled wheelchairs are supplied to service users who can mobilise independently using a wheelchair and who:

- 4.2.1 Satisfy the general eligibility criteria in section 2 (see page 2)
- 4.2.2 Can functionally self-propel a manual wheelchair without this being detrimental to their development or their medical condition. GP advice regarding this may be requested.

## 4.3 Configurable self-propelled wheelchairs

Provision of a configurable wheelchair will be considered on a clinical needs basis for service users who:

- 4.3.1 Meet the criteria for a manual self-propelled wheelchair in section 4.2
- 4.3.2 Are full-time existing wheelchair users
- 4.3.3 Are unable to maintain independent mobility in a standard manual wheelchair and can demonstrate an increase in their indoor mobility through this provision or are unable to functionally self-propel a standard wheelchair because to do so would exacerbate an existing clinical condition. This should be evidenced by a supporting statement from their GP or Consultant.

## 4.4 Highly configurable self-propelled wheelchairs

Service users may be considered for a highly configurable wheelchair to facilitate maximum independence and mobility. These types of wheelchairs are usually provided for service users who can transfer independently.

These wheelchairs are supplied to service users who:

- 4.4.1 Meet the criteria for a configurable self-propelled wheelchair in section 4.3
- 4.4.2 Have a stable long term medical mobility condition
- 4.4.3 Have sufficient physical and cognitive ability to manage a wheelchair that is designed to be used in a less stable configuration
- 4.4.4 Would achieve significantly greater independence with this type of wheelchair.

These wheelchairs are not suitable for consideration with certain medical conditions, especially those that are deteriorating and where posture is typically affected.

Where service users require a corrective seating system, or modifications for postural support, these should be compatible with the wheelchair that is prescribed. If this is not possible then a compromise will have to be reached, and a more standard wheelchair issued.

## 4.5 Bariatric wheelchairs

Bariatric wheelchairs (otherwise known as heavy duty wheelchairs) will be considered for service users with bariatric needs if clinically appropriate. It is essential for the service user to be accurately weighed, and the weight documented. An estimate is not safe or acceptable.

The carer or family member will need to demonstrate ability to safely push and manage the wheelchair.

## 5.0 Equipment for children and young people

A wheelchair will be provided for children over five years old and for younger children whose needs can be better met by a wheelchair, who meet the service eligibility criteria. Buggies will be considered for children who are aged under five years old.

### 5.1 Standard single buggy

These are buggies which do not provide postural support. Buggies are supplied to service users who are unable to mobilise independently and who:

- 5.1.1 Satisfy the general eligibility criteria in section 2 (see page 2)
- 5.1.2 Do not require postural support but have outgrown standard commercially available buggies

The wheelchair service does not provide buggies exclusively for the purpose of carrying equipment and/or accessories required for the care of the service user.

### 5.2 Specialist single buggy

A specialist buggy offers postural support to the service user that is not available in a commercially available buggy. Only one buggy will be supplied per service user. Specialist buggies are supplied to service users who are unable to mobilise independently and who:

- 5.2.1 Satisfy the general eligibility criteria in section 2 (see page 2)
- 5.2.2 Meet the requirements for the provision of special seating as part of a 24 hour postural management programme
- 5.2.3 Will use the buggy for significant periods of every day
- 5.2.4 Are unable to have postural support fitted to their existing buggy or in a standard buggy issued by the wheelchair service.

If there is evidence of complex postural needs and a recognised clinical need for postural management then children under the age of 36 months will be considered by the CCG to fund on an individual basis (via an Individual Funding Request).

Double (twin) buggies will only be supplied in line with the above criteria where both siblings have long-term mobility problems. Where one child has a specific medical need only, the wheelchair service will supply mobility equipment and any necessary postural support within it for the disabled child only. Parents will be able to use a Personal Wheelchair Budget to assist in the purchase a double buggy.

## 6.0 Electrically powered wheelchairs

An electrically powered wheelchair will only be considered when a manual chair is no longer appropriate to meet the service user's clinical needs.

Service users must be capable and be medically fit to safely control a powered wheelchair independently. It is the responsibility of the wheelchair service to determine whether or not an individual can operate a powered wheelchair proficiently and safely.

A service user will only be issued one powered wheelchair and a standard manual back-up chair for use during periods of repair of the powered chair. The wheelchair service cannot provide temporary loan powered wheelchairs during these periods.

### 6.1 Electrically powered indoor only wheelchairs (EPIC)

These wheelchairs are intended for indoor use only. Indoors means within the service users private home,. They must not be used in any indoor public environment e.g. shopping centres, hospitals, etc. Limited use of the EPIC outside such as in the garden will be part of the holistic assessment by the wheelchair service.

EPICs will be considered for service users who demonstrate their ability to operate a powered wheelchair independently and who:

- 6.1.1 Satisfy the general eligibility criteria in section 2 (see page 2)
- 6.1.2 Are full-time wheelchair users
- 6.1.3 Live in a permanent residential environment where the wheelchair can safely access all relevant facilities required for daily living
- 6.1.4 Have no medical conditions (including medical treatments or medication) that affect consciousness such that they or others are put at risk
- 6.1.5 Have no problems with visual, cognitive, visual-spatial or other higher cortical functions or other medical conditions that would put them or others at risk

### 6.2 Electrically powered indoor/outdoor wheelchairs (EPIOC)

EPIOCs will be considered for service users who demonstrate their ability to operate a powered wheelchair independently and who:

- 6.2.1 Meet all the criteria for an EPIC in section 6.1
- 6.2.2 Will significantly improve their independence and quality of life, indoors and outdoors

- 6.2.3 Have suitable facilities to enable safe independent access to the outdoor environment
- 6.2.4 Have a local environment which is accessible to the EPIOC and compatible with its use
- 6.2.5 Can manage the wheelchair safely in a variety of outdoor environments
- 6.2.6 Have suitable storage for the EPIOC and will not store it outside the home environment or where it impedes emergency access.

### 6.3 Powered wheelchairs with dual control

Dual operated electrically powered indoor/outdoor wheelchairs enable the service user to control the chair but there is a second joystick control mounted near the push handle for the carer to take control of the wheelchair.

Cases for the provision of dual controls will be considered on an individual basis and will only be done so in exceptional circumstances for service users who are able to independently operate an EPIOC but due to a deteriorating or fluctuating medical condition may require some assistance to safely control the chair or for children being issued their first powered wheelchair who have not developed road sense.

The wheelchair service does not supply powered wheelchairs that are controlled solely by an attendant.

### 7.0 Tilt-in-space wheelchairs

Wheelchair tilt facility is the ability to permanently adjust the angle of the seat whilst maintaining the seat to back angle, and is often referred to as “tilt-in-space”. A standard wheelchair with semi-reclining back and wedge cushion should be considered as the first option where a service user needs to sit in a tilted position. Any environmental constraints will be considered when prescribing this type of wheelchair. Tilt-in-space wheelbases are often provided in combination with specialist seating systems.

Tilt-in-space wheelchairs or wheelbases are supplied for those service users who:

- 7.1 Satisfy the general eligibility criteria in section 2 (see page 2)
- 7.2 Have postural needs that cannot be met without the use of a variable tilt-in-space
- 7.3 Can use the tilt-in-space function safely and effectively, or have carers who are able to use the tilt function safely on their behalf

Tilt-in-space wheelchairs are not provided solely for resting, sleeping, feeding or hygiene or to overcome moving and handling or hoisting issues or for the management of other health conditions such as urgent post-seizure assistance or respiratory life support.



## 8.0 Accessories and modifications

Requests for accessories or modifications to wheelchair service equipment will only be accepted when they are required to meet a clinical mobility or postural need within wheelchair service loaned equipment. Providing and fitting accessories or modifications carries some risk which must be assessed before proceeding.

- 8.1 Where possible, compatible accessories from the original wheelchair or buggy manufacturer should be used
- 8.2 Service users or their carers must be able to use the accessories or modified parts effectively and safely
- 8.3 Service users must not fit their own accessories or carry out modifications to the loaned wheelchair or buggy without following the process approved by the wheelchair service.

Modifications and accessories may be provided by the wheelchair service to address specific mobility and/or postural needs in the wheelchair, for example:

- 8.4 Trays will only be provided for postural needs and not as an alternative to a table. The service user will need to be able to demonstrate safe use of the wheelchair with the tray fitted
- 8.5 Head supports/headrests will only be supplied as part of a seating system for postural control
- 8.6 Elevating Leg Supports will only be supplied if there is a clinical need due to inability to position the leg on a standard foot support e.g. fixed leg contractures
- 8.7 Harnesses will only be supplied for a postural need when a suitable lapbelt is already in situ
- 8.8 Height-adjustable push handles will only be supplied on a case by case basis where there is a clinical need. There may be occasions where the clinical team will request supporting information from a medical practitioner to support an application.

Exclusions:

- 8.9 Head supports/headrests are not supplied for transport purposes only. The transport provider is responsible for providing appropriate head support/restraint. If a wheelchair or buggy is used as a vehicle seat, a suitable head restraint should be used during travel.
- 8.10 Harnesses are not supplied for transportation or as a restraint method
- 8.11 Elevated leg rests will not be supplied for resting, or for requests to manage oedema
- 8.12 Powered seat riser units are not supplied by the Wheelchair Service but these can be considered as part of a PWB. The service user must be eligible for the model of powered wheelchair that is compatible with a seat riser unit and it

must not conflict with their clinical needs. They cannot be fitted retrospectively, and must be fitted at point of supply

- 8.13 Attendant-operated hub or disc brakes are not supplied on wheelchairs apart from on specialist wheelbases for custom seating, in some instances.

Cases which involve the need to carry medical equipment will be considered on a case by case basis. Oxygen cylinder carriers will be provided if a risk assessment by wheelchair service therapists supports provision.

## 9.0 Pressure relieving cushions

A standard cushion will be provided for use in conjunction with the supplied wheelchair. Specialist cushions, appropriate to the service user's clinical needs, will be provided for any service user who:

- 9.1 Has specific pressure care needs when using their wheelchair
- 9.2 Requires additional postural support within their wheelchair.

Cushions are supplied for use with wheelchair service loaned equipment. Service users who would be eligible for wheelchair service provision and who have their own clinically appropriate private wheelchair may be considered for issue of a specialist cushion.

Pressure relieving cushions will only be provided for service users in residential and nursing homes with wheelchairs provided by the wheelchair service.

Provision of higher risk pressure relieving cushions will only be considered after all other pressure management techniques have been considered; cushions with higher pressure relieving properties will not be provided in order to facilitate a service user sitting out for longer periods than are safe, or to reduce care packages.

## 10.0 Custom made seating systems

The term "custom made seating" includes both specialist modular seating and bespoke seating in order to sustain or correct posture to facilitate mobility of a service user within their wheelchair or specialist buggy.

Specialist seating systems are supplied for those service users who:

- 10.1 Satisfy the general eligibility criteria in section 2 (see page 2)
- 10.2 Have complex postural needs that cannot be met without the addition of customised or complex modular seating systems to their wheelchair service loaned equipment
- 10.3 Can use the specialist seating effectively and safely or have carers who can take responsibility for doing so.

The wheelchair service will assess on an individual basis the appropriateness of

fitting NHS custom made seating systems into private wheelchairs. In all cases it must be deemed by the wheelchair service that the service user is eligible for a wheelchair in accordance with the NHS provision (for example, seating and postural accessories will not be provided for outdoor only powered chairs). Only one seating system will be supplied.

## 11.0 Residential and nursing home residents

The wheelchair service will provide mobility equipment to service users who are permanent residents of residential or nursing homes and who meet the eligibility criteria for provision of self-propelling or powered wheelchairs only. Wheelchairs are loaned to individuals for their exclusive use to ensure it meets their clinical needs and is safe for them to use.

**The wheelchair service will not provide attendant-propelled or transit wheelchairs to residential or nursing home residents unless they fulfil all the following conditions:**

- 11.1 The resident has significant postural needs that cannot be met by an off the shelf modular wheelchair and is taken out off site into their local community at least 3 days per week
- 11.2 The resident must be referred by a GP, registered Community Nurse, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist or other registered allied health care professional using the correct referral form which must be fully completed
- 11.3 An additional section of the referral form must be completed by the carer or family member who will be taking the service user out regularly into the community.

## 12.0 Service users undergoing rehabilitation

The wheelchair service will consider provision of a wheelchair for service users who have undertaken rehabilitation who:

- 12.1 Satisfy the general eligibility criteria in section 2 (see page 2)
- 12.2 Have reached their rehabilitation mobility goals before a referral for wheelchair provision can be processed by the wheelchair service
- 12.3 Have reached a plateau in their condition or the future long term need can be determined
- 12.4 Have a confirmed long term discharge destination.

## 13.0 Personal Wheelchair Budget (PWB) Scheme

The Personal Wheelchair Budgets (PWB) scheme aims to provide a wider choice for service users. Service users who meet the wheelchair service eligibility criteria and who have been identified as needing a new or replacement wheelchair may be eligible for a PWB.

During assessment the service user will work in partnership with a wheelchair service clinician to consider the wider health and wellbeing needs and outcomes the service user wants to achieve with their wheelchair. A Care and Support Plan will be completed to determine which of these needs can be met by wheelchair service provision and the most suitable equipment from the wheelchair service's approved range will be offered (the Notional NHS provision). Service users will be advised of the value of this wheelchair or buggy and will then have a number of choices:

- Accept this Notional NHS provision
- Choose a Notional Top-Up PWB and pay for additional accessories or features to be fitted to the wheelchair or buggy offered from the wheelchair service. Some examples include: sun canopies, spoke guards, powered elevating leg rests, powered recline or powered seat riser
- Choose a Notional Alternative PWB, paying the difference in value between the offered wheelchair and an alternative one from the wheelchair service approved range
- Request a Third Party PWB, using the value of their offered wheelchair towards a different wheelchair supplied by a third party.

13.1 PWBs will only be issued towards equipment that is considered by the wheelchair service to be suitable for the service users' assessed clinical need.

13.2 PWBs will not be available if service users just want a change in wheelchair or are simply replacing an accessory and there is no clinical need to replace the wheelchair

13.3 Third Party PWBs will only be issued towards equipment from reliable, reputable suppliers. A list of suggested local suppliers will be available from the wheelchair service upon request

13.4 PWBs are not available retrospectively for privately purchased wheelchairs or charitably funded wheelchairs

13.5 PWBs will not be provided for custom made seating or pressure relieving cushions.

Further information on Personal Wheelchair Budgets can be found on the wheelchair service website and is available on request.

## 14.0 How to get in touch

For more information on the Kent and Medway wheelchair service, please visit or contact us on:

Our website: [www.kentandmedwaywheelchairservice.co.uk](http://www.kentandmedwaywheelchairservice.co.uk)

Email: [kentandmedwaywcs@millbrookhealthcare.co.uk](mailto:kentandmedwaywcs@millbrookhealthcare.co.uk)

Telephone: 0330 124 4485. Lines are open Monday - Friday 8.30 - 17.00.

In the event that a service user wishes to challenge the interpretation of these eligibility criteria, they should contact NHS Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group email: [kmccg.wheelchairs@nhs.net](mailto:kmccg.wheelchairs@nhs.net).

## 15.0 References

[1] PMG BPG1 First Revision v2.2 (April 2020) International Best Practice Guidelines BPG1 Transportation of People Seated in Wheelchairs, 1st Revision 2019.