

Referring an Adult for a Powered Wheelchair

KEN167

Guidance and considerations for Healthcare Practitioners

Issue 1: 01/04/2023



Introduction

This guide is designed to support you to make a clinical decision as to whether the individual meets the criteria for provision of an NHS powered wheelchair from the Wheelchair Service. Please read this carefully to avoid raising service user expectations.

There is a separate guide if you are referring a child.

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Please read the full Wheelchair Service eligibility criteria, which can be found on our website. The specific sections in relation to powered provision can be found in Appendix 1 and should be read alongside this guide.

If a service user is being assessed for custom seating, this pathway for provision will be completed prior to the powered pathway being started. This is to ensure that any decisions in relation to posture are addressed first.

Who can refer for a powered wheelchair?

A referral for a powered wheelchair assessment **will only be accepted from a Healthcare Practitioner**. As part of this process, we require that all relevant medical information is obtained from the service user's GP or Consultant. **Incomplete referrals will be returned**. The episode of care will not be started until we have all the information required to triage.

Ultimately, the Wheelchair Service will complete an assessment and make a clinical decision as to whether an individual meets the criteria and is able to use a powered wheelchair independently and safely.

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/kent-and-medway-wcs

What to consider before you refer?

Is it the right time?

The pathway from a manual to a powered wheelchair is one that is not often reversed so it is important that the timing for provision is appropriate, and a decision is made alongside an MDT assessment and the Wheelchair Service criteria.

Deteriorating conditions

There are conditions that have a more predictable pathway e.g. Duchenne's Muscular Dystrophy or Motor Neurone Disease. Therefore, although we understand that each person should be treated as an individual, in specific pathways, a powered wheelchair may be required before that person goes "off their feet" and loses their ambulant mobility.

Reaching rehab potential

The Wheelchair Service is not commissioned to provide wheelchairs, manual or powered, until an individual has reached their rehab potential.

During this period, it is the responsibility of the rehab facility to provide mobility aids including wheelchairs. You will find more information regarding this on the website in the FAQ section.

Trialling a powered wheelchair during a period of rehab can have pros and cons. Please consider all elements included in this guide before you trial a wheelchair. Raising expectations too early can lead to disappointment if the individual does not meet the criteria when assessed at a later point within their pathway. On the positive side, some powered wheelchair users in early rehab will progress to using a manual wheelchair on completion of their rehab.

Mobility and walking aids

Has the service user's ability to mobilise deteriorated? Has the cause of the deterioration been investigated? Do they require a review of their mobility aid or a change in aid?

- The service user **must need to use the powered wheelchair for all their mobility needs.**
- The service user **must be unable to walk or self-propel functionally inside their own home** or have been advised that walking or self-propelling inside their own home is contra-indicated on medical grounds.

Falls

If the service user has reported to have been falling outside or within their home, has the cause of the falls been explored?

- Has a change in medication been explored or identified?
- Has there been a change in their medical condition?
- Has the service user received advice on how to manage falls?
- How frequent are the falls?
- Has the environment been checked to establish any environmental causes?
- Has their footwear been checked. Poorly fitting slippers can cause slips and falls.

Consider a referral to the Kent Community Health - NHS Foundation Trust - Falls Prevention Service, for more information click the link:

www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/falls-prevention-service/

For further advice on Fall prevention from NHS please click the link:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/falls/prevention/



Medical considerations

- ① How will the use of a powered wheelchair affect the service user's weight, strength, ability to stand to transfer and general health? This needs to be balanced with the positive impact the use of a powered wheelchair can have. If a powered wheelchair is indicated, is there a plan in place to ensure that all other function is maintained?
- ① Does the service user take regular medication that may impair their ability to use a powered wheelchair safely?
- ① Will the medication cause drowsiness or loss of concentration?
- ① Take into consideration regularity and severity of any form of loss of consciousness. The person may not be safe to use a powered wheelchair – see 6.1.4 of the criteria.

Review of manual wheelchair

If the service user currently has a wheelchair pushed by an attendant, have you **considered if a self-propelling wheelchair** is the next option?

Wheelchairs can be configured to use one upper limb to propel or a combination of upper and lower limbs or punting with lower limbs.

If the service user has a **manual wheelchair**, we will review why this is not meeting their needs first. There are different manual wheelchairs within the equipment range and the configuration can be adjusted to meet changing needs.

Poor posture can have a detrimental effect on effective propulsion. It may be that a postural assessment is required in the first instance.

Technique is also key to being able to propel independently. External training may be required and can be organised through various organisations. The Wheelchair Service will be able to provide further information on options for training.

Independent use of a powered wheelchair and level of function

The service user must demonstrate the ability to **use a powered wheelchair safely and independently** (without supervision, except in the case of age-appropriate supervision of children during the initial stage of provision), without endangering themselves and other people. **The service does not provide attendant powered wheelchairs for sole use by a carer.**

Driving a powered wheelchair requires a high level of skill to interact with both the powered chair and the external environment safely.

Please refer to section 6.1 of the criteria for a full list of considerations.

Training

The Wheelchair Service does not have the capacity to offer training to gain independence with a powered wheelchair. The service can provide guidance on powered training if there is a designated person/s who will be able to offer this training and practice.

A training agreement will be completed at the point of issue for trial purposes only. There will be a time limit on this trial period. At the end of the trial period, a decision will be made by the MDT if the service user has achieved independent powered mobility (indoors) or if an alternative route for provision (e.g. charity or private funding) needs to be pursued. Re-referral in the future is always an option should changes be experienced.

Home environment and location of use

The home environment must be suitable. Please do not refer if there is obviously not adequate turning space, general space or wide enough doorways. In this instance, you may need to consider or complete a referral for home adaptations first.

The service user must live in a permanent residential environment where the wheelchair can access all relevant facilities required for daily living. If adaptations are in the planning stage or in progress, please call the service to discuss the most appropriate time for referral.

Floor surfaces and thresholds between rooms have an impact on propelling. A laminate floor is much easier to propel across than a thick pile carpet.

A risk assessment of the home environment and any other areas (e.g. school, Day Centre or garden area) will be carried out by the Wheelchair Service if eligibility criteria is met.

To find out more about a DFG (Disabled Facilities Grant) visit:
www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants



Consider the following elements when looking at the suitability of a home environment:

Access	Is there level access? Are there ramps, thresholds, or narrow door widths?
Turning space	Is there space to turn within a room or from the hall / corridors into a room?
Door widths	Measure the narrowest point with the door open. The wheelchair needs to be the clinical size as required by the service user, rather than the size needed to fit through a doorway
Furniture	Is there space to manoeuvre? Does furniture need to be rearranged or removed?
Radiators on walls	Radiators or any wall mounted cupboards will reduce the width in a hallway
Internal steps	Are there any internal steps that could be a hazard to the service user?
Open stairs	Open staircases need to be gated
Floor surfaces	Powered wheelchairs may not turn on thick pile carpets and rugs
Other residents and pets	Who else lives with the person who will be using the powered wheelchair? Will the use be a risk to them or will they cause a risk to the powered wheelchair user?
Piped oxygen	Trailing tubes can cause a risk if driven over

Summary of considerations and alternative referral options

Use this table to guide you as to the most appropriate referral route:

Problem	Consider / action
Mobility has deteriorated	<p>Referral to Physio for review of mobility and/or assessment for walking aid.</p> <p>Discuss with GP: are there underlying medical causes for deterioration?</p>
Private powered wheelchair	<p>The use of a private powered wheelchair does not automatically meet eligibility for NHS provision.</p> <p>Provision of a manual wheelchair is considered prior to powered provision.</p>
Struggling to propel manual wheelchair	Refer to the Wheelchair Service for a review of the manual wheelchair unless there are definite contraindications for self- propelling.
Loss of consciousness, blackouts, or seizures	<p>We require full information as to the nature, regularity, and severity of any form of loss of consciousness. Check with the GP before making a referral, the person may not be safe to use a powered wheelchair – see 6.1 of the criteria.</p>
Medication side effects	<p>Does the service user take regular medication that may impair their ability to use a powered wheelchair safely?</p> <p>Will the medication cause drowsiness or loss of concentration?</p>
Falls	<p>Investigate the cause of the falls. Check with the GP before making a referral. In the first instance consider a referral to the Kent Community Health - NHS Foundation Trust - Falls Prevention Service: www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/falls-prevention-service/ or to a Physiotherapist</p>
Full time use	If the use of a powered wheelchair is not their only means of mobility and is not required for daily use within their home, they do not meet the criteria .
Home environment	The home environment needs to be suitable for independent use of a powered wheelchair.
Service user just wants to use a powered wheelchair outside	Does not meet criteria. Offer signposting information (see end of this guide).
Carer unable to push a manual wheelchair	Does not meet criteria. Advise the service user to contact the Wheelchair Service.

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 the 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 the website for advice on what can and cannot be fitted to a wheelchair provided by the Wheelchair Service.

Adult powered wheelchair referral checklist

Before you refer for a powered wheelchair you should be able to answer the following statements:

I confirm that:		Tick
Independent mobility	The service user is unable to walk independently and safely within their own home.	
Deterioration in mobility	The cause of deterioration in the service user's mobility has been fully investigated and addressed.	
Mobility aids	A review of or referral for a mobility aid has been considered and completed (attach any assessment).	
Transit / Attendant pushed wheelchair	The service user only has a transit wheelchair, but a self-propelling wheelchair is not appropriate (you will need to give your reasons why).	
Ability to use current self-propelling wheelchair	Self-propelling a manual wheelchair inside the service user's home is detrimental to the overall health and disease progression for this service user (including a manual wheelchair of a higher specification).	
Falls inside their own home	The causes of falls have been fully investigated, including a referral to the Falls clinic (where available).	
Medication	Effects of medication, medical condition and any loss of consciousness have been checked with the service user's GP.	
Access to home	The service user has access both to and from their home which is appropriate to the safe use of a powered wheelchair.	
Internal home environment	The service user has a home environment compatible with the safe and independent use of a powered wheelchair.	
Full time use	The service user needs to use the powered wheelchair for all of their mobility needs. For daily use, it is more than 4 hours a day.	
Cognitive and physical ability	Following assessment, I believe that the service user has the cognitive and physical skills to use a powered wheelchair independently and safely.	
Meets the criteria	In my professional opinion and having reviewed the guide for powered referrals and the service criteria, I confirm the service user meets the criteria for assessment for a powered wheelchair. I understand that this does not mean that a powered wheelchair will be provided. Any decision on provision is the responsibility of the Wheelchair Service.	

What happens next?

Once your referral has been received, the information you have provided will be reviewed by a Triage Therapist. Contact will be made with the service user to clarify any information and discuss the proposed use of a powered wheelchair. This may be completed via a video appointment, so that the home environment can be reviewed.

It may be determined that a service user does not meet the criteria and this can be at various stages in the pathway.

Signposting information for service users that do not meet the criteria.



If you determine that the service user does not meet the eligibility criteria for a powered wheelchair, there are other options which the service user could be signposted to. This information is included with the Frequently Asked Questions for service users and can be found on the website.

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

NHS information

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

Which guide

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



ShopMobility UK



Appendix 1: Wheelchair service criteria for powered wheelchair provision

This is an extract from the full eligibility criteria which can be found on our website.

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 user's 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

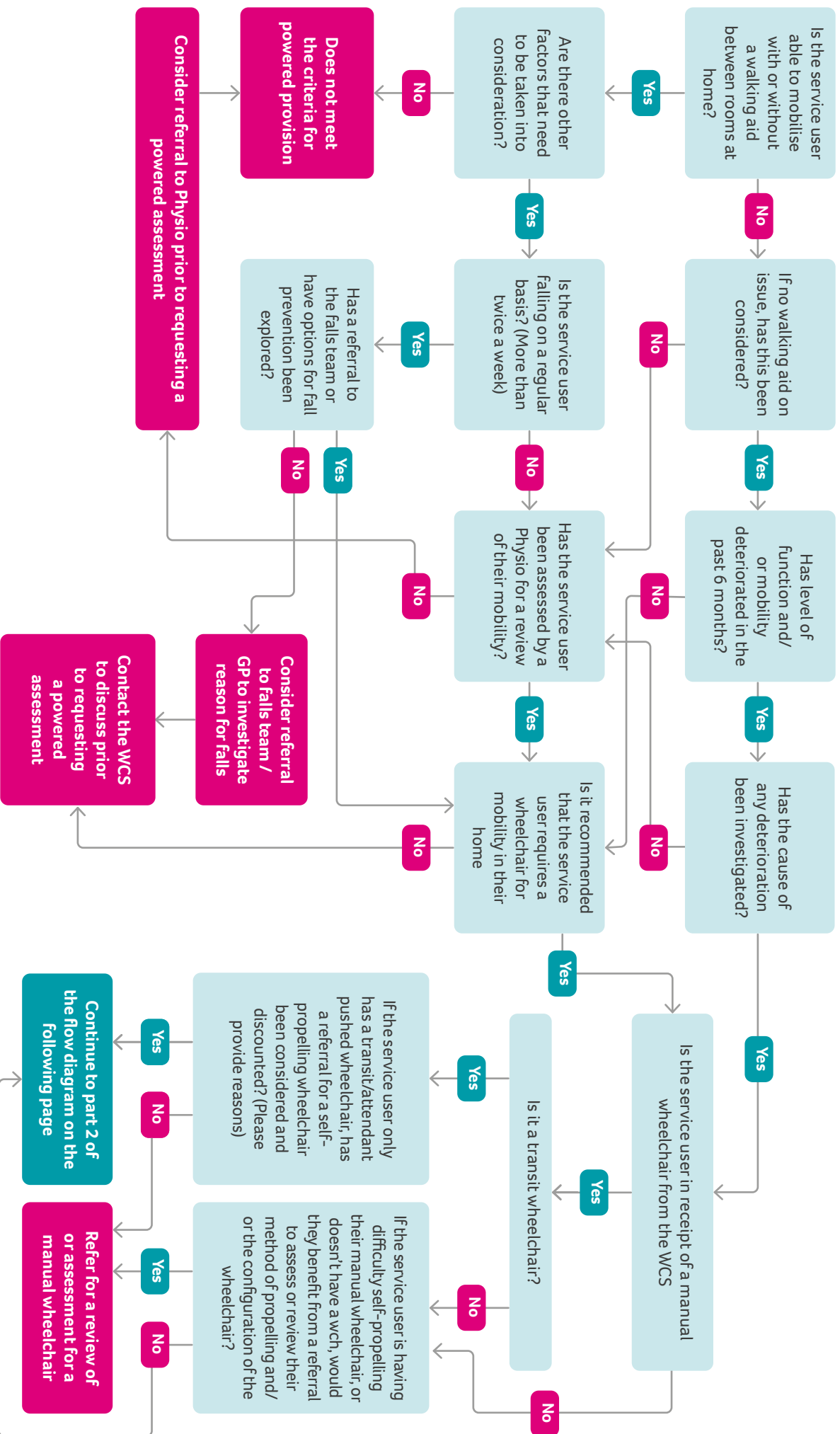
Dual operated electrically powered indoor/outdoor wheelchairs enable the service user to control the chair but there is a second joystick control mounted near the push handle for the carer to take control of the wheelchair.

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.

Powered referral guidance: flow diagram

Part 1



Powered referral guidance: flow diagram

