

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

## Information for Service Users

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SUR168



# 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: [www.surreywheelchairs.co.uk](http://www.surreywheelchairs.co.uk)

**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

You can be referred by a registered Healthcare Practitioner, this may be for example, an Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist or your GP.

## Why do I have to be referred by a Healthcare Practitioner?

There are many factors that need to be considered as part of an assessment for a 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.

**There may be times when the use of a powered wheelchair is indicated earlier but this should be decided between yourself, the Healthcare Practitioner 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 and identify the most appropriate intervention for you at the time. Often, during and after a period of illness, muscles can lose strength and you may need an intervention to restore function.

## 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. It is also important that you are assessed for a mobility aid by the most appropriate person.

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

Your needs for a wheelchair may change during your period of rehabilitation. During this time, your Therapists will keep in touch with the Wheelchair Service and will 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 and can be dangerous 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 use of a powered wheelchair.

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

It is best practice to consult with the Healthcare Practitioners who know you, 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.

## 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.

It may be appropriate for you to be seen by a Falls team. Please follow the link:

[www.cshsurrey.co.uk/our-services/service-adults/falls-service](http://www.cshsurrey.co.uk/our-services/service-adults/falls-service)

For more information on Falls prevention you can view the Surey Downs online guide: [surreydownshealthandcare.nhs.uk/falls-prevention-guide](http://surreydownshealthandcare.nhs.uk/falls-prevention-guide) or for further advice on Fall prevention from the NHS visit: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/falls/prevention](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/falls/prevention)



# 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?**

You may benefit from having a powered wheelchair to use outdoors, but the Wheelchair Service is not commissioned to provide powered wheelchairs for outdoor only use. You can find the eligibility criteria on our website.

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. It may be that you would benefit from a review of your manual wheelchair.

Many people do find that a powered wheelchair allows them to go further outside. We can offer signposting information about where you can purchase a powered wheelchair (see later in this guide). If you choose to purchase a powered wheelchair, we would always recommend that you seek advice from a Healthcare Practitioner 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](http://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 use your powered wheelchair safely, if possible.

In some circumstances, you may decide or we may decide with you that the continued use of a powered wheelchair is not appropriate. 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 independently. We will assess whether you are safe to use the powered wheelchair independently outside of your home as well as inside your home. If you are not safe driving outside, you should be assisted to use your manual wheelchair when outdoors.

## 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.surreywheelchairs.co.uk](http://www.surreywheelchairs.co.uk)



### 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](http://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

Scoters



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:**

#### Woking

Unit 2B, Kingswey Business Park, Forsyth Road, Woking, Surrey, GU21 5SA

**0330 124 8210**

**SurreyWCS@rosscare.co.uk**

#### Redhill

Unit 30, IO Centre, Salbrook Road Industrial Estate, Redhill Surrey, RH1 5DY

# 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](https://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](https://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](https://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](https://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](https://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk)

## SUR168 FAQ's for the provision of an NHS powered wheelchair

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