

Response to the Middlesbrough Health Scrutiny Panel
Review of Patient Transport Services

South Tees Hospitals NHS Trust Response to Panel's Questions

Q1: Following the clinical decision to discharge, what is the process for arranging Patient Transport Services?

A1.1: A planned discharge

Wards are able to book online with North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) or fax / telephone for Patient Transport Services (PTS) before 11.00am the day prior to discharge. Wards contacting Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) only have the ability to fax or telephone for PTS prior to 11.00am the day before discharge. Both YAS and NEAS operate a PTS service Monday to Friday. Therefore, if a booking is required on a Monday it will need to be booked the previous Friday before 11.00am.

A1.2 A same day discharge

Wards will try to book PTS by contacting NEAS or YAS depending on the patients' hospital site and destination. However, after a certain time if transport from the Ambulance Trust is unavailable, in order to minimise the disruption to patient flow an alternative form of transport will be sought. This is usually a taxi or private ambulance depending upon the patients' individual needs.

Q2: Who decides the appropriateness of the transport relating to each patients needs?

A2: Generally in most ward areas, the qualified nurse assigned to the patient during their hospitalisation will decide upon the appropriateness of the transport with medical staff advising where necessary.

Q3: How does the ward notify Social Care, where appropriate, of a patients' upcoming discharge?

A3: In most specialities the qualified nurse assigned to the patient will notify social services staff of the address the patient is a resident. In the larger specialties such as Acute Medicine and Surgery they have discharge coordinators that deal with complex discharges requiring a multi-disciplinary team approach. There is a Discharge Risk Assessment Tool that is used in some areas to identify specific patients' needs upon discharge. These are assessed in line with the new NSF for Continuing Health Care and discussed with primary care assessors, reporting to the CHC Manager, on a regular basis. Also Surgery and Medicine in particular, use the 'Notification form' to alert Social Services, on admission, to a patient requiring their services upon discharge. This form is completed by a qualified nurse as follows:

Section A&B to be completed by the qualified nurse and sent to social services to forewarn them of the needs of a patient upon discharge.

Section C: to be completed to inform Social Services they have 72hrs to respond and assess the patient for their needs upon discharge.

Section D: to be completed if Social Services do not respond within 72hrs. This is faxed over to the onsite Social Services offices, which triggers a charge of £100 a day for a delayed discharge.

Q4: What would be the most likely reasons for a delay in the patient getting transported, once a discharge has been made?

A4: The primary reasons for delay upon discharge vary in frequency from specialty to specialty but they are noted in order of most frequent reason as follows:

- 1) No ambulance availability due to 'same day discharge' request for transport
- 2) Ability for relatives/carers to make arrangements to collect patients once they have been informed of the 'same day discharge'
- 3) Limited service from the Ambulance Trust on a weekend
- 4) Vehicle is inappropriate to meet patients needs for transport, due to unclear insufficient information at time of request

Q5: Does the Trust commission any Patient Transport Services? If so, from whom?

A5: The Trust has block contracts with NEAS, YAS, NWCAS and MSNE.

- North East Ambulance Service – contracted to provide PTS from North Tyneside down to East Cleveland
- North East Ambulance Service – contracted to provide PTS to the Regional Spinal Injuries Centre
- Yorkshire Ambulance Service – contracted to provide PTS across North Yorkshire and the Hambleton & Richmond area.
- North West Cumbria Ambulance Service – contracted to provide PTS from North Cumbria
- Medical Services North East – contracted to provide PTS Monday to Friday 12.30pm – 7.30pm to support 'same day discharges' and cross boundary work.
- The Trust also has a contract with a local taxis firm which is accessed to transport patients on discharge where appropriate.

In relation to Outpatient appointments:

Q6: What advice is given regarding transport options when inviting people to outpatient appointments?

A6: Historically this information is contained in the letters sent out with appointment details. In relation to Patient Transport patients are usually requested to discuss their transport requirements with either their GP or through the PCT call centre depending on where they reside.

Appointment letters also include a patient information leaflet that informs patients of how they can apply for a reimbursement of transport costs through the Hospital Travel Scheme. Most Outpatient Departments have displayed information on local taxis or schemes such as the 'Door-to-door Transporter Service'.

Work by the Trusts recently appointed PTS Officer to establish a transport handbook in each area will support staff being able to offer more transport options. This work can be expanded to include a patient leaflet detailing transport options to hospital.

Q7: What is the process if a patient requires Patient Transport Services?

A7: An outpatient can have their transport arranged locally through the PCT Tees call centre for Teesside PCT locations. This is a new service that has been in operation since April 2007 and is currently under review. Outside of these areas the Ambulance Call Centre can be contacted directly or via their GP. This means there are times when the Trust often does not know a patient is using PTS transport until they arrive for their appointment.

Some outpatient areas such as Main Outpatients, arrange transport through the reception or secretarial staff at the request of their Consultant if the patient requires a follow up appointment. These journeys are usually planned for the follow up appointment date / time.

Glossary	
PTS	Patient Transport Services is defined by Ambulance Trusts as Non-Emergency transport.
NEAS	North East Ambulance NHS Service
YAS	Yorkshire Ambulance NHS Service
NWCAS	North West Cumbria Ambulance NHS Services
MSNE	Medical Services North East (Private)
Patient Flow	The patients pathway from admission to discharge
Discharge	When a patient is identified as well enough to leave the acute hospital setting to go home or into a community bed.
Same Day Discharge	When a patient requires transport home on the 'same day' as medical staff have decided to discharge the patient.
Frequency	Rate of recurrence
Speciality	Defined field or area of expertise such as Medicine, Surgery, Neurosciences, Cardiothoracic, Women & Children etc
Block Contracts	'X' number of journeys delivered in return for 'X' amount of money paid
Teesside PCT Locations	Middlesbrough, Stockton, Redcar & Cleveland, Hartlepool

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29-01-08