

About the consultation

From October 2018 NHS Kernow will commission one universal non-emergency patient transport service for patients in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. This will make it easier to make sure the needs of patients are being met:

- by improving the quality of services and ensuring they are better value for money;
- by introducing a single point of access for all types of non-emergency patient transport; and
- by ensuring patients access the right type of transport for their needs.

At the same time NHS Kernow is reviewing the policies which underpin these services, and assessing the needs of the population that use them. The policies and criteria for eligibility are outdated and vary in their application across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. This, combined with increasing year on year costs of providing NHS funded transport, means NHS Kernow must ensure that it is only providing services on the grounds of health or financial need where there is a mandatory requirement to do so.

From April 2017 NHS Kernow aims to have in place a new NHS funded transport policy which will clearly outline:

- the services available to patients;
- the eligibility criteria for the different services available; and
- how to access the services.

In this consultation we are asking for people's views on:

- changes to NHS funded transport policy;
- understanding the impact on patients of changes to NHS funded transport services available; and
- proposals to commission a new universal non-emergency patient transport service

In this document we explain what these changes may mean for patients that use NHS funded transport, either now or in the future.

Why do we want to make changes?

The service contract for the main non-emergency patient transport provider comes to an end in September 2018 and this gives NHS Kernow the opportunity to make improvements.

We recognise that NHS funded transport services in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are fragmented with no standardised service levels. As a result patients and healthcare professionals can find it confusing to understand which services are available and how to access them.

Non-emergency patient transport Consultation document

Kernow Clinical Commissioning Group

We buy healthcare on behalf of the local population of Cornwall and Isles of Scilly. The money for this comes from a fixed budget. By law, we are required to keep within this budget. Demand for healthcare is greater than can be funded from this fixed budget. Unfortunately, this means that some healthcare which patients might wish to receive and which professionals might wish to offer cannot be funded. This has always been the situation since the start of the NHS.

Our approach to this situation is to prioritise what we spend, so that the local population gets access to the healthcare that is most needed. This assessment of need is made across the whole population and, wherever possible, on the basis of best evidence about what works. We also aim to do this in a way that is fair, so that different people with equal need have equal opportunity to access services. This approach is not new. It is consistent with other NHS organisations who buy healthcare for their local populations.

One result of this kind of assessment is that NHS Kernow is reviewing the provision of NHS funded transport for patients. This will ensure we are funding services only where there is a clinical need or a mandatory requirement to do so. This means that, as a result of the assessment, some patients that may have previously been in receipt of NHS funded transport would no longer receive it.

It also means that, in cases such as the off island residents of the Isles of Scilly where we are not meeting mandatory requirements to fund transport, we will be able to do so in the future.

It is anticipated that the current costs of this service will be reduced by undertaking these changes, even after taking into account of meeting our mandatory requirements in respect of the residents of the Isles of Scilly.

What is NHS funded transport?

Patients travelling to receive NHS non-emergency healthcare are normally expected to make their own way using their own transport or the range of public, community or voluntary transport available locally. However, patients may be eligible for assistance on the grounds of either health need or financial need.

NHS funded transport for health need

NHS funded non-emergency patient transport services are available to patients who are unable to travel on private or public transport due to a health need. This service mainly helps patients who are accessing healthcare services, being transferred between healthcare services or being returned back to their place of residence having received healthcare services. The healthcare must be NHS funded in order to be eligible for non-emergency patient transport. Non-emergency patient transport services are available free of charge to eligible patients.

NHS funded transport for financial need

Patients that do not have a health need but are on a low income, or in receipt of certain benefits, may be able to claim a refund of reasonable travel costs under the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme if they are referred to hospital or other NHS premises for NHS specialist treatment or diagnostic tests. Patients are expected to use the cheapest suitable mode of transport for their circumstances.

Both forms of assistance allow for an escort or carer to travel with the patient, where it is deemed medically necessary for someone to travel with them.

What is not included in this consultation?

We are **not** seeking views on:

- transport for patients requiring urgent or emergency (999) services; or
- urgent and emergency helicopter transport

What NHS funded transport services look like now

NHS Kernow buys non-emergency patient transport services which are used by patients to access healthcare in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and include:

- non-emergency ambulances;
- car transport;
- high dependency ambulances; and
- specialist mental health transport.

Some of these services are bought directly by NHS Kernow and some are bought by our healthcare providers. This means that there are different contracts and standards in place depending on where a patient is travelling and the kind of service they require, rather than one universal service for all patients. It also means that services cost each of the healthcare providers a different amount of money.

In addition to the above NHS Kernow also funds a number of other services. Some of these are mandatory, which means the Department of Health or NHS England say we have to provide them, and some of them are discretionary, which means we have chosen to provide them.

Mandatory services

- Non-Emergency Patient Transport
- Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme-the refund of patients travel costs, where the patient meets qualifying benefit or low income criteria.
- Isles of Scilly travel- as part of the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme the residents of the Isles of Scilly only have to pay £5 to travel to the mainland for their NHS treatment. We currently book and pay for patients to travel by air or sea from St Mary's to the mainland. We are not currently meeting the requirement to pay for residents of the 'off islands' to travel to St Mary's to catch their connecting transport to the mainland.

Discretionary Services

- Assistance to patients that do not meet the criteria for non-emergency patient transport or the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme. These are known as discretionary payments and may cover travel or accommodation costs. Many arrangements have been on-going for a number of years without review.
- Patients who have frequent travel requirements: Car transport for patients travelling three or more times a week for a sustained course of treatment, such as renal dialysis or radiotherapy.
- Patients who have no alternative transport: Subsidised voluntary car services for patients that do not meet medical or health eligibility criteria and do not have their own means of travelling to healthcare appointments. This transport is provided by TAP (Age UK). Patients currently pay a maximum of £20 each way for their travel and NHS Kernow pays the remainder of the fare.

What would the changes mean?

NHS Kernow is seeking people's views on:

- changes to NHS funded transport policy;
- understanding the impact on patients of changes to NHS funded transport services available; and
- proposals to commission a new universal non-emergency patient transport service

Service	What are we consulting on?	What the changes could mean
<p>Non-emergency patient transport services NHS Kernow buys non-emergency patient transport services which are used by patients to access healthcare in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, these services are for patients with a health need and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-emergency ambulances; • car transport; • high dependency ambulances; and • specialist mental health transport. <p>From October 2018 NHS Kernow will commission one universal non-emergency patient transport service for patients in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. This will make it easier to make sure the needs of patients are being met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by improving the quality of services and ensuring they are better value for money; • by introducing a single point of access for all types of non-emergency patient transport; and • by ensuring patients access the right type of transport for their needs. 	<p>NHS Kernow is seeking views on proposals change eligibility criteria to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that the eligibility criteria are universally applied to patients accessing all NHS healthcare services. Only eligible patients should be receiving free NHS transport. This means making sure that those patients who are able to travel by private or public transport for day to day living also do so when attending healthcare appointments. We are consulting on proposed eligibility criteria which will mean that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ patient eligibility will always be checked, and will be the same regardless of which healthcare provider a patient is travelling to; ○ those patients whose health needs mean they are able to travel by public or private transport, do so. <p>NHS Kernow would also like to understand the public's views on service standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how long patients receiving free NHS funded transport are prepared to wait at their healthcare provider if their transport gets them there early for their appointment; • how long patients receiving free NHS funded transport are prepared to wait at their healthcare provider after their appointment for their transport; • how much time patients are prepared to spend on their transport when travelling to and from their healthcare; • how patients like to be kept informed about their transport booking and when their transport is arriving to collect them; and • when and how patients should be able to make bookings for NHS funded transport. 	<p>The changes to eligibility criteria will mainly affect patients in the 'walking' category. This means a patient whose health needs mean that they can travel in a private car (e.g. a relative, friends or neighbour's car) or on public transport (e.g. a bus, train, volunteer car service or taxi) these patients will not qualify in the future for patient transport.</p> <p>Patients meeting the medical eligibility criteria for non-emergency patient transport or the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme would continue to be able to access assistance through these routes.</p> <p>Public and patients responses to the questions posed in our questionnaire will help to shape the flexibility in service delivery i.e. spending longer on transport or waiting longer for allowing us to deliver more cost effective services.</p>

Service	What are we consulting on?	What the changes could mean
<p>Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme Patients that do not have a health need but are on a low income, or in receipt of certain benefits, may be able to claim a refund of reasonable travel costs under the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme if they are referred to hospital or other NHS premises for NHS specialist treatment or diagnostic tests. Patients are expected to use the cheapest suitable mode of transport for their circumstances.</p>	<p>Not Applicable</p>	<p>NHS Kernow is not proposing any changes to the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme. This is a mandatory requirement and will continue to be available to eligible patients.</p> <p>Patients meeting the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme would continue to be able to access assistance through these routes.</p>
<p>Isles of Scilly travel NHS Kernow funds transport, either by boat or aeroplane, for residents of the Isles of Scilly travelling from St Mary's to the mainland for treatment. Residents make a £5 contribution towards the cost of their travel. Transport is booked for patients by St Mary's Hospital and by Royal Cornwall Hospital NHS Trust. Patients are able to choose whether to fly or take the boat. Flights operate year round and the boat operates from April-October. The cost of a flight to the NHS is twice that of the cost of the boat.</p> <p>Many patients travelling from St Mary's to the mainland stay for more than one day to allow for travel time.</p>	<p>NHS Kernow is seeking views on proposals to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> only fund transport by boat to the mainland for patients travelling to the mainland and back in more than one day, during the period that the boat operates. Patients choosing to fly would be expected to pay the difference between the cost of the boat and the cost of the flight. Patients travelling over to the mainland and back in one day would automatically qualify for NHS funded transport by flight, all year round. Outside of the period that the boat operates all patients would continue to qualify for flights; only fund flights to Lands' End; patients choosing to fly to Newquay would be expected to pay the difference between the cost of the flight to Lands' End and the cost of the flight to Newquay; and cease funding the shuttle bus service provided by SkyBus for patients travelling from Lands' End to Penzance. 	<p>Residents of the Off islands would be reimbursed for the cost of their travel to and from St Mary's, when travelling onwards to the mainland for NHS funded healthcare.</p> <p>Patients travelling from the Isles of Scilly to the mainland for NHS funded healthcare will continue to receive NHS funded transport but the choice of transport and destination may be limited. Alongside this, there is work looking at reducing the need to travel to the mainland for some routine healthcare.</p> <p>Patients meeting the medical eligibility criteria for non-emergency patient transport or the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme would continue to be able to access assistance through these routes.</p>
<p>Discretionary payments NHS funded transport services should be available to patients based on health or financial need as determined by Department of Health and NHS England criteria. NHS Kernow should not fund transport where there is a social need (e.g. because a patient does not have their own car). In addition to this the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme does not include the reimbursement of accommodation costs.</p>	<p>NHS Kernow is seeking views on proposals to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> stop making discretionary payments for transport to patients from 1st April 2017. This will include the reimbursement of travel and accommodation expenses and the provision of NHS funded car transport (also known as TAP cars provided by Age UK) for patients that do not meet eligibility criteria for NHS funded non-emergency patient transport services or the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme. 	<p>This means patients who have in the past received, or would currently receive, discretionary payments would cease to do so.</p> <p>These patients would have their individual cases reviewed by a clinical panel at NHS Kernow to assess the impact of these changes and identify alternative options for accessing their healthcare where appropriate.</p> <p>Patients meeting the medical eligibility criteria for non-emergency patient transport or the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme would continue to be able to access assistance through these routes.</p>

Service	What are we consulting on?	What the changes could mean
<p>Frequent travellers</p> <p>NHS Kernow funds transport, usually by TAP car, for patients attending hospital at least three times a week for a sustained course of treatment. The only exceptions to this are patients who travel to Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust for frequent treatment, who have to make a contribution towards the cost of their travel. The majority of patients receiving this service are renal and cancer patients. There are no medical or financial needs assessment made to receive this transport, the only criteria is frequency of travel to receive treatment.</p>	<p>NHS Kernow is consulting on several options for the future of this service and is seeking views on proposals to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continue to provide the frequent traveller service free of charge and remove the charge to patients travelling to Plymouth Hospital NHS Trust; or • continue to provide the frequent traveller service free of charge but on a means tested basis; or • move to providing a service that requires all frequently travelling patients to contribute to costs; • move to providing a service that requires all frequently travelling patients to pay all the cost of the service; or • stop funding all frequent traveller transport for all patients. 	<p>This means that some or all patients who would qualify for NHS funded transport as a frequent traveller would no longer be eligible.</p> <p>These patients would have their individual cases reviewed by a clinical panel at NHS Kernow to assess the impact of these changes and identify alternative options for accessing their healthcare where appropriate.</p> <p>Frequent travellers meeting the medical eligibility criteria for NHS funded non-emergency patient transport or the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme would not be affected by these changes.</p>
<p>Subsidised voluntary cars</p> <p>NHS Kernow funds car services for patients that do not meet medical or health eligibility criteria and do not have their own means of travelling to healthcare appointments. This transport is provided by TAP (Age UK). Patients currently pay a maximum of £20 each way for their travel and NHS Kernow pays the remainder of the fare.</p>	<p>NHS Kernow is seeking views on proposals to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stop subsidising voluntary car services journeys for patients attending NHS funded healthcare. 	<p>This means that patients using voluntary car services that do not meet the eligibility criteria for NHS funded non-emergency patient transport services or the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme would be expected to meet the full cost of the transport to their NHS funded healthcare.</p> <p>Patients meeting the medical eligibility criteria for non-emergency patient transport or the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme would continue to be able to access assistance through these routes.</p>

What we are consulting and engaging on

We are running a twelve week public consultation and engagement to seek views on:

- the service levels patients expect from a universal NHS funded non-emergency patient transport service;
- changes to eligibility criteria for NHS funded non-emergency patient transport; and
- changes to NHS funded Isles of Scilly travel, discretionary payments, frequent travellers and subsidised voluntary car services.

We would like you to complete a questionnaire to help us understand your views. This information will enable us to review our plans and to shape them based on what you tell us. The public engagement will run from 12 December 2016 to 6 March 2017.

How to respond

You can take part in the online survey or download a hard copy, which you can return to us freepost here:

www.kernowccg.nhs.uk/get-involved/consultation/non-emergency-patient-transport/

If you would like us to send you a copy of the survey, please email kccg.engagement@nhs.net or you can write to us at:

NHS Kernow
NEPTS
Sedgemoor Centre
Priory Road
St Austell
PL25 5AS

In addition to the questionnaire there will be a number of engagement sessions around Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly where you will be able to meet the clinicians and managers responsible for undertaking the change. You will have the opportunity to ask questions and get further clarity on the changes. These events will be publicised on the home page of our website (www.kernowccg.nhs.uk).

If you are a member of a patient group, or a group with an interest in health, you can ask for someone to attend one of your meetings to talk about the engagement, provided that the meeting is taking place during the period of engagement. We cannot guarantee to meet every request, but we will do our best to accommodate any received.