

July 2012 – Factsheet 13



Transport to Hospital

Introduction

We have received many calls since October last year from people who have found that they can no longer get free transport to hospital for routine appointments. There have been some changes in the way that transport is arranged and in this factsheet we will be explaining these, as well as covering other options available to transport you to hospital, and help with paying for them.



Non Emergency Patient Transport Services (NEPTS)

There has always been criteria (based on clinical need) covering which patients can get non emergency transport to local hospitals. Patients usually requested this from their GP surgery and the criteria was not strictly followed. NHS Suffolk reviewed the way transport was requested from September 2011 and a patient transport booking line was set up, with patients being required to ring this line (08458 500 774) if they wanted transport to either Ipswich, West Suffolk, James Paget, Norfolk and Norwich, Addenbrookes or Papworth Hospitals. Patients living in the Waveney area (which is covered by NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney) should ring a separate number (01493 453777) if they need to book hospital transport.

Patients who request non emergency transport will find they are asked a series of questions on their medical needs when they ring to book. The criteria which set down who can qualify for non emergency transport, are rigidly enforced by the transport booking line staff, and this has led to disappointment, frustration and worry for patients who have been told they do not qualify. Alternative transport arrangements can be both difficult and costly to arrange, and Age UK Suffolk is concerned that patients may be missing important appointments because of this.

Before telephoning the transport booking line

Make sure you have the following to hand..

- Your NHS number.
- Name and address of your GP practice
- Details of your appointment at the hospital clinic.
- Questions about any difficulties with mobility will be asked so, if it helps, make a list of all the issues you might need to mention before you phone.

If you are refused transport what should you do?

Ring the transport line again and ask for a re-assessment of your request. This will be dealt with by a booking line team leader, who will listen to the information given and re-consider your request. If you are still refused, the

reasons will be explained to you. If you still feel unhappy with the decision you should speak to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

The PALS number for people living in the Waveney area is 0800 587 4132

The PALS number for people living in the rest of Suffolk is 0800 389 6819.

If you feel it will be impossible to keep the hospital appointment without transport being provided, you may also want to speak to your GP or Practice Nurse, BUT first consider the other transport options suggested below.

What other ways are there to get to hospital?



There are a number of community transport services available in Suffolk such as Community Car Services, DialARide, and good neighbour schemes.

Community Car Services involve volunteers driving their own cars on a non-profit-making basis to help you make essential journeys. You pay a contribution based on how much mileage the volunteer undertakes on the journey. You also pay the hospital car parking costs. Community Car Services are offered over much of Suffolk but are dependent on drivers being available. It helps if customers can give as much notice as possible. Ring Age UK Suffolk for details or look on the Suffolk On Board website (see page 4).

Dial A Ride is a local door-to-door transport service, using easy access minibuses, which are fully accessible to wheelchair users. These services are run by voluntary organisations and funded by Suffolk Community Transport. Normally a passenger joins Dial A Ride as a member and can then book journeys in advance (normally 7-10 days advance notice is required) and these are allocated on a first call, first served basis. Journeys are normally undertaken within a 10 mile radius of where the Dial A Ride scheme is based. The fare is much the same as ordinary bus services. Ring Age UK Suffolk for details of Dial A Ride services or look on the Suffolk On Board website. (see page 4).

In some villages in Suffolk there are Good Neighbour Schemes, and a “Good Neighbour” volunteer registered with the scheme may be able to provide transport to hospital. Each individual scheme has its own helpline number for requesting a lift or other service. You will pay for the mileage covered as well as parking at the hospital. Details of Good Neighbour schemes are available from Suffolk ACRE (see page 4)

On all of the community transport services mentioned above a friend or assistant may be able to travel with you. These services may also help you with transport to appointments at your doctor, dentist, chiropodist or local clinic.

If you have regular support from a home help agency or company, they MAY be able to provide transport to hospital. You may be required to pay for the home help's time as well as the mileage covered and parking.

Hospital Rides is a car sharing scheme which aims to match together people who need transport with people who are driving to hospital. This can be

arranged via their website www.hospitalrides.co.uk. Hospital Rides is an unregulated scheme, so passengers should bear in mind that the drivers offering lifts will not be CRB checked, and the vehicles being used will also not have been checked.

Is there any help with the cost of travel to hospital?

Suffolk residents who are either over the state retirement age or cannot benefit from free bus travel because of disability, can apply for Travel Vouchers that can be used towards their use of community transport, taxis or private hire vehicles. The value of these vouchers is £50 per year and you can apply by ringing 0845 600 0659. NOTE that you cannot apply for vouchers if you already have a Free Travel Bus Pass. (Good Neighbour Schemes do not normally accept travel vouchers).



If you are on Pension Guarantee Credit you are entitled to claim your necessary travel costs to receive NHS treatment whilst under the care of a consultant, or, in some cases, following a referral for tests by a GP or dentist.

You should be able to submit your claim for the cost of transport and be reimbursed in cash on the day of your appointment. (You are expected to use the cheapest means of transport available bearing in mind the journey you need to make, your age, medical condition and any other relevant factors). Taxi fares are not normally re-imbursed.

Always raise any questions about your journey with the hospital before you travel. Contact details for the relevant department at local hospitals are as follows:-

Hospital	Tel number	Location in hospital
Ipswich Hospital	01473 712 233	South Finance Office (opposite children's ward and Bramford ward Use South Entrance (No6))
James Paget Hospital, Gorleston	01493 452 452	Patient Travel Office in main reception area (opposite League of Friends shop)
West Suffolk Hospital	01284 713 000	Ask staff member or volunteer in main reception to show you the location of the General Office
Addenbrookes, Cambridge	01223 245 151	Outpatients reception
Papworth Hospital	01480 830 541	Car Parking & Patient Travel office in main reception.
Norfolk & Norwich Hospital	01603 286 286	Patient Services Office hatch in East Block, on Level 2.



You will need to take with you to the hospital office

- A letter from the Department of Work and Pensions, showing what benefits you are receiving. People of pensionable age **must** be on **Guaranteed** Pension Credit – and it must say this on the letter. The letter should be dated within the last year.
- Appointment letter/card
- Car parking ticket and/or bus/train ticket.

If you are not on Guaranteed Pension Credit but your income is low, and your savings are less than £16,000, you can apply for help with travel costs to hospital under the NHS Low Income Scheme. It is necessary to complete an HC1 application form. To obtain this form ring 0845 850 1166. If you have nobody to help you fill the form in, contact Age UK Suffolk's Benefits Advice Service for assistance (see page 4).

Useful contacts from this factsheet



NEPTS (Non Emergency Patient Transport Service)

Helpline for Suffolk 08458 500 774

Helpline for transport to James Paget Hospital 01493 453777

PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service)

Suffolk 0800 389 6819

Waveney area 0800 587 4132

Suffolk On board website and helpline www.suffolkonboard.com

Helpline 0845 606 6171

Suffolk ACRE (for details of Good Neighbour Schemes) 01473 345 300

Suffolk Travel Line (to apply for travel vouchers) 0845 600 0659

WRVS Community Car Services in Suffolk 01473 744 739

Age UK Suffolk

Information Help Centres

Ipswich 01473 257 039

Lowestoft 01502 586 308

Bury St Edmunds 01284 757 750

Benefits Advice Service 01449 674 222

Ends 1 June 2012 Age UK Suffolk Information Services.

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