

Dedicated end of life transport

Dear colleague,

A dedicated transport service was launched on the 5th October for patients who are imminently dying and will be available until 31 March 2016.

More information about the service is detailed below. I have also attached a copy of the booking process for ease. Please feel free to forward this email on to anyone who you think may need to book this service in future.

Lessons learnt from last year have helped inform this year's service and three dedicated vehicles – one for each North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) operational division – have been put in place, with crew available seven days a week, including Bank Holidays.

NEAS has entered into a contractual arrangement with St John Ambulance Service to provide this resource.

The vehicles are equipped to transport patients at the end of life comfortably and efficiently and they will be manned by an emergency care technician-led crew who have undergone palliative care training.

As well as supporting the discharge of patients at the end of life, the service will also serve end of life patients with complex needs who require admission to a hospital or hospice for symptom management.

The scheme will be closely monitored on a weekly basis to ensure vehicles are in the right place at the right time.

Operating times for the three vehicles will be staggered and they will operate as follows:

- Vehicle sign PALN1 – 10am-6pm; NEAS North Division (Northumberland, Newcastle, North Tyneside)
- Vehicle sign PALC2 – 9am-5pm; NEAS Central Division (South Tyneside, Gateshead, Sunderland and North Durham)
- Vehicle sign PALS3 – 11am-7pm; NEAS South Division (Durham Dales, Darlington, Hartlepool & Stockton and South Tees).

We will aim to provide a vehicle within one hour of booking where possible but if this response is not met, a NEAS call handler will contact the person who placed the booking with an explanation and an updated expected time of collection.

Requests will be prioritised according to patient type and need.

Making a booking

Referrals which meet the criteria outlined below can be made by any health or social care professional.

- The patient resides in and requires transport within the NEAS operational area.

- The patient has a valid and current DNACPR order, where appropriate, with the original copy available for the transport crew. Note: the patient will not be refused transport because the DNA CPR order is either not in place or invalid.
- The patient is near the end of life and is being transferred to their preferred place of care.
- The patient is an end of life patients with complex needs who requires admission to a hospital or hospice for symptom management.

If a referral is deemed to be inappropriate, an explanation will be given and the caller will be redirected to the appropriate service.

Requests for transporting patients to a care setting for treatment or investigation and to be returned back to their home/hospice/hospital do not meet these referral criteria for this service. Referrers making such requests should be signposted to the relevant booking procedure for the Patient Transport Service in the CCG area the patient resides in.

Referrals should be made by ringing the 'Urgent' line on 0191 414 3144. Referrals should only be made when the patient is ready to travel. This is not a dedicated helpline for end of life/palliative care transport requests so please clearly state you are requesting 'palliative care transport'. If your call is not answered immediately, please remain on the line as the call handlers will be aware of your call.

Bookings can ONLY be taken between 8.30am and 5pm, however the booking line will be available 24 hours a day to receive any cancellations.

Requests for transport received by the booking line outside of the operational hours of the dedicated vehicles, and which cannot wait until the dedicated vehicles next become available, should be managed by following the 'urgent' call booking and handling processes, utilising the trust's core emergency care vehicles when the palliative care dedicated transport is not in operation. These requests will be managed as 'urgent' requests and prioritised as a 1, 2 or 4 hour response.

The last booking for same day transport must be made by 5pm.

If you are booking on behalf of a bariatric patient or a patient with an active infection such as C Diff, this must be clearly stated at the time of booking.

For more information about this service, please contact me on Andrew.Airlie@neas.nhs.uk.