

# Frequently Asked Questions – Devon

## For patients May 2016

### Contents

1. What help is available for me to get to hospital appointments? .....	3
2. What is Non-Emergency Patient Transport (NEPTS)? .....	3
2.1 What is non- emergency patient transport (NEPTS)?.....	3
2.2 What training do NEPTS staff have?.....	3
2.3 Who pays for NEPTS? .....	3
2.4 Who provides the NEPTS Service in Devon?.....	3
2.5 Do patients have to pay for NEPTS? .....	4
3. Making a booking – Patient Transport Advice Service (PTAS) .....	4
3.1 What is new? .....	4
3.2 Who else can help? Community Transport Contact Points.....	4
3.3 When should I book? .....	4
3.4 Can I book NEPTS to go to my GP appointment?.....	5
3.5 Do they go everywhere NHS appointments are held?.....	5
3.6 Can I bring a family escort with me? .....	5
3.7 Can I ask for a female only or male only crew? .....	5
3.8 Can my doctor get me a booking for NEPTS?.....	5
3.9 Will all patients be able to insist on travelling alone, and not share with other patients?.....	5
3.10 Can patients book NEPTS if they can't afford to pay for another option?.....	6
3.11 How do patients get home, if they came in to hospital with an emergency ambulance?.....	6
4. Who can have NEPTS? .....	6
4.1 Who can have NEPTS? .....	6
4.2 What are the criteria?.....	6
4.3 Who will decide who gets NEPTS? Are they clinically trained to decide? .....	7
4.4 If I have been assessed once, will I always be eligible? .....	7
4.5 If a patient lives in a nursing home, will they get NEPTS?.....	7
4.6 Will patients receiving CHC funding always get NEPTS?.....	7
4.7 Will a patient who is in “hospital at home” always need NEPTS? .....	7

5. Additional help for frequent attenders.....	7
5.1 What is a frequent attender?.....	7
5.2 Why do they get extra help? .....	7
5.3 Can they choose to travel independently? .....	7
5.4 Who books their journeys?.....	8
5.5 Is it the same service? .....	8
5.6 If I am too unwell to travel by car, what happens?.....	8
6. Problems and changes .....	8
6.1 How will the patient at home know that transport is running late? .....	8
6.2 How do patients notify the transport if they don't want to travel? .....	8
6.3 What happens if I'm not ready when the transport arrives to collect me? .....	8
6.4 How do I make changes to bookings?.....	9
6.5 Can patients contact the transport service direct?.....	9
6.6 Do patients get told what service has been booked for them? .....	9
6.7 What type of vehicle will be provided? .....	9
6.8 How do patients raise concerns or complaints? .....	9
6.9 How can patients give positive or negative feedback? .....	9
7. Long distance journeys .....	9
7.1 What if I am travelling to another county/area outside Devon?.....	9
7.2 What does in area mean? .....	10
7.3 What does out of area mean? .....	10
7.4 Are the bookings made in the same way?.....	10
7.5 Why do patients and staff have to give notice of journeys needed out of area? ....	10
7.6 Will a journey still be free to the patient?.....	10
7.7 What service will this be booked with? .....	10
8. How do patients get help with travel costs to attend NHS appointments? .....	10

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## 1. What help is available for me to get to hospital appointments?

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Patients are encouraged to make their own way to NHS appointments wherever possible. If they are too unwell to travel by car, taxi, public transport or community transport, they can contact the new Devon **Patient Transport Advice Service (PTAS)** to be assessed to see if there are eligible for **Non-Emergency Patient Transport (NEPTS)**.

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## 2. What is Non-Emergency Patient Transport (NEPTS)?

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### 2.1 What is non-emergency patient transport (NEPTS)?

It is a transport service for patients who currently can't travel safely any other way to NHS secondary-care appointments, admissions or discharges. Journeys to GPs, dentists or opticians or their practice staff are not included. NEPTS vehicles deliver pre-planned journeys e.g. outpatient appointments, and non-urgent on the day journeys e.g. discharges not planned in advance, where there are clinical reasons the patient can't travel by everyday means.

### 2.2 What training do NEPTS staff have?

NEPTS staff are known as Ambulance Care Assistants (ACAs). ACAs are trained in basic manual handling and also trained in basic lifesaving. They are trained to use all of the equipment that is carried on a NEPTS ambulance.

### 2.3 Who pays for NEPTS?

The local NHS Clinical Commissioning Group pays for this transport for any patient registered with a local GP who is eligible for NEPTS transport

### 2.4 Who provides the NEPTS Service in Devon?

NEPTS in Devon is provided mainly by three transport providers:

**First Care Ambulance (FCA)** provides journeys for patients who live in Devon and are registered with NEW Devon CCG GP practices – new from 29.5.16.

**ERS Medical** provides all journeys for Plymouth residents and those to any service in Plymouth or provided by Derriford hospital staff.

**South Devon Healthcare Patient Transport** provides journeys for patients registered with SDTCCG GP practices and within the South Devon area.

These providers have contracts to move all eligible patients to any NHS secondary care venue required. Each provider has a contract which specifies exactly what is included over what hours. All patients are covered by one of the providers.

Additionally in Devon and Plymouth, other local providers are contracted to provide other appropriate journeys and booked by the central booking service.

## 2.5 Do patients have to pay for NEPTS?

No.

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## 3. Making a booking – Patient Transport Advice Service (PTAS)

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### 3.1 What is new?

From June 2016, there is a new central booking service **for patients registered with a GP in NEW Devon CCG** known as the Patient Transport Advice Service (PTAS). PTAS will take all **NEPTS** bookings – from patients or staff from 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday (except bank holidays).

**PTAS 0345 155 1009**

The existing booking services in Plymouth and Torbay and South Devon continue as before.

**Plymouth ring 01752 431954**

**Torbay, Teignbridge and South Devon ring 01803 656777**

### 3.2 Who else can help? Community Transport Contact Points

From 29.5.16 local Community Transport Contact Points are able to advise patients on alternative transportation for patients not eligible for NEPTS. They are experts on local community transport groups in your area, who are there to assist local people to get to services and social activities with some support.

01404 465 290	Exeter and East Devon
01271 314332	North Devon and Torrington
01884 242 099	Mid Devon
0845 053 9100	Plymouth
01822 617 525	West Devon and South Hams

### 3.3 When should I book?

You are encouraged to book 2 weeks to 48 hours ahead of your appointment and make sure to update your booking if your appointment changes.

### **3.4 Can I book NEPTS to go to my GP appointment?**

No. The national regulations do not allow non-emergency patient transport services to take patients to primary care i.e. GP, dentist, optician or pharmacist or any appointment provided by the practice staff.

### **3.5 Do they go everywhere NHS appointments are held?**

NEPTS can go to any other secondary-care service funded by the NHS, whatever premises are being used.

### **3.6 Can I bring a family escort with me?**

A patient can bring an escort with them on NEPTS in limited circumstances – if the patient is a child under 16, or with confirmation from a clinician that this is necessary. Circumstances could include that the patient has dementia, needs reassurance or needs an interpreter. An escort on a vehicle needs to be fulfilling a role on the vehicle to travel on the vehicle.

Otherwise friends and relatives can arrange to meet the patient at hospital to give them support during treatment or appointments.

### **3.7 Can I ask for a female only or male only crew?**

In some clinical circumstances, where this is warranted, this may be possible. Advance planning will be needed so bookings must be made at least 48 hours ahead and you will have to provide information to support the request. If clinical staff who understand your reasons are available, it will be helpful for them to assist you when you book.

### **3.8 Can my doctor get me a booking for NEPTS?**

Patients are asked to make their own bookings for out-patient appointments or admissions. Staff at hospitals will help with booking transport at discharge from hospital.

NHS staff can request NEPTS for a patient as long as the patient meets appropriate criteria. A clinician's knowledge of the patient's medical issues will always be of help should a decision prove difficult.

### **3.9 Will all patients be able to insist on travelling alone, and not share with other patients?**

No. NEPTS vehicles are designed to carry more than one patient at a time. However, in very limited circumstances, it may be clinically appropriate for a patient to travel alone. These circumstances would include, but not be limited to, having an infectious condition or having MRSA in an open area or wound or where it would be unsafe in another way for a patient to share with others.

Patients who want to travel alone will be advised to make their own arrangements.

### 3.10 Can patients book NEPTS if they can't afford to pay for another option?

No, patient transport is only available to those for whom it would not be safe or clinically suitable to travel by private or public transport. It is not about affordability. Patients should plan ahead to book and afford transport, be supported by providers to reclaim their costs if eligible or ask providers for advance costs help to attend.

See Q8 "how to reclaim patient travel costs".

### 3.11 How do patients get home, if they came in to hospital with an emergency ambulance?

It is the patient's responsibility to ask family or friends to collect them. If they are assessed by hospital staff as being eligible for NEPTS, discharge staff should follow their organisation instructions for booking NEPTS.

## 4. Who can have NEPTS?

### 4.1 Who can have NEPTS?

Patients are eligible when they meet the clinical criteria for help at the time of booking and journey. This does not include social or financial reasons for transport (such as being unable to afford a journey or not having access to a bus or car).

### 4.2 What are the criteria?

Eligible patients are those who:

- Have a current medical condition such that they require the skill or support of Patient Transport Services staff on/after the journey and/or where it would be detrimental to the patient's condition or recovery if they were to travel by other means;
  - Journey will be detrimental to health
  - For patients who may harm themselves, or have an infectious wound condition
  - For patients whose condition may cause harm to others
  - For patients who need to be monitored and / or treated during the course of the journey.
    - For example, a patient requiring medication every four hours may not be eligible for medical patient transport if they were travelling from Bideford to Exeter but would be eligible if they were travelling from Bideford to Manchester.
- Have a medical condition that currently impacts on their mobility to such an extent that they would be unable to access healthcare and/or it would be detrimental to the patient's condition or recovery to travel by other means.
  - For patients who will need substantial assistance/support to move from their bed/chair at pick up point to vehicle and from vehicle to destination.
- Are the recognised parent or guardian where children (up to the age of 16) are being transported in accordance with the preceding bullet points.

- Have a mental incapacity, learning disability or mental health condition, which makes using private or public transport unsuitable.

#### **4.3 Who will decide who gets NEPTS? Are they clinically trained to decide?**

Staff at the 3 booking services in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay and South Devon will make the assessments, using the same criteria each time. These staff will use a standard protocol to check the patient's needs, whether they can safely use other forms of transport and any immediate circumstances which have to be taken into account. They do not base their decisions on a given diagnosis but on a patient's need for support and access to help.

#### **4.4 If I have been assessed once, will I always be eligible?**

No, each time a patient makes a booking their eligibility will be reassessed to take into account changing circumstances and clinical needs.

#### **4.5 If a patient lives in a nursing home, will they get NEPTS?**

Some homes have their own transport and can transport their residents themselves. Otherwise any patient will need to contact PTAS to see if they are eligible for NEPTS, or make other arrangements.

#### **4.6 Will patients receiving CHC funding always get NEPTS?**

No, they will be assessed when they request a booking.

#### **4.7 Will a patient who is in "hospital at home" always need NEPTS?**

No, they will be assessed in the same way as other bookings for medical need.

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## 5. Additional help for frequent attenders

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### **5.1 What is a frequent attender?**

Any patient who has to attend hospital at least 3 times a week or ten times a month for treatment for the same medical condition.

### **5.2 Why do they get extra help?**

They are offered an extra service provided locally which recognises that quite often the treatment and the repetitive nature of the treatment they are receiving means patients can feel very unwell and significantly less able to travel by other means.

### **5.3 Can they choose to travel independently?**

Yes, it will be up to them to decide if they wish to use NHS provided transport or to travel independently.

#### **5.4 Who books their journeys?**

Staff at the treatment unit where patients are attending will deal with bookings and amendments for regular journeys. Where additional journeys to other linked services are needed, patients in Devon can book directly by ringing the PTAS on 0345 155 1009, in Plymouth ring 01752 431954

or in Torbay and south Devon ring 01803 656 777

#### **5.5 Is it the same service?**

No, this service is not provided by a NEPTS company. It will be a car service from an approved local provider where the driver will collect them, and possibly other patients (solo journeys are not routinely provided), take them to hospital and collect them after the appointment for the return journey. All bookings by staff or patients are made through PTAS.

#### **5.6 If I am too unwell to travel by car, what happens?**

Tell staff at your treatment unit and they can book non-emergency patient transport if you now need more support than a car driver can provide.

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### 6. Problems and changes

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#### **6.1 How will the patient at home know that transport is running late?**

Your transport provider will be responsible for keeping patients and/or hospital departments informed if they are running late.

#### **6.2 How do patients notify the transport if they don't want to travel?**

As far in advance as possible patients should contact their booking service to cancel the journey. Even if you make this decision on the day, it is useful to let the booking service know, as your transport may then be used on another journey instead.

#### **6.3 What happens if I'm not ready when the transport arrives to collect me?**

At home:

Because there may be other patients being collected on the way, patients are generally asked to be ready at home to be picked up 2 hours before their appointment time. Should a patient not be ready when a vehicle arrives, the crew/driver will have to decide how long they can wait without compromising the arrangements for other patients. If the crew have to move on there is no guaranteed return to pick the patient up later.

After your appointment or treatment:

Your return journey will have been booked for a set time. If you are held up and not ready when your transport arrives, they are able to wait for a short period. If the transport cannot wait until you are ready, a new booking will be made. You may then have to wait some time for your journey home.

#### **6.4 How do I make changes to bookings?**

Patients can ring the booking service to update them on any changes to their plans.

#### **6.5 Can patients contact the transport service direct?**

No they should contact the booking service at PTAS, or staff where the booking was arranged.

#### **6.6 Do patients get told what service has been booked for them?**

Most patients will be booked with the local main service provider, as long as they make their booking in advance. First Care Ambulance will contact their passengers in advance to confirm the arrangements.

#### **6.7 What type of vehicle will be provided?**

The main providers will mainly be using minibus type vehicles, with a number of seats, clamp points for wheelchairs and stretcher use capability. You may share with a number of other patients.

#### **6.8 How do patients raise concerns or complaints?**

They can report concerns to the booking service they used, to the transport provider booked for them or to PALS at their CCG. Issues can be raised in any format, writing down the details is not a requirement, but if possible you should provide details of what happened, what you are unhappy about and what response you want. All agencies will cooperate in providing explanations and learning from issues raised.

#### **6.9 How can patients give positive or negative feedback?**

You can thank staff directly, complete feedback forms on vehicles or let any local PALS service know.

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## 7. Long distance journeys

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### **7.1 What if I am travelling to another county/area outside Devon?**

As long as you are eligible and travelling to an NHS appointment or service, you can book NEPTS.

## 7.2 What does in area mean?

In area means that the start and destination points of a journey are within a 40 mile radius of the centre of Devon. This covers Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, and Taunton.

## 7.3 What does out of area mean?

Out of area means that either or both the start and destination points of a journey are outside a 40 mile radius of the centre of Devon.

## 7.4 Are the bookings made in the same way?

Yes, by contacting PTAS.

## 7.5 Why do patients and staff have to give notice of journeys needed out of area?

Taking a vehicle out of the area for a significant period of time means that the resources need careful planning for that day. Notice of the journey allows the provider that planning time.

## 7.6 Will a journey still be free to the patient?

Yes as long as the patient is eligible.

## 7.7 What service will this be booked with?

These journeys are not included in the main contracts for NEPTS transport providers, and may be booked with a range of local approved providers. If returning from out of area, the journey may be arranged with a service from another area of the country.

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## 8. How do patients get help with travel costs to attend NHS appointments?

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**Most patients** make their own way to NHS appointments, or home from hospital. They have to make the payment for this transport themselves.

**Some patients** are eligible to reclaim their costs for attending NHS appointment.

**No costs are refundable** for attending an appointment with your GP, dentist, optician or any of their practice staff.

**Full costs** are only refunded if you have chosen to use the cheapest suitable option available.

**To reclaim:** Some large venues and hospitals where NHS appointments are held will be able to refund the costs to eligible patients on the day of an appointment. To apply you need to have proof you are eligible and proof of your costs with you. If this is not possible they will

be able to provide patients with reclaim forms which can be used to reclaim up to 3 months after the appointment.

If you are eligible for help and have real difficulties in raising cash to travel because you have only had very short notice of your appointment, contact PALS or the department you are attending and ask about travel cost help in advance.

For all information or to request a form ring call **0300 330 1343** or go to

<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/help-with-health-costs.aspx> or

Also look out for local posters “Help with Health Costs” or ask at any PALS or general office.