


Eligibility Criteria

for the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Wheelchair Service



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Contacting the Wheelchair Service

You can contact the Service using the details below. The Service operates as a single point of contact for all wheelchair needs, including referrals, assessments, repairs and maintenance.

Telephone: 0808 175 3996

Email: ajm.ssotwheelchairservice@nhs.net

Website: <https://staffordshireandstoke.wheelchair.services/>

Please visit the Service website to check our opening hours, particularly around bank holidays.

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1. Introduction

This document is for the benefit of service users, parents, carers and health care and social care professionals to clearly outline the services and equipment choices that our users are eligible to receive. It is also an essential reference document for clinicians working within the wheelchair service.

The contents of this document have been agreed by the NHS Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board (ICB), which is the organisation responsible for commissioning the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Wheelchair Service.

The Wheelchair Service is a single entity which provides clinical assessments, repairs, and maintenance for wheelchairs. The Service is provided for the NHS by AJM Healthcare, an independent company.

2. Population Covered

The Provider shall provide the Service to people who meet the acceptance criteria and who are registered with a General Practitioner (GP) in the areas of county Staffordshire, comprising:

- The District of Cannock Chase
- Borough of East Staffordshire
- District of Lichfield
- Borough of Newcastle-Under-Lyme
- District of South Staffordshire
- Borough of Stafford
- District of Staffordshire Moorlands
- City of Stoke-on-Trent
- Borough of Tamworth

3. Acceptance Criteria

The Service is for children and adults of all ages (see below) who have a physical and/or degenerative long- term condition. This shall include children and/or adults:

- Who are assessed as requiring one of the four levels of support (see section 19).
- Living in nursing homes (subject to the provisions of section 18).
- Whose condition lasts six months or more and seriously impairs their mobility.
- At the end of life or with a terminal illness.
- Registered with a General Practitioner within the ICB area (see section 2).
- Under the age of 36 months where it is clinically demonstrated that a standard buggy/ pushchair available from retail outlets is unsuitable. A request for support shall be made in writing by the parent/carer and be supported by a health care professional.
- Who agree and comply with the terms and conditions of the wheelchair and/or associated equipment loan at all times.

4. Exclusion Criteria

The Service will not provide:

- Services to people who do not meet the acceptance criteria or who do not agree to or do not comply with the terms and conditions of the any wheelchair and/or associated equipment loan.
- Equipment of any kind except in relation to the agreed care plan/needs of the service user
- Wheelchairs/buggies to be used as a restraint for behavioural needs or as static seating e.g. armchairs/feeding chairs.
- Wheelchairs for porter services.
- Specialist sporting equipment.
- Mobility scooters.
- E-motion assisted hand-rim systems.
- Rain covers, sunshades or comfort items.
- More than one chair, unless a powered wheelchair is provided and then a back-up manual chair may be offered.
- Service when wheelchair provision has contraindications to the service user's medical condition or safety.

5. Provision of Wheelchairs and Associated Equipment

The Service provides equipment to meet assessed clinical needs. All persons referred to the Service will only be assessed for a wheelchair where the following general criteria are met.

- Referred individual has a permanent impairment or medical condition that seriously impairs their ability to walk
- Referred individual is registered with a GP within the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board (ICB) area.
- Referred individual requires the use of a wheelchair for a period in excess of six months unless they require palliative care
- Referred individual intends to make regular use of a wheelchair
- The referral, prescription or assessment request is received by the wheelchair service on a dedicated and recognised form
- Equipment will be provided solely as an aid to mobility. Other sources of funding should be explored where elements of the wheelchair's features are required to meet work, education or sporting requirements
- Provision of equipment is subject to the referred individual agreeing to the current conditions of loan

- Equipment will only be replaced if it ceases to meet the assessed clinical needs of the service user or is beyond economical repair
- The service user or their carer must demonstrate safe use of the equipment in the intended environment. This will be established at assessment.

The Service maintains an approved range of equipment list. This list gives details of all equipment which can be prescribed in the following categories:

- Attendant propelled manual wheelchair
- Self-propelling manual wheelchair
- Electrically powered indoor chair (EPIC)
- Electrically powered indoor/outdoor chair (EPIOC)
- Wheelchairs to be used with special seating systems
- Paediatric equipment
- Reclining back and/or tilt
- Pressure relieving cushions
- Accessories

6. Equipment Not Provided

The Wheelchair Service will not provide the following equipment:

- Equipment for sole use within educational establishments, work environments and leisure facilities.
- Equipment for the sole use of accessing transport
- Tricycles or bicycles
- Scooters and electrically powered outdoor chairs (EPOC)
- Add-on power packs, power-assisted wheels and stair climbers. In most cases these items are not allowed to be fitted to a chair provided by the Service; please contact the Service for clarification.
- Trike attachments: the Service does not allow the attachment of a trike unit to any wheelchair issued by the Service. Wheelchairs provided by the Service are not routinely tested or approved for the fitting of commercially available power packs, power assisted wheels or stair climbing devices and therefore permission must be sought from the Service before attempting to fit a privately purchased unit. Requests will be dealt with on an individual basis taking into account all potential risks for users, carers and the equipment provided by the Service.
- Wheelchairs that enable a person to stand up or have facilities that enhance functional ability as opposed to mobility.

- Wheelchairs to be used in place of more appropriate static seating.
- Accessories and modifications over and above those that have been clinically prescribed which cannot be easily removed or operated independently from the wheelchair provided by the wheelchair service.
- Wheelchairs required only for occasional use less than three times a week.

7. Specific Criteria for Attendant-propelled Manual Wheelchairs

- Referred individual complies with the general criteria and exclusions.
- Referred individual has a carer who is able and willing to push the wheelchair.
- The prescribed wheelchair is used as an aid to indoor and/or outdoor mobility and is not used in place of an armchair or static seating system.

8. Specific Criteria for Self-propelling Manual Wheelchairs

- Referred individual complies with the general criteria and exclusions.
- Referred individual is assessed as being medically fit to self-propel and self-propulsion is not detrimental to their medical condition. In some instances, the referred individual will be assessed as able to self-propel in an indoor environment only in order to give a limited increase in function and independence.
- Where a carer is required to push the wheelchair outdoors, the referred individual has a carer who is able and willing to push the wheelchair outdoors.
- In exceptional circumstances consideration will be given to issuing a self-propelling manual wheelchair where the referred individual is unable to self-propel but the carer would gain benefit from the features a self-propelling wheelchair provides.
- Consideration will be given to whether the referred individual needs an energy efficient self-propelling wheelchair based on whether they have an assessed medical condition that results in reduced strength and/or major excessive activity would result in deterioration of the medical condition. This referred individual would have to have been assessed as being a fulltime user whose level of functional independence would significantly increase with the issue of a lightweight or energy efficient wheelchair.
- Consideration will be given to whether the referred individual needs a highly active wheelchair based on whether their level of functional independence would significantly increase with the issue and whose needs are not met through the issue of an energy efficient self-propelling wheelchair.

9. Specific Criteria for Electrically Powered Indoor Chairs (EPICs)

- Referred individual must either be unable to walk, or self-propel a manual wheelchair effectively within their home environment or have written confirmation from their GP that these activities are detrimental to their medical condition.
- Through frequent and regular use of an EPIC the referred individual has the potential to benefit from increased mobility and independence in terms of activities of daily living.
- Referred individual is medically fit to independently control a powered wheelchair indoors, free from conditions causing loss of consciousness or epileptic seizures in waking hours within the last year and free from any combination of medical conditions and/or treatments likely to make independent control of powered wheelchair unsafe.
- Referred individual has a home environment which is compatible with the use of a powered chair and which includes a suitable storage area with a power supply for a battery charger.
- Referred individual has demonstrated in a driving test and by other means that they have the insight, intellectual capacity and dexterity to operate an EPIC safely and responsibly on their own without physical assistance and verbal instruction. Provision of powered chairs is subject to periodic review of driving ability.
- Referred individual must agree to members of the wheelchair service contacting other medical parties to obtain appropriate medical information which may affect the individual's ability to safely operate a powered wheelchair.

10. Specific Criteria for Electrically Powered Indoor/Outdoor Chairs (EPIOCs)

- Referred individual complies with the criteria for issue of an EPIC and has been safely using an EPIC for a period of six months. Wheelchair service therapists and technicians will reserve the right to upgrade EPICs to EPIOCs within a three-month period or when deemed appropriate by the Service.
- Referred individual has safe and easy access into and out of their home and can demonstrate that they can independently access the outside environment. They have a local outside environment which is compatible with the safe use of an EPIOC.

11. Specific Criteria for Wheelchairs with Special Seating Systems

- Referred individual uses a wheelchair for a significant part of the day and requires special seating as part of a postural management programme.
- Referred individual is unable to maintain a safe sitting posture in a standard wheelchair even when issued with off the shelf posture corrective accessories.
- Referred individual is unable to maintain a safe sitting posture in a non- standard wheelchair.

- Referred individual has both a home environment able to accommodate the seating required and carers who are able to operate the system safely.
- Special seating systems will be mounted onto the most appropriate wheelchair or buggy base that complies with current crash testing regulations.
- Special seating is primarily supplied to meet the postural and mobility needs of the referred individual. Where possible consideration will be given to other demands placed on the seating system. It is not always possible to meet all the individual's specific needs especially in terms of education and feeding requirements.
- Service users issued with custom made postural seating system will agree to be regularly reviewed.
- Special seating will not be provided where it is assessed that the clinical needs and comfort of the referred individual would be better served by the provision of a posture supportive commercially available armchair or where the provision of such equipment is mainly required in order to overcome moving and handling/hoisting issues.

12. Specific Criteria for Paediatric Equipment

- The Service will assess and provide equipment for children from any of the types of equipment mentioned provided that the general and individual criteria for prescription are complied with.
- The minimum age for referral is usually 30 months. Younger children will be assessed where it has been clinically demonstrated that there are complex postural needs.
- Children will be assessed for provision of a wheelchair or buggy depending on their assessed clinical need and age appropriateness.
- Double buggies will only be supplied where both children meet the criteria for provision.
- The Service is unable to meet the needs of children who require provision for behavioural issues or those without degenerative disease who solely require the wheelchair for occasional long distance outdoor mobility. However, clinical reasoning will be applied on a case-by-case basis in exceptional circumstances as part of the assessment process.
- The Service is unable to meet the needs of children without degenerative disease who require a wheelchair or buggy for occasional longer term outdoor mobility.

13. Specific Criteria for Reclining Back or Tilt Mechanisms

- Referred individual is a full-time user with a clinical diagnosis for which a wheelchair with recline and/or tilt is appropriate.
- Carers can operate the system safely, access transport and detach/reattach component parts for the safety of the service user.
- Following assessment by a wheelchair therapist, the referred individual would benefit from provision of a mobile system as opposed to a static seating system.

- The Service is unable to provide wheelchairs with a recline and/or tilt facility where the provision of a posture supportive commercially available armchair would meet the referred individuals clinical need or if the equipment is solely required in order to overcome moving and handling/hoisting issues.
- Recline and/or tilt may not be supplied where the referred individual is an inpatient within a hospital or rehabilitation unit and is continuing to show improvement in their posture and mobility.

14. Specific Criteria for Pressure Relieving Cushions

- Cushions are only supplied for use within a wheelchair and are provided to achieve comfort, satisfactory posture, increased stability and as an aid to pressure ulcer prevention and management.
- No wheelchair should be supplied without at least a vinyl covered foam comfort cushion of a 2" or 3" depth, as many will require a more advanced solution based on clinical indicators.
- Alternative cushions will be issued to users following assessment by either a therapist or technician working within the Service or by an approved prescriber (using cushions from a product list as agreed with the wheelchair service).
- Where the cushion provided has a removable cover only one cover will be provided. Referred individuals with specific ongoing continence issues may be referred on to the continence service.
- Following assessment, postural and pressure relieving cushions can be issued for use in wheelchairs that have been purchased by an individual privately or through a Personal Wheelchair Budget. Cushions provided will be from the standard range as offered.
- Pressure relieving cushions are not issued for use within a basic transit wheelchair or where provision of a cushion is mainly required in order to overcome moving and handling/hoisting issues.

15. Specific Criteria for Accessories and Modifications

- Accessories will only be provided following an assessment of clinical need, risk assessment and at the discretion of the Service.
- Modifications will only be undertaken following a risk and clinical assessment and only in accordance with manufacturers guidance and C.E. marking legislation.
- Modifications deemed as affecting a manufacturer's warranty will not be considered where the wheelchair has either been privately purchased or purchased using the Personal Wheelchair Budget.
- The Service is unable to supply accessories such as crutch holders, rain covers and sunshades.

16. Specific Criteria for Fitting Add-on Packs, Power Assist Wheels and Stair Climbers

- The Service recognises that wheelchair users may wish to take advantage of the benefits offered by a power pack, power assist wheels or a stair climber by fitting a privately purchased unit to a wheelchair issued by the Service.
- Wheelchairs provided by the Service are not routinely tested or approved for the fitting of commercially available power packs, power assisted wheels or stair climbing devices and therefore permission must be sought from the Service before attempting to fit a privately purchased unit. Requests will be dealt with on an individual basis taking into account all potential risks for users, carers and the equipment provided by the Service.
- Individuals who wish to fit this equipment should ensure that they obtain advice from the supplier with regard to the suitability of fitting the unit to their wheelchair. They should supply the wheelchair service with full brochure and technical details of what they are requesting to fit to their wheelchair.
- Before fitting this equipment, the service user must obtain written agreement from the wheelchair service. Any additional costs incurred in fitting this equipment will not be met by the wheelchair service.
- Where it has been noted that extraordinary costs have been incurred due to the use of the equipment the wheelchair service reserves the right to withdraw prescribed equipment from issue or consider charging the individual for repair costs. Upon its return to the Service, the cost of converting the chair back to the manufacturer's specification may be charged to the user.

17. Specific Criteria for the Supply of Multiple Wheelchairs

- Consideration will be given where a wheelchair is required for both upstairs and downstairs use. The wheelchair provided for upstairs use will be provided with a standard cushion and may not be the same make or model as the primary chair.
- Where a powered wheelchair has been issued, an attendant propelled manual wheelchair will be issued in case of breakdown or power failure preventing use of the issued powered chair.
- The Service is currently unable to supply second wheelchairs for use within educational establishments, to satisfy work related requirements or to be used solely for leisure or transportation purposes.

18. Specific Criteria for Supply to Residential Care and Nursing Homes

- The Service is unable to provide standard transit wheelchairs for residents in residential care or nursing homes with the purpose of transporting patients within the home or to take the residents on outings by staff, as it is their contractual obligation to provide suitable moving and handling equipment including wheelchairs and associated equipment e.g. hoists.

- Where a service user is assessed as being capable of independently self-propelling a wheelchair or operating a powered wheelchair and can demonstrate that it will enable them to independently access the facilities required for personal care, the appropriate equipment shall be supplied.
- Any equipment issued shall be on a prescription basis and, as such, shall be for exclusive use of the service user they are issued to. Any equipment on loan from the Service identified as used for any other reason than its prescribed intention (e.g. transportation/pool chair for other people) shall be withdrawn immediately. This is since litigation could result from inappropriate use by an individual for whom it was not prescribed.
- If an existing service user moves into a residential care home or a nursing home (home), it shall be the responsibility of the service user, their families and carers and the home to advise the Service of the change. The individual loan shall continue until the service user's needs change, the equipment becomes unsuitable for use or is no longer required e.g. due to bereavement of the service user. In this instance, the equipment shall be returned to the Service. Failure to relinquish the equipment may result in the home being charged for the equipment or an investigation by NHS Fraud.
- The Service shall only provide transit wheelchairs with postural support seating systems to residents of residential care and nursing homes where this is the only safe way to move them from room to room and not in place of suitable static seating. These shall not be provided if the person can safely be moved to suitable static seating using a standard transit wheelchair or a hoist or a combination of both.

19. Levels of Need

The levels of need are reproduced from the [‘National Wheelchair Data Collection Guidance’](#) and [‘Guidance for using Wheelchair Currency’](#) documents produced by NHS England. An individual must meet one of these need levels to be accepted by the Service (see section 3).

Low Need

- Occasional users of wheelchair with relatively simple needs that can be readily met.
- Do not have postural or special seating needs.
- Physical condition is stable, or not expected to change significantly.
- Assessment does not typically require specialist staff.
- Limited (or no) requirement for continued follow up/review.

Medium Need

- Daily users of wheelchair, or use for significant periods most days.
- Have some postural or seating needs.
- Physical condition may be expected to change (e.g. weight gain / loss; some degenerative conditions).
- Comprehensive, holistic assessment by skilled assessor required.
- Regular follow up / review is required.

High Need

- Permanent users who are fully dependent on their wheelchair for all mobility needs.
- **AND** complex postural or seating requirements (e.g. for high levels of physical deformity).
- **OR** physical conditions may be expected to change / degenerate over time.
- **OR** very active users, requiring ultra-lightweight equipment to maintain high level of independence.
- In all cases, comprehensive, holistic assessment by a skilled assessor required. Regular follow up / review with frequent adjustment is required/expected.

Specialist Need

- Permanent users who are fully dependent on their wheelchair for all mobility needs.
- **AND** highly complex postural or seating requirements (e.g. for high levels of physical disability) and/or are at greatest risk to their health and well-being.
- **AND** physical condition may be expected to change / degenerate over time.
- **OR** have complex and /or fluctuating medical conditions and multiple disabilities, which may include physical, cognitive, sensory and learning aspects.
- **OR** they are likely to require 24 hour postural management due to; poor trunk control, inability to sit without support, limited upper limb function, possible spinal curvature and joint contractures.
- **OR** they are at high risk of secondary complications due to their levels of disability such as contractures, chest infections and respiratory diseases.
- The most common diagnoses for people who need specialist wheelchair services are: cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, brain injury, motor neurone disease, high level spinal cord injuries.
- In all cases, comprehensive, holistic assessment by a skilled assessor required. Regular follow up / review with frequent adjustment is required/expected.

20. Appeals

- If a service user wishes to appeal this eligibility criteria, they should first appeal to the Wheelchair Service itself. The Wheelchair Service has an established process for handling cases which fall outside of the eligibility criteria. The service user should state the reason for their appeal and provide any supporting information for their appeal.
- On receipt of the appeal, the Wheelchair Service will discuss the case with the responsible Commissioners and other clinicians, as appropriate. The outcome of this appeal will be communicated by the Wheelchair Service to the service user.
- If the service user does not feel the matter is resolved, they have the right to make a complaint via the NHS Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICB complaints process. The Wheelchair Service can provide further information on this process.