

Supporting patients, carers and relatives with travel costs

Patient information leaflet



Supporting patients, carers and relatives with travelling including payment of expenses

For some patients, carers and relatives travel is essential in order to receive care and treatment and support a patient's care plan.

We are a large organisation, spread across a wide geographical area and travel may be lengthy, costly or there may be poor access to public transport. This can widen health inequalities and potentially have serious consequences for the health of patients. Therefore, the Trust is committed to supporting patients, *carers and relatives travel as part of an overall package of care.

* A carer is someone who looks after another person, usually a family member or friend, who could not manage without their support due to illness, disability, mental health problems or an addiction.



Who can claim?

To qualify for help with travel costs under the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme, you must meet the following conditions:

1	At the time of your appointment, you or your partner (including civil partners) must be receiving one of the qualifying benefits, or named on a NHS Low Income Scheme Certificate HC2 or HC3 eligibility criteria of the NHS Low Income Scheme. You can apply for the scheme as long as your savings, investments or property (not counting the place where you live) don't exceed the capital limit. In England, the limit is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• £23,550 for people who live permanently in a care home• £16,000 for everyone else
2	Your journey must be undertaken to receive services under the NHS Act 2006 eg a hospital or clinic visit, this does not include a visit to see a GP or dentist.

Where deemed necessary by your Consultant, GP or other health care professional, the travelling expenses of someone to escort you may also be claimed as part of your travelling expenses.

Additionally, if you are a child under 16 attending an appointment the travel costs of your parent or guardian escorting you may be paid. In both cases payments are made on the basis of your eligibility for the scheme irrespective of the eligibility of the person coming with you.

Before we can process your claim we need to see the following:

- Proof of eligible benefit e.g. letter from DWP stating benefit entitlement. If you contact your local Jobcentre Plus they will provide this letter for you
- NHS Low Income Scheme Certificate HC2 or HC3
- Appointment card/letter
- Receipts (as applicable)

If you do not have the necessary proof with you, a postal claim may be made using an HC5 claim form. These are available from the Cashiers Office or from your local Jobcentre Plus.

Where appropriate and reasonable advance payments can be paid to patients who may not have access to the monies to travel to their healthcare appointment. Retrospective claims will be paid up to three months after the date of treatment.

Qualifying benefits

- Income Support (IS)
- Income Based Employment and support allowance (ESA (IB))
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA (IB))
- Working Tax Credit (WTC)
- Child Tax Credit (CTC)
- Pension Credit – Guarantee Credit
- Universal Credit (UC) - Net earnings less than £435

Patients:

May be able to claim a refund under the 'Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme' (HTCS) of the cost of travelling to hospital or other NHS premises for NHS-funded treatment or NHS appointments arranged by a doctor.

Carers and relatives:

The Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme does not include carers or relatives travel costs to visit patients in hospital. However, the Trust recognises that carers and relatives support is an important part of a patient's care plan.

You should be asked about your travel needs as part of the 'Getting to know you' process within 72 hours of an individual's admission and travel solutions may be agreed and supported where necessary.

Travel solutions should always be offered to carers and relatives in any of the following circumstances:

- When a carer or relative is not able to use a car to visit.
- When the public transport journey is longer than 45 minutes (door to door) or the complexity of the travel arrangements mean that the time spent on travelling is longer than 45 minutes.
- When a carer or relative have individual access requirements which make their journey more difficult (e.g. elderly carers/relatives, young carers/relative, those with disabilities or health difficulties, those with young children).
- Where the patient is located in comparison to carer's or relative's home address.



How you travel

By car: We pay fixed rates of reimbursement by mileage. A refund on the car parking receipt is given. Please note that if you are not eligible for reimbursement of travel costs you may still be eligible for discounted car parking.

By public transport: The costs of fares associated with travelling to hospital will be refunded (you will need to keep your travel receipts).

By taxi: The cost of taxis will be reviewed on an individual basis.



Claiming your travelling expenses

Claims can be made from:

- The service you are attending – this may be by cash or cheque, or directly into your bank account.
- The Cashiers or General Offices – staff will tell you where these are located.



Further information about the content, reference sources or production of this leaflet can be obtained from the Patient Information Centre. If you would like to tell us what you think about this leaflet please get in touch.

This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (Braille, audio, larger print, easy read, BSL or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre on 0191 246 7288.

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