

Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Protocols

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Title		Finance Procedure I14 : Reimbursement of Patients Hospital Travel Costs
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Local Ref (optional)		
Main points the document covers		Procedure covering the eligibility for and the reimbursement of patients travel costs
Who is the document aimed at?		Staff involved in the reimbursement of patients travel costs
Author		Diana Owen, Head of Financial Accounting
Approval process		
Approved by (Committee/Director)		Director of Finance
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Full Equality Impact Assessment		No
Lead Director		Trish Donovan
Category		Finance
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Method		Electronically to senior staff & available to all staff via the Trust web-site
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Required by CQC		
Required by NHLSA		
Other		
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No	Date	Amendment
1	August 2010	Amendments as a result of revised DH guidance mainly around extension of eligibility & handling postal claims
2	August 2014	Removal of references to PCTs
3		
4		
5		

Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust

Finance Procedures

Section I Banks & Cash

I14 Reimbursement of Patients' Hospital Travel Costs

1 – Introduction

- 1.1 The NHS operates a Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS) which provides financial help to patients who do not have a medical need for ambulance transport, but who require assistance with the cost of travel to receive certain NHS services. Entitlement to this help is based on the patient's current entitlement to certain benefits and allowances, or if they are on a low income. Jobcentre Plus offices and the Pension Service have a responsibility for the confirmation of entitlement to benefits, but no responsibility for the operation of the Scheme.
- 1.2 There is an HTCS guidance document (dated May 2010) which can be found on the internet at http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_116383
- 1.3 This procedure covers :-
 - a) Availability of initial information to patients
 - b) Eligibility criteria
 - c) Patient claim procedure

2 – Availability of information to patients

- 2.1 The Trust must have adequate arrangements for informing all NHS patients of their entitlements. In practice this means :-
 - a) Having available in patient areas both posters and leaflets outlining the scope of the scheme (see details of poster HC10 and leaflet HC11 in Appendix A), and explaining the local payment arrangements including clearly signposting the cashier's office.
 - b) Providing information on the website.
 - c) Advising patients in advance about the scheme (e.g. with appointment/admission letters) including the need to supply the appropriate proof of eligibility at the time they make a claim.
 - d) Encouraging patients to make use of concessionary fares and public transport promotional offers where available.
 - e) Ensuring that all frontline staff are aware of the procedures.

3 – Eligibility for reimbursement

- 3.1 Journeys for which eligible patients can receive reimbursement are :-
 - a) Attending any place in the UK for the provision of any NHS service, other than primary medical or primary dental services, which are provided following a referral by a doctor or dentist. The journey must not be on the same day and the same premises as the primary medical services which led to the referral.
 - b) Travelling to a port in the UK for the purpose of travelling abroad to receive the services covered above. The costs of travel from the port to the place of treatment

are not covered under the HTCS – the NHS body who made the arrangements should pay separately.

- 3.2 Where the journey is eligible as in Paragraph 3.1, patients are entitled to have their travelling expenses reimbursed if they are receiving Income Support, income based Employment and Support Allowance, income based Jobseekers Allowance, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, or Pension Credit – Guarantee Credit, or if they are the partner or dependents of someone receiving these benefits.
- 3.3 Patients may also be eligible for the scheme under the NHS Low Income Scheme. To be assessed for this they need to use form HC1, submit it to the Prescription Pricing Division (PPD) of the NHS Business Services Authority, and have since been issued with form HC2 or HC3 confirming full or partial eligibility. Patients who have not yet applied for this eligibility should be advised to do so without delay, and to retain all bus tickets, train tickets and other proofs of travel until a PPD assessment has been completed.

4 – Allowable costs

- 4.1 Patients are reimbursed for either the cost of their travel by public transport (which should be encouraged) or, if they travel by car, petrol costs according to a rate per mile agreed by the Trust. This rate covers the estimated cost of petrol and is therefore the same as the median lease car rate, which is reviewed on a regular basis. Changes to the rate are notified by the Head of Financial Accounting by email to all petty cash float holders.
- 4.2 Car parking charges will be taken into account only if they are unavoidable e.g. at a hospital, but under no circumstances will penalties incurred by incorrect parking be allowed.
- 4.3 In certain circumstances taxi fares may be reimbursed e.g. head injury patients who are unable to use public transport, or someone living in a rural area with inadequate public transport. To be eligible, such taxi travel must be agreed with the Trust in advance.
- 4.4 Under the scheme, eligible patients are also entitled to reimbursement of the travelling expenses of an escort where this is considered to be medically necessary by their consultant. This reimbursement is based on the entitlement of the patient, not the escort. Escorts for children are always covered.

5 – Time limits

- 5.1 Entitlement to the scheme remains for as long as the patient's circumstances under 3.2 remain unchanged or while certificates HC2 or HC3 are valid.
- 5.2 Patients are able to claim immediately on arrival. All claims to the Trust must be made within one month of the date of travel, except in the case of patients who wish to claim by post, or those who intend to claim entitlement under the Low Income rule (section 3, above). These patients are allowed three months to make their claim to the PPD, then a further month to claim reimbursement from the Trust.
- 5.3 Where patients wish to claim retrospectively, form HC5 is completed.
- 5.4 It may occasionally be necessary to make an advance payment in a case where a patient does not have access to the money to enable them to make the journey. If an

advance payment is to be made, the officer making the payment must later ensure that the journey did take place.

6 – Approval procedure

- 6.1 Claims for reimbursement on the date of travel are generally reviewed and paid immediately through the petty cash system. It is the responsibility of the cashier administering the petty cash float to make the following checks :-
- a) Confirm that the patient actually attended for treatment on the date(s) claimed
 - b) Ensure the claim is within the one month time limit
 - c) Verify provide proof of entitlement to benefit as in 3.2 above or by possession of form HC2
 - d) If the patient provides proof of entitlement to benefit by HC3 (partial entitlement) then only the difference between the total claim value for that week and the amount that the patient is expected to meet themselves (as stated on HC3) is payable
 - e) Claims for reimbursement of public transport costs must be supported by evidence that the journey was actually made. Valid bus & train tickets, or taxi fare receipts, must be produced. The dates, values and descriptions on the tickets must be consistent with the journey being claimed for.
- 6.2 Patients claiming for car travel are reimbursed at the agreed rate per mile (see paragraph 4.1).

7 – Postal claims

- 7.1 Where a postal claim is made for reimbursement of travelling expenses previously incurred, claims are sent to the PPD using form HC5(T). The PPD informs the relevant provider or, if the provider is outside the UK (e.g. an ISTC) then the relevant Trust. The relevant provider or Trust must then make the payment.
- 7.2 In this instance, payment is made by BACs/cheque by the Finance Department's Accounts Payable section

8 – Resolving queries on claims

- 8.1 Any queries regarding the eligibility of a claim that cannot be immediately resolved by the cashier (e.g. allowing a claim for car parking) are referred to their manager. It is their responsibility to ensure that patients claiming under this scheme possess the necessary proof of entitlement.
- 8.2 If a patient is unhappy about the resulting decision, they should be referred to the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS). If they are still not satisfied, they should be told about the NHS complaints procedure.

9 – Payment of claims

- 9.1 The cashier completes the "Patients Travel Reimbursement Claim Form" (format at Appendix B). These forms are pre-numbered controlled stationery in books which are issued by the Finance Department. The patient signs the form on receipt of the cash.
- 9.2 Tickets and other supporting documents are retained by the cashier, unless they are still valid (e.g. a weekly ticket) in which case they are initialled and returned to the patient. Documents are then filed as part of the petty cash procedure.

References & associated documents

HTCS guidance document
NHS and Jobcentre Plus forms

Reviewed By _____

Date _____

Authorised By _____

Date _____

Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust

Finance Procedures

I14 Reimbursement of Patients' Hospital Travel Costs Appendix A Forms in Use

HC1 Available from Jobcentre Plus Office, and from Trust General Offices.

Claim to eligibility for scheme from patients who are not claiming any of the benefits described in Paragraph 3.2 above, but believe they may be entitled to either full help, or partial help, due to low income.

HC2 Issued by PPD.

Certificate showing full entitlement to the scheme.

HC3 Issued by PPD.

Certificate showing partial entitlement to the scheme.

HC5 Available from Jobcentre Plus Office, and from Trust General Offices.

Refund claim form for retrospective claims

HC10 Available in patient areas.

Display poster summarising the Scheme.

HC11 Available in patient areas, and from Trust General Offices.

Leaflet on help with health costs for patient use.

SHROPSHIRE COMMUNITY HEALTH NHS TRUST
PATIENTS TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT CLAIM FORM

Serial No:

FORM TO BE COMPLETED IN CAPITALS:

Name

Address

.....

Appointment Date/Time

Hospital/Clinic/Ward

Amount to be reimbursed in Figures.....

Amount in Words

National/Insurance Number

Hospital Number

Please provide evidence of:

1. Income Support, Income Based Job Seekers Allowance, Tax Credit Exemption Certificate or valid HC2/HC3 form.
2. Appointment Card stamped by the clinic to validate the visit
3. Travel charge receipt.
4. Written confirmation from your Clinician/Doctor of the requirement for an escort (if appropriate)

*I declare that the information given on this claim form is true and complete to the best of my knowledge.**I understand that action may be taken against me if I make an incorrect claim.**I consent to the disclosure of relevant information on this form for the purposes of fraud prevention, detection and investigation.*

Patients Signature

Date:

OFFICE USE ONLY

AUTHORISED BY:

Name

Designation

Signature

Date