

PATIENT TRAVEL EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT POLICY & PROCEDURE

Unique Reference / Version				
Primary Intranet Location	Policy Name	Version Number	Next Review month	Next review year
Complaints	Patient Travel Expenses Reimbursement Policy & Procedure	V.3	July	2013
		Secondary Intranet Location		
		Trust wide		

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Ratifying Committee	Quality & Risk
Ratified Date	July 2012
Review Date	July 2013
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Owner's Job Title	Director of Patient Experience and Lead for Nursing and Non Medical Professionals

It is the responsibility of the staff member accessing this document to ensure that they are always reading the most up to date version, - This will always be the version on the intranet

Related Policies PALS Operational Policy	
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Stakeholders	Chief Executive Complaints and PALS Team Patient Experience Committee
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Version	Date	Author	Author's Job Title	Changes
V1	18/6/09	Karl Perryman	Head of Complaints & Legal Services	
V2	11/8/11	Joanne O'Neill	Complaints Manager	Minor update
V3	17/7/12	Joanne O'Neill	Complaints Manager	Amended to Trusts new Policy format

Short Description
Policy in relation to reimbursement of travel expenses following a visit to the hospital.

Key words
Travel, Expenses, Entitlement, Credits

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PATIENT TRAVEL EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT POLICY & PROCEDURE

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 For some patients, travel to hospital can present difficulties – for example, because of the cost, the length or complexity of the journey, or lack of access to private or public transport. This policy is primarily concerned with the financial help that is available under the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS), to those patients who do not have a medical need for ambulance transport and who cannot meet the cost of travel to hospital. The scheme operates under the provisions of the National Health Service (Travelling Expenses and Remission of Charges) Regulations 2003 as amended.

2 PURPOSE

- 2.1 This policy will give guidance on the administration of patients travel reimbursement.

3 DEFINITIONS

3.1 Patient Travel Expenses Reimbursement

Financial support for patients to travel to hospital who are unable to financially support themselves.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Complaints Manager

The Complaints Managers role is to ensure adequate support is provided for the Trust's travel desk.

4.2 PALS Travel Desk Officer

The role of the PALS Travel Desk Officer is to:

- To process all claims for patients' travel reimbursement and car parking ensuring compliance with the standard Health Service Travel Costs Scheme.
- To confirm entitlement for claims for payment and advise patients of low income scheme availability – providing HC1, HC1(SC), HC5 Forms, or other such documentation where, appropriate.
- To calculate and confirm mileage using MapQuest or similar, computer based software, processing claims and issuing payable orders or cash where appropriate.
- To compile and deliver to the finance department, the daily record of payments using an Excel spreadsheet software or via a completed GS1 form.

- To maintain accurate records and statistics of travel reimbursement claims and, in liaison with the Finance Department, regularly review the effectiveness of the current reimbursement procedures.
- To file and archive processed travel reimbursement claim forms, photocopying documents where necessary.

5 PATIENTS ENTITLEMENT TO REIMBURSEMENT OF HOSPITAL TRAVEL COSTS

5.1 Patients on the following benefits are entitled to full reimbursement of hospital travel costs:

a. Income Support:

Patients who received income support should be able to present an order book, Form FF260 or FF260A covering the day they attended the hospital. Or they should ask their local Jobcentre Plus office for a letter confirming receipt of Income Support for the purpose of refunds for travelling expenses and HNS charges.

a. Income Based Job Seekers Allowance:

Patients who receive Income Based Job Seekers Allowance are not likely to have evidence and they should ask their local Jobcentre Plus office to confirm receipt of this benefit for the purpose of refunds of travelling expenses and NHS charges.

a. Tax Credits:

Patients who receive Working Tax Credit (WTC) or Child Tax Credit (CTC) are entitled to a refund provided they meet the following conditions:

- (i) their income is £15,050 per annum or less. This is the amount shown on the Tax Credit award and they get WTC or CTC or,
- (ii) they get WTC with a disability element shown on the award or,
- (iii) they get CTC and are not eligible for WTC.

These patients will be sent a NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate showing that they are entitled to help with health costs.

a. Pension Credits:

Pension Credit consists of two elements – Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit. Guarantee Credit (paid on its own or with Savings Credit) entitles the recipient and their partner to full reimbursement of Hospital Travel Costs.

Patients in receipt of Saving Credit on it own are not entitled to reimbursement of travel costs, although they may be entitled to full or partial help under the NHS Low Income Scheme and as such should be advised to complete a Form HC1.

- 5.2 Patients who are dependants in a family that receive Income Support, Income Based Job Seekers Allowance, WTC or CTC are also entitled to reimbursement of Travel Expenses and should be able to present the evidence of entitlement outlined above.
- 5.3 Entitled 'in-patients' may claim for the journey to hospital and for the homeward journey on discharge. Claims cannot be made for visits home during 'in-patient' stays. Entitled 'outpatients' can claim for their journey to and from the hospital for each outpatient appointment. Patients are only entitled for reimbursement for the journey from their usual place of residence to the hospital and back.

6 OTHER ROUTES PROVIDING ELIGIBILITY FOR HEALTHCARE TRAVEL COSTS

- 6.1 Where patients are not in receipt of any of the benefits listed above but are on a low income, they may be eligible for assistance through the NHS Low Income Scheme. A Person may be eligible for full or partial payment of their NHS travel expenses in certain circumstances, which are detailed in the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme. The person will need to apply to the Prescription Pricing Division (PPD) at Sandyford House, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE2 1DB on an approved form to claim. Where the claim to entitlement is successful, the PPD will issue a notice of entitlement to that person (which may include the claimant's family members).
- 6.2 Patients who may be entitled to help on low-income ground should be encouraged to read leaflet HC11 and to make a Low Income Scheme claim using Form HC1 (HC1(SC) if in a Care Home and a refund claim using Form HC5(T).
- 6.3 Patients who might not consider that they are on a low income should be encouraged to make a claim if they have to travel frequently or over long distances. Unless their savings are in excess of the limit of £16,000 (£21,500 if in a Care Home) otherwise, they will be sent a certificate showing how much, if anything, they have to pay for their travel per week. They will be entitled to a refund of anything in excess of the amount shown. Certificates show how long they last for, usually 12-months.

7 TRAVELLING EXPENSES OF PATIENTS' ESCORTS

- 7.1 Under the HTCS, eligible patients are also entitled to claim for travelling expenses of escorts where this is considered by their GP or Consultant to be medically necessary. Payments for the travelling expenses of escorts under the scheme should be considered as part of the patient's travel cost and solely on the basis of the patient's entitlement and not that of the escort. Under the provisions of the HTCS, references to an escort can be taken to mean up to two escorts where this is considered medically necessary.

8 RETROSPECTIVE CLAIMS

- 8.1 Patients may claim help with travel costs up to 3 months after the date of travel. All the conditions applying to patients who claim at the time of travel apply equally in such cases and only Income Support, Income Based Job Seekers

Allowance, Pension Guarantee Credit, Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit or Low Income Scheme eligibility that cover the date of travel can be taken into account.

- 8.2 Where patients wish to make a retrospective claim for travel expenses or are unable to produce evidence of entitlement at the time of travel, they should be given a Form HC5 so that they may claim a refund. The completed HC5 must be received by the relevant office within 3 months of the date of travel for which reimbursement is being claimed. The relevant office is shown on the Form HC5.

9 WAR DISABLEMENT PENSIONERS – SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

- 9.1 There are special arrangements that apply to War Disablement Pensioners attending hospital for medical treatment for their pensionable disability. These arrangements include payment of travelling expenses, subsistence and loss of earning allowances. The HTCS does not apply in such cases.
- 9.2 Any war pensioner enquiring about expenses for attending for medical treatment should be advised to contact the Veterans Agency, Norcross, Blackpool FY5 3TA, stating that they are a war pensioner and giving their full name and address and, if possible, their war pension number.
- 9.3 War pensioners attending hospital for reasons other than their accepted war disability should be treated under the HTCS arrangements on the same terms as other patients.

10 PATIENTS BEING TRANSFERRED BETWEEN TREATMENT CENTRES

- 10.1 The cost of transferring patients from one hospital to another, or to a clinic or nursing home, whilst their treatment remains the responsibility of an NHS Consultant should be regarded as part of the treatment costs. The travel costs of patients who are sent home either as part of their treatment or to meet a hospital's convenience should also be regarded as part of the treatment costs. Patients who take leave from hospital at their own request cannot be helped with their travel costs.

11 VISITORS TO PATIENTS IN HOSPITAL

- 11.1 Help for visitors to patients in hospital is not available under the HTCS, except for the parents, guardians or carers of babies on the Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU), who, providing they are in receipt of the qualifying benefits, may be reimbursed their travel expenses for each visit. However, recipients of any qualifying benefits visiting someone in hospital may be able to obtain some help in the form of a Community Care Grant from the Social Fund; they should be advised to enquire at their local Jobcentre Plus office and ask for an application Form SF300.

12 PROVISION OF TAXIS

- 12.1 In certain cases, where there is no alternative (for example in cases where patients have restricted mobility or public transport is not available for part or

all of the journey), and the GP or hospital Consultant issues written instructions that it is medically necessary for the patient to travel in a method other than public transport, patients may have to use a taxi. These costs will be reimbursed in full.

- 12.2 In other exceptional circumstances (such as unaccompanied females discharged from A&E late at night after public transport has stopped running, with no money and no safe way of getting home), taxi fares may also be provided but each case must be assessed on its own individual merits. In these circumstances, the hospital duty bleep holder is to be contacted for a decision.

13 CALCULATION OF TRAVEL COSTS

- 13.1 Appropriate travel costs should be calculated on the basis of the cheapest form of public transport available to the patient (including any promotional or concessionary fares). Patients travelling by private car may claim the lesser of:

- a. payment by mileage travelled, calculated at the current rate per mile as published on http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/cars/fuel_company_cars.htm, which is updated every 6 months on 01 June and 01 December.
- b. the equivalent public transport cost.

- 13.2 Car parking charges will also be reimbursed to entitled patients, where they are unavoidable. This does not include penalties incurred through illegal parking. The car parking ticket or the blue backing paper with the unique car parking ticket serial number must be produced when making a claim.

14 PROCEDURE FOR CLAIMING REIMBURSEMENT OF TRAVEL EXPENSES

- 14.1 During the hours 08:30am to 16:30pm Monday to Thursday and 08:30am to 16:00pm on Friday entitled claimants may apply in person for reimbursement of their travelling expenses and car parking fees at the PALS Travel Desk located at the entrance foyer to the hospital. Proof of entitlement must be shown to the PALS Travel Officer, together with proof of appointments or hospital stay. This will be confirmed using PAS.

- 14.2 The PALS Travel officer will calculate the claimant's entitlement and issue payment by cheque or by cash where requested. Payment's will also be made in advance of travel upon request or retrospectively through a postal claim on Form HC5(T). On completion Claimants are required to send the HC5(T) to their local Jobcentre Plus office. Each payment will be recorded on the HM Paymaster General Form GS1, which is delivered to the Finance Department at the end of each working day.

- 14.3 GUM patients, who are entitled to claim travel expense reimbursement under the criteria detailed in paragraph 2 are, without exception, to be paid in cash and their personal details are to be kept entirely confidential. The names and addresses of GUM patient Claimant's are not to be recorded on HM Paymaster General Form GS1.

15 MONITORING OF COMPLIANCE

- 15.1 Monitoring of compliance will be achieved by Finance Department daily scrutiny of HM Paymaster General Form GS1's, Internal Audit and by the periodic review of complaints received relating to this service (via the CLIP report). Compliance with roles and responsibilities is monitored at appraisal, following review of the individual's knowledge & skills framework (KSF) together with the job description.

16 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This policy has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment and is not considered to have a discriminatory impact on any individual or groups. A translated version of this policy will be provided upon receipt of request.

REFERENCES

- 16.1 Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS) 2010
The National Health Service (Travelling Expenses and Remission of Charges) Regulations 2003, as amended.

MONITORING COMPLIANCE

Key elements (Minimum Requirements)	Process for Monitoring (e.g. audit)	By Whom (Individual / group /committee)	Frequency of monitoring	Responsible individual / group / committee (plus timescales(for		
				Review of Results	Development of Action Plan	Monitoring of action plan and implementation
Monitoring the efficiency of the service is undertaken by the finance department.	Audits	Finance Department	Annually	Audit Committee	PALS	Board of Directors

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Equality Impact Assessment Tool

(To be completed and attached to any policy document when submitted to the appropriate committee for ratification.)

STAGE 1 - SCREENING

Name & Job Title of Assessor: Joanne O'Neill – Complaints Manager		Date of Initial Screening:	
Policy or Function to be assessed:			
		Yes/No	Comments
1.	Does the policy, function, service or project affect one group more or less favourably than another on the basis of:		
	• Race & Ethnic background	No	
	• Gender including transgender	No	
	• Disability:- This will include consideration in terms of impact to persons with learning disabilities, autism or on individuals who may have a cognitive impairment or lack capacity to make decisions about their care	No	
	• Religion or belief	No	
	• Sexual orientation	No	
	• Age	Yes	Children under 18 cannot claim
2.	Does the public have a perception/concern regarding the potential for discrimination?	No	

If the answer to any of the questions above is yes, please complete a full Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment.

Signature of Assessor: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Line Manager: _____

Date: _____

STAGE 2 – EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

If you have indicated that there is a negative impact on any group, is that impact:

		Yes/No	Comments
1.	Legal/Lawful under current equality legislation?	N/A	
2.	Can the negative impact be avoided?	N/A	
3.	Are there alternatives to achieving the policy/guidance without the impact?	N/A	
4.	Have you consulted with relevant stakeholders of potentially affected groups?	N/A	
5.	Is action required to address the issues?	N/A	

It is essential that this Assessment is discussed by your management team and remains readily available for inspection. A copy including completed action plan, if appropriate, should also be forwarded to the Equality & Diversity Lead, c/o Human Resources Department