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Joint Commissioning
Committee

THE FUTURE VISION FOR NON-EMERGENCY PATIENT TRANSPORT IN WALES (2030)

CABINET SECRETARY FOREWORD



Jeremy Miles MS
Cabinet Secretary for
Health and Social Care

Ensuring that patients can access the healthcare services they need is fundamental to delivering our long-term plan for health and social care set out in 'A Healthier Wales'.

Non-emergency patient transport is an essential service, efficiently and effectively supporting service users to access planned care services across Wales.

As demand for healthcare services has grown, with NHS Wales working tirelessly to support people with more complex needs, so has the need for a steadfast, robust, and responsive patient transport service.

In 2016, the Welsh Government approved a business case for the modernisation of the Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS) in Wales. This has since steered the development and delivery of patient transport services at a local and national level.

Through the delivery of the ambitions set out within the business case, I am delighted that NHS Wales and its partners are providing service users with a safe and effective patient transport service. As with all services, we routinely look to advance models of care to ensure that they can respond in line with our evolving policy expectations.

This vision seeks to harness the latest available evidence and thinking of experts in the field to set out a clear vision for the future. The vision explores how the service can be reinvigorated through digital transformation, strategic integration, patient-centred care and partnership working.

The vision aims to drive progress at pace towards enhancing patient experience, improving service efficiency, and ensuring our patient transport services meet the evolving needs of our population and the NHS in Wales.

CHAIR FOREWORD



Ian Green OBE

Chair of the NHS Wales
Joint Commissioning
Committee

The NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee (NWJCC) plays a pivotal role in overseeing the commissioning of healthcare services across Wales. Our Mission is to improve the health and care for people in Wales, by adhering to our principles of commissioning evidenced-based services that:

- Are shaped by people who use the services and those with expert knowledge and experience in providing them
- Provide high quality care with outcomes that matter to people
- Are sustainable and make the best use of resources (money, workforce and capital assets)

The NWJCC's strategic oversight is crucial for the continuous improvement and modernisation of the Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS).

This document outlines the NWJCC's strategic vision for NEPTS in Wales, focusing on key priority areas to address current challenges and future demands.

By using expertise and resources, the NWJCC aims to transform NEPTS into a more patient-centred, efficient, and integrated part of the healthcare system.

The development of this strategic vision for NEPTS in Wales has been a collaborative effort, involving stakeholders from across healthcare, Welsh Government, local authorities, patient representative bodies and third sector organisations. Our collective goal is to create a service that is responsive, efficient, and centred around the needs of our patients.

This vision outlines our commitment to modernising NEPTS, integrating the service with wider healthcare and transport systems and leveraging technology to improve service delivery.

We invite all stakeholders to join us in this journey together, towards creating more effective and patient-focused non-emergency patient transport services in Wales.





INTRODUCTION

The Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS) in Wales is a crucial component of the healthcare system, ensuring that patients with medical needs, but who do not require an emergency response, can access healthcare facilities and services. In Wales, each year NEPTS complete over 600,000 patient journeys, transporting patients to outpatient appointments, life maintaining treatment, transferring patients between hospitals or taking patients home after being discharged from hospital. Despite its importance, NEPTS faces numerous challenges, including increasing demand, resource limitations and service integration, resulting in the need for modernisation.

In October 2023, the Emergency Ambulance Services Committee (EASC), now known as the NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee (NWJCC) tasked the Chief Ambulance Services Commissioner with the development of a future vision for patient transport, following the formal closure of the NEPTS Business Case (2016).

In the development of a future vision for patient transport services in Wales, the NWJCC team have engaged and communicated with a range of stakeholders from health boards and Trusts, the Welsh Ambulance Service University Trust, Welsh Government, local authorities, Transport for Wales, community transport sector, transport providers and patient representative bodies to understand the challenges and future requirements of patient transport services in Wales.

Through the feedback obtained via facilitated engagement events, workshops, localised health board meetings, patient surveys and feedback via the NWJCC Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service Delivery and Quality Assurance Group meetings, the NWJCC have developed this future vision for patient transport in Wales.

This document, developed by the NWJCC outlines a comprehensive vision for the future of NEPTS in Wales (2030).



The vision is built around five key priority areas aimed at transforming non-emergency patient transport services to meet future demands and enhance patient care:



Modernising for Change: Adapting our resources and approaches to service delivery, to respond to the changing needs of the population and healthcare system.



Digital Transformation: Leveraging technology to improve coordination, efficiency and patient experience.



Strategic Integration: Ensuring non-emergency patient transport services are integrated within the wider healthcare system.



Patient Focused: Prioritising patient needs and feedback to enhance service delivery.



Working in Partnership: Building strong collaborative relationships with partnership organisations to improve service outcomes.

By focusing on these priorities, the vision aims to create a responsive, efficient, and patient-centred non-emergency patient transport service that aligns with the Welsh Government's strategic ambitions set out within the Well-Being for Future Generations Act (2015) and A Healthier Wales. The vision also aligns to the principles of the quadruple aims of prudent healthcare and Welsh Government Patient Travel Policy Framework. The anticipated outcomes include increased access to healthcare, improved population health, enhanced patient satisfaction, and better resource utilisation.





NEPTS IN WALES

232,871
Calls Handled

573,462
Journeys Completed

648
NEPTS Staff

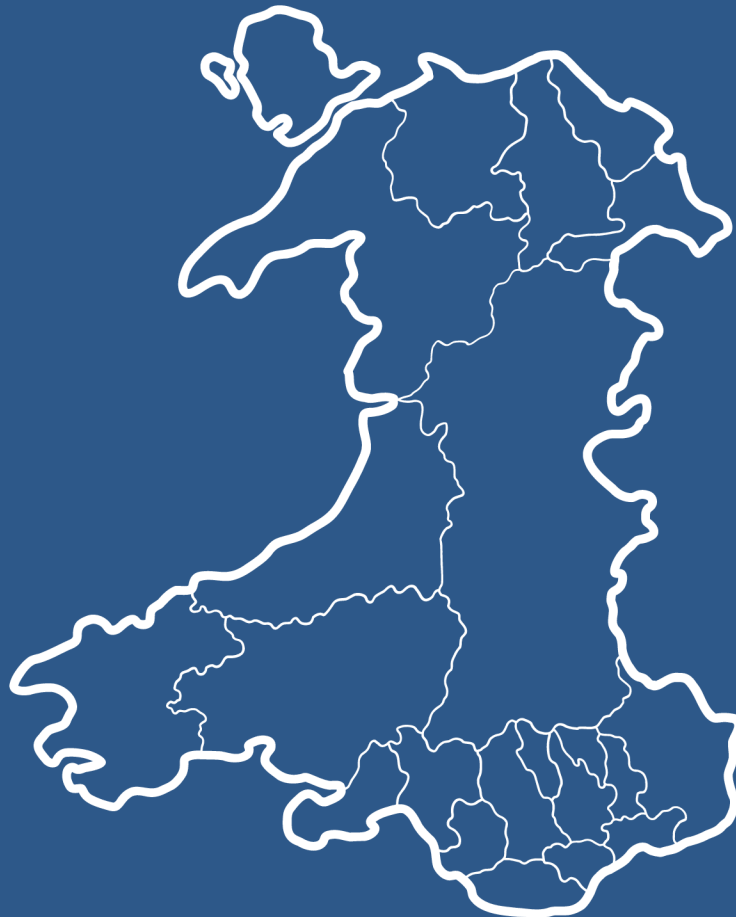
276
NEPTS Vehicles

150
NEPTS Volunteers

10,976,491
Miles Covered



A CHANGING LANDSCAPE WALES 2030



Growing Population: The population is set to grow by circa 4% to 3.24 million by 2030



Increasing Number of Households: By 2030 the number of households in Wales will increase by over 90,000



Increasing Older Adult Population: By 2030 the number of people aged 65+ is projected to increase by 158,000 (24.9%). This will mean more older adults needing our services



More Complex Conditions: Currently more than 40% of people aged 75+ live with two or more longstanding illnesses



Increasing Public Expectations: Expectations of the NHS are continuing to increase



TIME TO TALK

Time to Talk Public Health is a national panel of Welsh residents aged 16+ years established by Public Health Wales to enable regular public engagement to inform public health policy and practice.

The panel is designed to be broadly representative of the Welsh population by age, sex, deprivation, ethnicity and health board.

Members of the public are recruited to the panel using a variety of methods and subsequently invited to participate in regular surveys to provide insight into key public health issues.

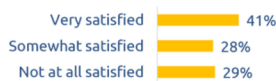
In August 2024, Time to Talk Public Health Wales conducted a survey with members on non-emergency patient transport and travelling to health appointments.

Based on your experience of the Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service, how satisfied, if at all, were you with the following?

First phone call (e.g. assessing if eligible, booking process)



Overall experience

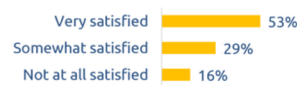


Asked to participants who reported having contacted and used the NEPTS (n=58; unweighted)

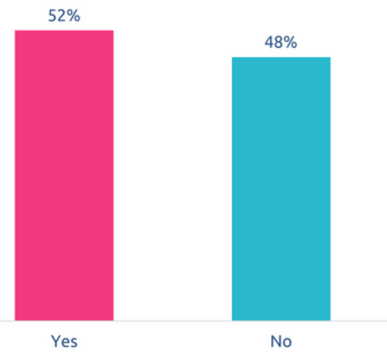
Vehicle experience (e.g. driver, vehicle cleanliness)



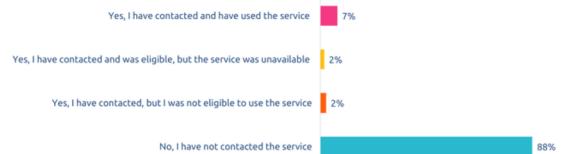
Timings (e.g. timeliness of pick up, length of journey)



Before today, had you heard of the 'Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service' (NEPTS)?



Have you ever contacted and been eligible to use the Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service?



Which of the following, if any, are reasons why you would be worried about travelling to a health service appointment? Select all that apply.



MODERNISING FOR CHANGE

Adapting our resources and approaches to service delivery, to respond to the changing needs of the population and healthcare system.

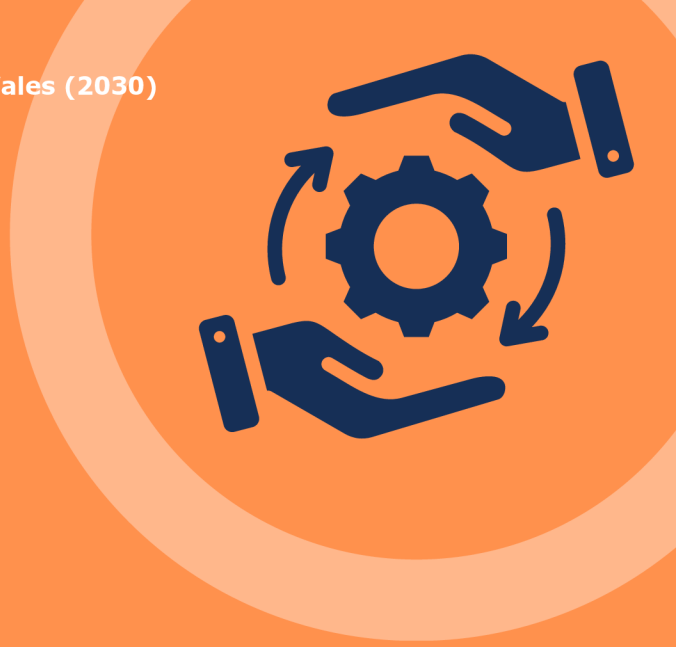
The demand for non-emergency patient transport services in Wales has changed over the last decade, with changes to the populations' demographics, the populations' health, how planned care services are delivered and the impact of the Covid19 pandemic.

Within Wales and across the UK, there has been growth in the ageing population. With a growing aging population and the number of people living with one or more care needs increasing, and an increase in the number of patients waiting to access planned care services, a greater percentage of the population will need to access planned care services over the coming years.

In order to respond to this change in population demand and wider NHS challenges, health boards are evolving their health care systems through service redesign by, extending operating hours, centralising specialist services, delivering care closer to home, integrating technology and accessing alternative care services outside of existing geographical areas. With growing system demand and patients needing to access services at locations and times outside of conventional practices, this creates a significant challenge for NEPTS.

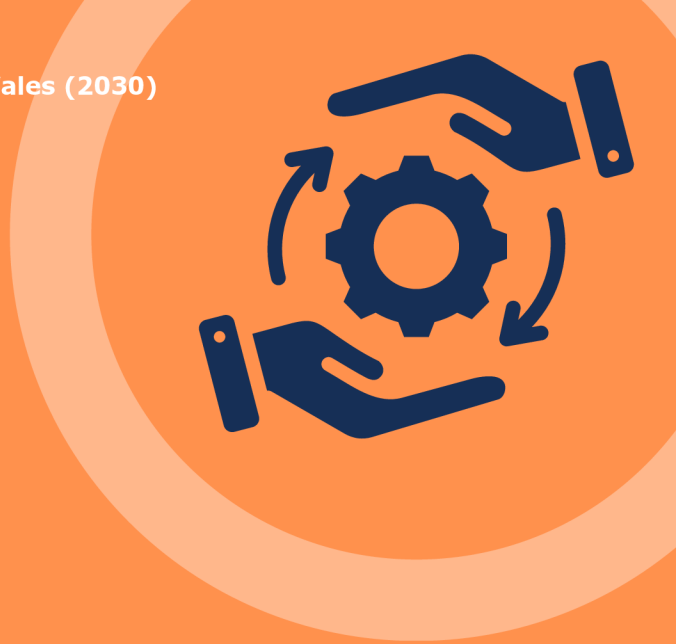
NEPTS also plays a key role in transporting renal dialysis and oncology patients to life maintaining treatments and transferring patients between hospitals or taking them home once discharged from hospital. There continues to be a growing number of patients accessing life maintaining treatment and an increase in the requirement to transfer or discharge patients to maintain system flow. For NEPTS, due to the frequency and nature of these journeys, accommodating these journeys can be resource intensive. To maintain the highest level of standards and in order to respond to the growing resource requirements for patient transport, NEPTS resource levels need to be reflective of patient demand.

To meet these demands, a strategic approach to modernising the non-emergency patient transport service is essential. This section outlines the key priorities and actions required to ensure non-emergency patient transport services can grow sustainably and effectively.



MODERNISING FOR CHANGE

Adapting our resources and approaches to service delivery, to respond to the changing needs of the population and healthcare system.



Access to Non-Emergency Patient Transport:

- Conduct a review of the patient transport eligibility criteria (Welsh Health Circular 2007/005), ensuring it aligns to the strategic requirements of NHS Wales.



Capacity and Resource Allocation:

- Conduct a review of NEPTS resource capacity, aligned to current and future population demand and health boards strategic and operational requirements.
- Optimise resource utilisation through the effective rostering and procurement of patient transport resources, maximising available resource capacity.
- Adopting the principles of value-based healthcare, maximising opportunities for investment to secure and deliver appropriate levels of resource.



Service Efficiency

- Maximise opportunities to align patient appointment times with transport availability.
- Utilising new technology, introduce alternative methods to streamline journey booking and coordination processes to improve efficiency and responsiveness.



Fleet and Estates Modernisation

- Introduction of alternative fleet options that support the reduction in carbon emissions, incorporate new technology and equipment to improve workforce safety and deliver the highest standards of care to patients.
- Modernised patient transport estates with locations aligned to population demand.



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Leveraging technology to improve coordination, efficiency, and patient experience.



The introduction of new technology in non-emergency patient transport services presents a significant opportunity to improve patient accessibility, enhance service efficiency, and optimise resource utilisation. By leveraging digital tools, patient transport can become more personalised, responsive and integrated with healthcare systems, creating a seamless experience for patients and healthcare providers alike.

The implementation of multiple user-friendly booking platforms will allow patients to easily schedule patient transport with confidence and in their first language. This is particularly beneficial for individuals who may struggle with language barriers, ensuring clear communication and reducing stress when accessing transport services.

For patients with sensory loss, new technologies can offer tailored solutions, such as voice-activated systems or visual alerts. This ensures that all patients can easily access and navigate transport services. Additionally, real-time updates on transport status, including estimated arrival times, can be delivered through mobile applications, text messages, or automated calls, keeping patients informed and reducing anxiety about missing or being late for their medical appointment.

Integration between patient transport services and healthcare providers can further streamline the patient journey. By coordinating patient appointments with transport availability, healthcare providers can optimise their schedules and ensure that transport resources are efficiently allocated. This minimises downtime and reduces the risk of transport shortages, ultimately improving both patient satisfaction and service efficiency.

Adopting advanced data analytics systems can provide significant insights into forecasting demand. By analysing historical transport data and healthcare trends, NEPTS can anticipate changes in service needs and adjust resources accordingly. For example, the impact of a health board service change, such as the centralisation of specialist services, can be assessed to ensure transport availability aligns with shifting patient demand. This data-driven approach ensures a more proactive and responsive service, supporting better outcomes for both patients and providers while optimising the use of transport resources.



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Leveraging technology to improve coordination, efficiency, and patient experience.



Patient Booking System

- Adopt new technology to ensure that all patients can easily access patient transport services in their first language, through multiple communication platforms.



Mobile Applications

- Develop mobile applications for patients and caregivers to book, track, and manage non-emergency patient transport services easily.
- Provide real-time updates and notifications to keep patients informed about their transport status.



Data Analytics

- Implement advanced data analytics tools, including forecasting with other NHS Wales organisations to monitor and evaluate non-emergency patient transport service performance continuously.
- Use data-driven insights to identify areas for improvement and optimise service delivery.
- Utilise predictive analytics to forecast demand and allocate resources efficiently.



Integrated System Technology

- Maximise opportunities to integrate NEPTS and health board scheduling systems to align transport availability with patient needs and manage changes to transport requirements.
- Establish integrated communication platforms to facilitate seamless 'Live' interaction between NEPTS staff, healthcare providers and patients.
- Ensure that all healthcare providers have access to real-time information to improve coordination and decision-making.



STRATEGIC INTEGRATION

Ensuring non-emergency patient transport services are integrated within the wider healthcare system.



Developing collaborative approaches to service design, strategic planning and integrated ICT systems, between WAST and health boards has the ability to deliver significant improvements in patient experience and maximise resource utilisation.

The integration of patient scheduling platforms and transport management software, would provide the ability to book a patient's medical appointment aligned to the availability of patient transport. This provides patients with reassurance that transport is available to convey them to their medical appointment and reduces the number of missed medical appointments due to transport availability.

Collaborative service design and strategic planning enables NEPTS to align its resources with healthcare service demands, reducing inefficiencies and enhancing patient care. For instance, scheduling transport within the patient discharge pathway aligns transport availability with the patient's planned discharge from hospital, improving punctuality, reducing patient wait times and ensuring that healthcare services can function smoothly with effective system flow.

Collaborative IMTP development, with a focus on the integration of patient transport requirements, enables better long-term resource planning. By anticipating changes in patient demand, health boards can ensure that patient transport services are optimised, maximising the utilisation of resources. Technology plays a critical role here, with advanced data analytics allowing for accurate forecasting of patient transport needs, improving both service delivery and cost-efficiency.

Ultimately, enhancing the levels of integration between NEPTS and health boards will lead to improved operational and financial efficiencies and improved overall patient experience.



STRATEGIC INTEGRATION

Ensuring NEPT services are integrated within the wider healthcare system.



Collaborative Planning



- WAST and health boards to work collaboratively at a system and operational level in the development and redesign of services, to ensure that non-emergency patient transport services are able to respond to the changes in service requirements.
- Collaborative approach to the Integrated Medium Term Plan (IMTP) process to ensure that non-emergency patient transport services align to the needs of health boards.



Coordinated Care Pathways

- Develop coordinated care pathways that incorporate non-emergency patient transport services as part of the overall patient journey.
- Ensure that non-emergency patient transport services are integrated into the planning process when patients are being discharged from hospital or transferred between hospitals, to enhance system flow.



Integration of Systems

- Implement advanced data analytics tools to monitor and evaluate non-emergency patient transport service performance continuously.
- Use data-driven insights to identify areas for improvement and optimise service delivery.
- Utilise predictive analytics to forecast demand and allocate resources efficiently.



PATIENT FOCUSED

Prioritising patient needs and feedback to enhance service delivery.



The core focus of NEPTS is to ensure that patients receive safe, timely and comfortable transportation to and from healthcare facilities. A patient-focused approach is paramount to delivering high-quality non-emergency patient transport services that meet the needs of a diverse patient population.

Designing non-emergency patient transport services with and for patients is crucial to delivering a service that is accessible, patient-centered and effective. Engaging patients in the design process ensures that the service meets their specific needs, from ease of booking to comfort during transport, resulting in a more positive overall experience.

When transport services are tailored to individual patient requirements, whether that involves accommodating mobility issues, medical conditions or personal preferences, patients will achieve a positive experience.

Comfort and safety are equally important. High-quality, well-maintained vehicles and well-trained staff contribute to a safe, comfortable journey. A focus on both physical and emotional well-being during transport can significantly enhance the patient experience.

Having the ability to understand how services are being experienced by patients is a critical component to continuous service development. Creating easy and accessible systems for patients to provide feedback ensures that the service evolves based on real experiences and needs. Regularly reviewing and acting on this feedback allows continuous improvement, ensuring the service remains responsive to patient expectations.

Effective communication is also essential. Clear, concise information about the transport process, from how to book to what to expect, ensures patients are well informed. Offering multiple communication methods, such as phone, online platforms and mobile applications improves access to services.



PATIENT FOCUSED

Prioritising patient needs and feedback to enhance service delivery.



Personalised Care

- Tailor transport services to meet the needs and preferences of patients.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers that convey NEPTS patients are trained to a high standard and provide compassionate and patient-centred care.



Comfort and Safety

- Ensure that all vehicles that convey NEPTS patients are to a high standard of quality, safety and comfort to enhance patient experience.
- Ensure that all patient transport service providers are procured through a robust procurement process that includes a rigorous constant safety and quality assurance process.



Feedback Mechanisms

- Ensure systems for patient feedback are easily accessible, in order for patients to provide feedback on their non-emergency patient transport experiences.
- Regularly review and act on patient feedback to continuously improve service quality.



Enhancing Communication

- Provide patients with clear, concise information about non-emergency patient transport services, including how to book, what to expect and whom to contact for assistance.
- Provide patients with access to multiple methods of communication, incorporating the use of online chat functions and mobile applications.



Advocacy and Representation

- In the development, design and delivery of non-emergency patient transport services, ensure the facilitation of forums that include patient represented bodies, to advocate for the needs and interests of patients.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Building strong collaborative relationships with partnership organisations to improve service outcomes.



Collaboration and partnership working is a crucial element of developing and delivering services to the wider population. Partnership working between NEPTS, health boards, Government, public transport (Transport for Wales), local authorities and community transport services offers numerous benefits in creating an integrated transport network. Aligning services through partnership working ensures that patients have access to a range of transport options, ensuring patients can easily access their medical appointments on time.

By working together, these organisations can share data to effectively plan and develop transport solutions that not only align to patient demand but also population flow, creating an effective transport network for the wider population. Integrating public and community transport options expands accessibility, particularly for patients in rural or underserved areas. Community transport services can fill gaps where traditional public transport may be limited, ensuring vulnerable patients are not left without transport.

This approach will enhance resource utilisation and minimise gaps in the existing transport network, ensuring enhanced service connectivity and providing greater value for Wales.

Ultimately, partnership working ensures a smoother, more efficient transport network, improving patient experience, increasing access to services and maximising the use of resources within Wales.



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Building strong collaborative relationships with partnership organisations to improve service outcomes.



Collaborative Delivery

- Collaborate with public and third sector bodies in the development of an accessible transport network, which provides a seamless transition between transport and healthcare.
- Develop a data sharing platform between partnership organisations, to support the effective design and development of transport services, leading towards a sustainable transport network in Wales.
- Work with partnership organisations to identify how system funding can be utilised through alternative methods to deliver more cost effective options.



Policy and Legislation

- Work with partners and Government bodies in the updating or development of policies and legislation, which have the ability to impact on transportation networks and access to health care services.



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