

## Frequently asked questions:

### If a patient has previously had an escort, will an escort always be approved?

No, each individual case will be dealt with appropriately in accordance with the criteria previously highlighted.

The authorisation of an escort for a patient on one return journey will not necessarily lead to the automatic authorisation of an escort in subsequent journeys where the patient's physical or mental condition may have changed.

### What about fear of flying?

Fear of flying is not in itself a reason for asking for an escort. The airline is accustomed and experienced in dealing with passengers who have anxieties or fears around flying, and they will deal with this as required.

Further copies of this leaflet are available from:

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If you do please contact 01595 743064 for assistance. An interpreter can be made available or the document can be supplied in your choice of language or print.

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# Escorts for Patients

## Patient Information Leaflet

This guidance is issued by Shetland NHS Board to provide information about all patient transport in relation to the provision of escorts paid for by the Highlands and Islands Travel Scheme.

Some patients will have to travel outwith Shetland to receive their medical care in hospital. For some patients, it will be necessary for them to be accompanied by an escort on this journey.

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## What is an escort?

An escort paid for by the Highlands and Islands Travel Scheme is for a patient who needs assistance to ensure the safe completion of the journey to or from hospital.

## Who can be an escort?

Any person that the patient wishes to nominate to travel with them on their journey. This can be a family member, carer or friend.

## What is the role of the GP?

Your family doctor (GP) will usually be the person who will be referring you/ family member/relative to hospital and so the GP will decide whether or not an escort is necessary.

## When can a patient receive an escort?

- All patients aged 16 and under will automatically qualify for an escort.
- In all other cases the criterion for authorising an escort is that it should be **medically necessary** for the patient to be escorted.

Examples of who would be entitled to an escort are patients with severe mobility restrictions, severe visual or hearing impairment, learning or

behavioural difficulties and mental incapacity, who are not normally independent and where assistance during the journey is needed, beyond the usual help that the airlines and patient transport can provide.

There are 3 elements to be taken into account when deciding whether or not an escort is allowed:

### 1. Is it necessary that the patient be escorted on the journey?

The criterion calls for there to be a necessity to be escorted, not merely that it is desirable to be accompanied.

### 2. Is the necessity of a medical nature?

Social or emotional grounds are not sufficient to fulfil the criterion.

### 3. Is the medical necessity only for the safe completion of the journey?

If a patient is medically fit to complete the journey unescorted, an escort should not be authorised in order to allow a relative to be present during treatment or other forms of hospital management.

This specifically precludes the authorisation of an escort for such reasons as to allow partners to be present at the birth of their children; to allow relatives to be present during serious surgical procedures; to allow relatives to be present when distressing news might have to be broken.

Transfer to Hospital in Aberdeen via minibus can be arranged, and any other specific needs should be discussed with the Patient Travel Staff. It would be appreciated if patients could make their needs known in advance as airport staff cannot anticipate problems if they have not been informed.

There is a Hospital Discharge Liaison Nurse for Orkney and Shetland who can advise and support patients in Aberdeen.

Contact: Aberdeen Royal Infirmary on 01224 554352 or 0845 456 6000 and ask for bleep 3611.

If a patient's journey does not warrant an escort, a Hospital Visitors Fare may be appropriate to allow someone to travel with the patient. This fare **ONLY** applies to In-patient treatment. Please contact the Patient Travel Department on 01595 743305 for advice.