

Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust

Wheelchair Service

Introduction

This short paper gives an overview of the provision of wheelchairs to patients who have a clinical need and explains the process of wheelchair provision.

1. Portsmouth Wheelchair Service receives approximately 1800 referrals for either a new wheelchair provision or a re-assessment per year.
2. This service is provided by the Disablement Services Centre situated at St. Mary's Hospital Portsmouth.
3. There are currently 12,000 manual chairs and 700 power chairs on issue in the community.
4. Referrals are received from the ward discharge team, community therapists and GP's.
5. Once a patient is provided with a wheelchair they are able to re-refer themselves directly into the service if their clinical needs change and a re-assessment of their wheelchair is required.
6. 60% of all of the referrals result in an assessment being undertaken by the clinical team. The remaining 40% of referrals require a basic, manual chair with standard accessories and are dealt with as paper cases by the clinical team and therefore do not require a direct assessment.
7. Wheelchairs are a Class 1 Medical Device and subject to the guidance from the Medical and Healthcare Devices Agency DB2006(05). There are frequent product recalls and MHRA alerts relating to wheelchairs or their components and as such, it is imperative that the wheelchairs can be traced and repaired efficiently.
8. The Disablement Services Centre has a new Approved Repairer called AJ Mobility who also provides 11 other service contracts nationwide.
9. The approved repairer reconditions 500 manual chairs per year, 40 indoor power chairs and 100 Indoor/Outdoor power chairs.
10. Over 1700 delivery activities and 1000 collections per year are carried out as well as 2670 repairs to manual chairs.
11. Approximately 40% of deliveries come from recycled chairs. The rest of the chairs are bespoke and ordered to specifically meet the clinical needs of the patients who are assessed.
12. The Disablement Services Centre engineers carry out a weekly audit at the AJ Mobility site to ensure that reconditioning and repair standards are maintained.

Staffing

13. The Wheelchair Service team consist of 2.5 Specialist Posture and Mobility Therapists, 2 Rehabilitation Engineers, and 1 Rehabilitation technician.
14. 3 clerical staff support the service and manage the processing of orders, receive phone calls and deal with all of the enquiries into the Department.
15. On a monthly basis, the clinical team will carry out 110 posture assessments and allocate a further 60 chairs or accessories on a paper case basis, i.e. provide equipment to patients who do not require an assessment.
16. The wheelchair service provides equipment to any eligible patient over the age of 3 years of age and covers all types of provision including standard chairs, wheelchairs to facilitate ward discharges, power chairs and complex seating.
17. Patients that cannot be seated in a standard configuration of wheelchair because they have fixed joint or limb deformities, require bespoke casting. The resulting contoured seating is then interfaced onto a manual or power chair base.
18. The Environmental control service is also based within the wheelchair departments and the power control systems are often designed and fitted to incorporate the patients' home environmental controls and the wheelchair control units.

Finance

19. Unlike other Service Level Agreements within the NHS where the money 'follows the patient' (often referred to as 'payment by results') the provision of wheelchairs is managed through a 'fixed block contract' which means that there is a finite amount of money available per annum with which to provide wheelchairs for patients. Therefore the requirement for a wheelchair has to be assessed on strict clinical need.
20. Within the Portsmouth area there is a higher proportion of patients with disabilities than the neighbouring wheelchair services of Winchester and Basingstoke.
21. The referral rate per year is four times greater than that of Winchester and 60% of referrals relate to patients with complex disabilities, when the above factors are taken into account the limitations of the fixed block contract become clear.
22. Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust has asked Portsmouth Primary Care Trust and Hants Primary Care Trust to carry out a health needs assessment of the wheelchair users in their respective areas to establish the true scale of wheelchair usage and wheelchair users needs.
23. There are currently a number of service developments being undertaken with Hampshire and Portsmouth Primary Care Trusts:

- Recent work has been completed to validate the existing referral criteria and the Primary Care Trusts have made some minor changes. It is not anticipated that these will result in any reduction in the referral rate.
- An equipment formulary for our core stock is being implemented and any exceptions to this will be reported to the Primary Care Trusts for additional funding.
- The waiting list is being redefined into two categories, namely urgent and routine so that the patients with urgent clinical needs can be assessed more quickly.
- The equipment ordering process is being altered so that the regular purchases can be made via a catalogue so that we can expedite the delivery times from the manufacture.

Other Wheelchairs

24. Other wheelchairs seen on the QA site are for general use and are readily available at main reception areas; a quantity of these wheelchairs was purchased by the League of Friends. Staff can request a porter with wheel chair if required by the patient or carer. These wheelchairs have a coin deposit mechanism. There is currently discussion within the Trust as to whether these wheelchairs should be maintained 'in house' or by Carillion.

Timothy Robinson

Head of Public and Patient Involvement

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