



West Yorkshire Patient Transport Service Service Re-start: Implementation of Patient Self-Booking June 2020

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This paper provides a summary of the key changes being implemented within YAS Patient Transport Services (PTS) in West Yorkshire to maintain continuity of service during the post-crisis system recovery.
- 1.2. From mid-June, the service will be enabling eligible patients to self-book their transport via telephone. This is routine practice in other areas of the region, but has previously not been available in West Yorkshire. The introduction of patient self-booking aims to increase service efficiency at a time of very limited capacity by ensuring that all bookings are accurate and appropriately triaged in line with national guidance. This process will reduce the potential for aborted journeys and preserve PTS capacity for those most in need.

2. Background

- 2.1. As part of the national Covid-19 response, all existing PTS contracts and national eligibility criteria were suspended, and the entirety of PTS resource was focused on facilitating discharges and providing transport for 'essential' journeys only - as defined in national guidance.
- 2.2. PTS capacity has also been significantly reduced due to the need to maintain social distancing and enhanced infection control measures during the ongoing pandemic. For PTS this has meant rapidly changing to a service model that can only transport a single patient per vehicle; as well as increased turnaround times between journeys to accommodate additional vehicle cleaning.
- 2.3. Prior to Covid, multi-occupant journeys made up approximately 37% of all YAS PTS activity in West Yorkshire. Moving to single patient journeys is overwhelmingly the right response for patients, though this has significantly reduced the efficiency and capacity of PTS across the region. With social distancing in its current form YAS modelling shows that existing PTS capacity (including our volunteers, IS and 3rd sector contractors) can only support up to 60% of pre-Covid activity levels.
- 2.4. Returning to pre-Covid activity levels with social distancing in place would require a further 140 WTE staff plus vehicles – which is unlikely to be feasible in the short to medium term. We are therefore taking urgent steps to develop external capacity and to drive greater efficiency out of existing PTS capacity.

3. Changes to PTS during the Covid Response

- 3.1. In line with national guidance, several steps were taken to manage PTS capacity during the initial phase of the Covid response:
 - 3.1.1. All patients advised to use their own private transport (or a household member's) wherever possible, or to seek support through volunteers i.e. Good Sam
 - 3.1.2. Electronic booking by Acute Trusts (via PAS) was suspended and replaced with direct booking by Health care professionals and representatives (HCRs) in acute trusts – focusing on essential services and discharge teams
 - 3.1.3. To avoid confusion regarding essential vs non-essential journeys, patient self-booking (was suspended across the region, bookings only through an HCR
- 3.2. These steps were effective in phase 1, allowing PTS to implement social distancing and to support delivery of the interim national discharge standard. The focus on accurate bookings also meant that aborted journeys reached all-time low figures during March-May. Typically within West Yorkshire over 8% of PTS journeys (ca. 3,000 per month) are wasted through aborts – usually where a patient decides to make their own way to an appointment and does not inform the acute trust to cancel their PTS booking. This is a significant and long-standing inefficiency within the WY system which was largely resolved during the initial phase of the Covid response.
- 3.3. While the system has seen some benefits from the greater attention placed on PTS booking; the increasing volume of activity means that telephone booking by HCRs is no longer practical, and risks placing an additional burden on acute staff.

4. Implementing Patient Self Booking

- 4.1. From June 15th, Patient self-booking - by phone - will be re-started in North Yorkshire, East Riding, Hull and North Lincolnshire. These areas previously had self-booking, combined with eligibility screening, prior to Covid, and will be returning to established systems – although with a revised set of interim eligibility criteria (see appendix 1).
- 4.2. Within West and South Yorkshire, PAS bookings will continue to be suspended and the current system of bookings by HCRs will remain in place. However in order to support Trusts with making PTS bookings, Yorkshire Ambulance Service will make a series of changes to the way bookings are taken:

From 15th June:	<p>Online facilities to make bookings will be amended to allow for booking of Outpatient appointments by HCR's registered on YAS's cleric booking system. At that point a series of screening questions will be required to be answered before the booking can be made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Travelling in your own car or with someone from your household is the safest transport environment during this pandemic. Therefore it is essential that HCRs continue to check with the patient that appropriate alternative methods of transport have been considered. As a result of social distancing PTS is operating with much reduced capacity, and we must ensure that PTS
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	<p>provision is available for those at risk or vulnerable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where HCRs are making bookings on behalf of patients they must have enough knowledge of the patients' mobility needs, any equipment required, their personal transport options and access. Should they not be able to complete the set screening questions, PTS will be unable to take the booking. • Wherever possible patients during this transition phase patients should be encouraged to complete the booking themselves by contacting YAS directly on 0300 330 2000. • This approach will ensure that bookings are accurate and has the added benefit of removing an administrative burden from acute or primary care HCR's.
From 22nd June	<p>Patient Self-booking will be fully enabled and promoted across acute trusts and primary care.</p> <p>Patients will be signposted to book directly with YAS on 0300 330 2000.</p> <p>We will proactively encourage HCRs to provide patients with our YAS single point of contact number as patients will be best placed to answer the screening questions relating to their mobility needs.</p> <p>YAS will continue to accept bookings from HCRs (with appropriate screening information as set out above), although it is intended that patient self-booking will be used wherever possible.</p>

- 4.3. When patients contact YAS PTS to book directly they will be screened to ensure eligibility for NHS funded transport – using a simple, interim set of eligibility criteria (as set out in appendix 1). Patients who do not meet the interim screening criteria will be referred within YAS for additional screening to confirm their medical need for NHS funded transport.
- 4.4. During the Covid recovery phase there is an opportunity to continue to increase the proportion of patients who self-book transport in West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire. Whilst Acute Trusts and GPs will always retain the ability to book transport, there are significant benefits in encouraging patients to self-book.
- 4.4.1. Rates of aborted journeys in areas with self booking are typically much lower – (ca. 4.5% compared to 8-9% in areas without). This is an important consideration to preserve transport capacity whilst social distancing measures are in place, but also represents an ongoing system efficiency once normal conditions resume.

4.4.2. Within West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire, the usual booking processes do not allow for the national PTS eligibility criteria to be routinely applied (i.e. there is currently no routine screening to ensure that patients meet the national criteria to receive NHS funded transport). Introducing patient self-booking creates the foundation to apply the eligibility criteria in future - as part of a wider consultation with patients and system partners. This step has already been taken in North and East Yorkshire where it has proven to be safe and effective at reducing low acuity demand and system transport costs.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1. With the ongoing support of PTS commissioners, over the coming weeks YAS will continue to engage with stakeholders to communicate the changes to booking processes. In addition to acute partners, particular attention is needed to engage with Primary Care regarding the process for new patient bookings during system recovery. To manage limited transport capacity for those with the need for it; the bookings are to be made by the patients themselves, rather than a tick box at the time of making the outpatient appointment.
- 5.2. YAS will provide communications through established primary care channels, in partnership with CCG's to ensure that electronic and leaflet guidance and single point of contact details are accessible to all.
- 5.3. With Commissioners and system partners, YAS PTS will continue to review and evaluate the impact of the changes set out above.
- 5.4. Through the YAS Recovery Programme, YAS PTS will continue to engage in the development of System recovery plans, including developing opportunities within West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire for ongoing system benefits through the application of national PTS eligibility criteria.

Appendix 1: Interim PTS Booking Criteria (pending approval by YAS Clinical Governance Committee)

The acceptance criteria which will be applied are as follows;

1. Where a patient requires a crew of 2 staff or lives in a nursing or residential home, NHS funded transport will be available.
 2. Where a patient meets any of the following criteria they will be asked if they have access to their own transport, or whether someone in their household is able to provide them transport. If they are unable to travel with a household member then NHS funded transport will be provided.
- Shielding as instructed by Government
 - Travelling for Chemotherapy/Radiotherapy/Dialysis appointments
 - Requires 24hr live in care at home

For all patients not meeting the criteria above, the following statement should be considered;

At the moment, due to social distancing PTS are moving only 1 patient at a time in each vehicle. As a result we have very limited capacity, which needs to be protected to ensure we are able to provide transport for those who are most at risk or vulnerable.

Then the patient should be asked;

- Do you have friends or family who could provide transport? **(this is the safest means of transport from a COVID IP&C guidance point of view – and needs to be promoted as such)**
- Can you confirm that you have a medical need for NHS funded transport?
- Does your medical need require that you use NHS Funded transport to attend your appointment, and would prevent you from making your own way or using Public Transport?
- Are you able to travel by taxi or voluntary car service?

HCRs making bookings for patients will be asked to complete the screening set.

Escorts will continue to NOT be allowed to travel, unless the patient is under 18, or has severe diagnosed dementia, or requires 24 hour care at home.

Patients who ring and are unable to meet the screening questions will be referred within YAS for additional screening to further review their medical need and be provided with alternative transport options within their area.