

# Response by NHS England (London Region) to the London Assembly Transport Committee report *Improving door-to-door transport in London*

## 1 Introduction

This paper represents the response by NHS England (London Region) to the report by the Transport Committee of the London Assembly, *Improving door-to-door transport in London, next steps*, which is itself a submission to Transport for London's review of door-to-door services, *The Social Needs Transport Review*.

The report raises several important points in relation to access and quality of transport services for Londoners with mobility problems.

## 2 Background

Patient transport services provide eligible individuals with non-emergency medical care needs with free transport to and from hospitals and clinics.

Eligible patients include those:

- Where the medical condition of the patient is such that they require the skills or support of patient transport service staff on or after the journey and/or where it would be detrimental to the patient's condition or recovery if they were to travel by other means;
- Where the patient's medical condition impacts on their mobility to such an extent that they would be unable to access healthcare and/or it would be detrimental to the patient's condition or recovery to travel by other means;
- Recognised as a parent or guardian where children are being conveyed.

Patient transport services are commissioned by local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). A range of providers operate in London, including the London Ambulance Service, transport provided by individual NHS Hospital Trusts, and independent private organisations. The voluntary sector also provides some patient transport services.

## 3 Recommendations

The Transport Committee of the London Assembly makes a number of recommendations for NHS England (London Region) to undertake wholly or in

conjunction with Transport for London (TfL) and the London boroughs/London Councils:

- NHS England London should instigate a review of the provision of Patient Transport services by NHS Trusts in London, with the objective to define and enforce minimum service standards (within 6 months);
- Consistent eligibility criteria should be established for Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard, Capital Call and NHS Patient Transport, and a single application process for people wanting to become users of these services should be introduced (within 1-2 years);
- A single customer feedback system for Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard, Capital Call and NHS Patient Transport should be established. This would enable complaints about all services to be directed to the same place. User surveys should also be integrated across these services (within 1-2 years);
- TfL [should] include these measures as early actions in the report of the Social Needs Transport Review, and work with boroughs, London Councils and NHS Trusts to deliver them (within 1-2 years).
- A single booking process for Dial-a-Ride, Taxicard, Capital Call and NHS Patient Transport should be established. This would enable service users to request journeys from any of these services at a single online source, or from local call centres covering all services (within 3-5 years);
- All door-to-door services should be commissioned jointly by TfL, boroughs and NHS Trusts. Commissioning should take place at a local or sub-regional level. Commissioners should seek to deliver a mix of regular and on-demand services, operated by public, private or voluntary sector providers. Funding would be provided by TfL, boroughs and NHS Trusts according to existing expenditure levels. The introduction of individual travel budgets for service users should also be considered (within 3-5 years).

## 4 Response

NHS England (London Region) recognises that while there are some outstanding patient transport services, there is variability in the provision of services across London. We also recognise that missed appointments serve no one: most importantly they fail the patient, but they also fail both the commissioner and the provider of services.

Governance in place since the enactment of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 means that commissioning and decision-making about the majority of NHS services are now made at a local level. It must be clear, therefore, that decisions about patient transport services are a local matter and it is the responsibility of London CCGs to decide how these services are commissioned and managed in the capital. It is not within the remit of NHS England (London Region) to impose a set of standards upon local commissioners.

We therefore recommend that the Transport Committee engages with local CCG Chairs and Chief Officers in relation to their responsibilities for taking forward the recommendations made in its report, and any further recommendations emerging from the Committee's work.

NHS England (London Region) will highlight the Transport Committee's report to the teams leading a programme of work that is currently underway to transform NHS services in London. The programme includes 13 priority workstreams, six of which are clinical (urgent and emergency care, mental health, children and young people, cancer, homeless health services and prevention) and seven of which are focussed on enablers (primary care, interoperability, personalisation and participation, specialised commissioning, payments and funding, estates and workforce). A programme of community services transformation, while not a standalone programme, cuts across much of the work being undertaken.

NHS England (London Region) recognises that better integration between the commissioners of patient transport services would be beneficial, alongside an improved means of ensuring effective patient feedback. NHS England (London Region) would support an initiative, led by TfL, to determine how this process should be established.

## 5 Next steps

NHS England (London Region) will highlight the Transport Committee's report on door-to-door services to the programme teams leading the transformation work described above.

We would be grateful if the Committee would keep us informed of developments following the submission of its report, and the subsequent publication of TfL's *Social Needs Transport Review*.