

Policy of Financial Assistance to Support Travel to and from Hospital

Document Type (please mark with X):	Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Guideline	<input type="checkbox"/>	Procedure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Protocol	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Date ratified:	24/03/2025							
Review date:	01/09/2026							
Version:	1.1							
Key words:	<i>Patient Travel, Financial Assistance, Highlands and Islands Patient Travel Scheme, HITS</i>							
OFFICE USE ONLY	Policy ID number	id 1660						
	Intranet location:	Policy Library – Organisational - Finance						

This document can, on request, be made available in alternative formats.
Record of Changes

Date	Version	Page	Amendment
17/12/2024	1.0		New document – existing policy transferred to new controlled document template; new sections updated (6/7/8)
26/08/25	1.1	4	Inclusion of other areas supported by the policy

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Document Summary Sheet

Key messages:

- The policy provides financial assistance that is a **contribution** towards travel, not a full reimbursement.
- Patients are responsible for ensuring their own travel arrangements align with our policy before incurring expenses.
 - If unsure, patients are responsible for seeking clarification from the NHS Highland Patient Travel Teams only.
- Taxis are a last resort option for transport and **must be pre-authorised**.
 - Without pre-authorisation, taxi fares will not be reimbursed, and the rate of public transport will apply instead.
- Patients must reside more than thirty miles away from the hospital, or more than five miles by sea, to be eligible for financial assistance.

NHS Highland is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all individuals accessing financial assistance under this policy. In line with data protection legislation, including the UK General Data Protection (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, the following principles apply:

- **Minimal Data Collection:** Only the information necessary to process travel claims is collected. This includes patient details, appointment verification, and financial eligibility where applicable.
- **Limited Clinician Contact:** When clinicians are consulted to confirm eligibility for escorts, taxis, or other travel-related support, only the required limited information is requested.
- **Restricted Data Use:** Personal data is not shared beyond what is required for claim processing and is never used for purposes unrelated to patient travel assistance.
- **Data Retention:** Information is retained only for as long as necessary to process and audit claims, in line with NHS retention policies. Once the retention period expires, data is securely deleted or anonymised.
- **Confidentiality and Security:** All personal information is handled securely, with access restricted to authorised staff involved in administering patient travel assistance.

For further information on how NHS Highland processes personal data, please refer to the [NHS Highland Privacy Notice](#).

1. Overview and Introduction

The NHS Highland Patient Travel Policy outlines the financial assistance available to patients and their carers/escorts for travel costs when attending hospital appointments, inpatient stays, or day cases. It acknowledges the challenges posed by the geography of the Highlands, where patients often need to travel significant distances for care.

There are two schemes in operation in NHS Scotland to assist patients with travel costs associated with these attendances:

1. **Patient Travel Scheme** – Provides support to all NHS Scotland patients receiving specific income-based benefits, regardless of distance travelled. The benefits which currently apply are listed in Appendix 1.
2. **Highlands and Islands Patient Travel Scheme** – Offers financial assistance to patients living in the former Highlands and Islands Development Board area who travel **more than thirty miles (one way)** to reach hospital or require a **journey by sea of more than five miles**. The Scottish Government's MEL 1996 (70) "Patients' Travelling Expenses Schemes" governs the content of this policy.

All other residents in NHS Highland not included in 1 or 2 above must pay their own travel expenses to get to hospital unless one of the following policies/area applies:

1. Financial Assistance for Abortion Care
[Find abortion services - NHS](#)
For late-stage (20+ weeks) abortion services you might be referred to BPAS (British Pregnancy Advisory Service) who will work with you to ensure the best treatment path.
2. [Young Patients Family Fund \(YPFF\)](#)
3. Healthcare & Forensic Medical Services
For those who have experience rape, sexual assault or child sexual abuse
4. [Living Donor Expenses Reimbursement](#)
5. Support of Children (under 16 or in fulltime education up to the age of 18) and Parent/Escort with Travel to and from Specialist Orthodontic Care

Patients who have NHS Ambulance Service transport arranged, private patients, or patients visiting primary care services such as their GP, dentist or pharmacist are not entitled to financial assistance under this policy.

Acting beyond the scope of these guidelines is not permitted.

The NHS Highland Patient Travel Policy ensures clarity for patients, carers, NHS Highland staff, and others involved in managing or authorising patient travel support, aligning with Scottish Government guidance.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the following departments and staff groups:

1. **NHS Highland Staff** – Including those involved in administering, authorising, or supporting patient travel arrangements.
2. **Wider NHS Staff** – Any staff that patients interact with throughout their healthcare journey, including hospital staff and administrative teams.
3. **General Practice Staff** – Who may provide guidance or support to patients regarding travel assistance.

4. **Patients and Carers/Escorts** – Those directly benefiting from or responsible for understanding and accessing travel cost assistance.

This policy ensures all relevant groups are aware of their responsibilities and the support available for patient travel.

3. Background

This policy is necessary to address the unique geographical challenges of the Highlands and Islands, where patients often need to travel significant distances to access hospital services. It ensures that financial barriers do not prevent patients from receiving appropriate care and that financial assistance is provided consistently across the Health Board.

Aims and Objectives:

1. **Ensure equitable access to secondary care**
 - a. The policy aims to support patients and their carers/escorts with travel costs, ensuring all patients, regardless of financial circumstances or location, can access necessary planned secondary care hospital services.
2. **Reduce financial barriers**
 - a. By offering financial contribution, the policy helps alleviate the burden of travel costs, particularly for those on low incomes or living in remote areas.
3. **Recognise geographic challenges**
 - a. The policy acknowledges the significant distances patients in the Highlands and Islands may have to travel and provides targeted support to address this challenge.
4. **Provide clarity and consistency**
 - a. It outlines NHS Highland's responsibilities and the eligibility criteria for financial assistance, ensuring transparency and consistency for patients and staff.
5. **Support Scottish Government Guidance**
 - a. The policy is bound by national frameworks, such as *MEL 1996 (70) "Patients' Travelling Expenses Schemes"* and the *"Help with health costs (HCS1): information booklet – August 2021"* booklet, to ensure compliance with national standards and equitable support across NHS Scotland.

4. Definitions

3. **Escort** – A pre-authorised, designated individual who accompanies a patient for travel assistance based on medical necessity.
4. **Continuous Treatment** – A defined course of intensive treatment requiring more than one attendance per week (e.g., chemotherapy, dialysis).
5. **Long-Term Treatment** – A treatment plan extending over an extended period (more than two weeks) where travel assistance may be required, including for weekend returns home.

6. **Financial Assistance** – A contribution towards travel expenses for eligible patients, not a full reimbursement.
7. **Highlands and Islands Patient Travel Scheme** – A specific travel assistance programme for residents of the Highlands and Islands Development Board area.
8. **Patient Travel Scheme** – A scheme that provides financial support for NHS Scotland patients on specific income-based benefits.
9. **Pre-Authorisation** – Approval required in advance for certain travel expenses (e.g., taxi fares, escorts).
10. **Qualifying Income-Based Benefits** – Specific government benefits that determine eligibility for full financial assistance.
11. **Mileage Rate** – The per-mile contribution rate for patients using their own vehicle.
12. **Patient Contribution** – The amount a patient must pay before receiving travel reimbursement.
13. **Accommodation Support** – Financial assistance for overnight stays when required due to travel constraints, up to a maximum rate per person per night.

5. Financial Assistance for Patient Travel Process

5.1. Principles:

- 5.1.1. The Patient Travel Schemes provide a **contribution** toward travel costs, not full reimbursement.
- 5.1.2. Under the Highlands and Islands Travel Scheme, patients **must pay the first £10** of any claim. Patients on qualifying benefits (Appendix 1) are exempt upon providing evidence of eligibility.
- 5.1.3. Patients and approved escorts must use the **most cost-effective** mode of transport suitable to their needs, considering the total trip cost.
- 5.1.4. Final judgement of the **cheapest reasonable means** of transport rests with NHS Highland. Patients should confirm eligibility in advance if unsure.
- 5.1.5. NHS Highland can book air, rail, or ferry travel (contact details in Appendix 3). Patients may alternatively arrange their own travel and claim back their financial contribution.
- 5.1.6. Flights will only be authorised by patient travel booking officers if:
 - a. The patient's health condition or disability requires it, or
 - b. It is **cheaper overall** than alternative transport (e.g. car, ferry, bus, train) plus overnight accommodation.

- 5.1.7. Relatives accompanying patients on air ambulance who do not qualify as escorts (Appendix 5) must cover their **own accommodation and return travel**. Air ambulance travel alone does not confer escort status.
- 5.1.8. Patients using their **own car** can claim mileage expenses at the [HMRC Fuel Advisory rate](#), which is reviewed and updated quarterly and based on the rate for a petrol engine 1400cc to 2000cc.
- 5.1.9. Travel for **private treatment** is not reimbursed.
- 5.1.10. Claims must be for **completed journeys** only. Submitting claims for unmade journeys is fraud and will result in action.
- 5.1.11. Patients and escorts are encouraged to stay with **family or friends** where possible.
- 5.1.12. Travel should occur on the **same day** as the appointment. If travel schedules do not permit a day return, travel is allowed one day before or after with accommodation costs covered where necessary.

5.2. Who can claim expenses:

The following individuals may be eligible for contribution towards travel expenses:

5.2.1. Patients

- Permanent residents of the NHS Highland area who live thirty miles or more (one way) from the hospital or require a journey by sea of more than five miles.

5.2.2. Authorised escorts

- Suitable adults who do not have a medical condition that limits their ability to support the patient during travel. Escorts must be able to drive if travelling by car. Further guidance on eligibility of escorts is provided in Appendix 5.
- A contribution towards escorts' expenses will be provided based on the patient's eligibility. Escorts must fulfil the purpose for which their travel was authorised.
- If an escort fails to accompany the patient completely as planned, a contribution toward their expenses will not be provided, and they may be required to repay costs incurred by NHS Highland.

5.3. Who cannot claim expenses:

5.3.1. Emergency travel

- Patients admitted to a mainland hospital under emergency circumstances or transported by NHS Ambulance are not eligible for reimbursement under the Highlands and Islands Travel Scheme. These situations fall outside the scope of this policy.
 - Patients transported by ambulance may have their return journey arranged and travel costs contributed to by the NHS Highland Patient Travel Office provided they meet the scheme's eligibility requirements.

- Costs incurred due to falling ill while away from home (e.g. on holiday) are not reimbursed.
- **Air Ambulance travel:**
 - The Scottish Air Ambulance crew determines whether friends or relatives can accompany the patient. Accompanying a patient by air ambulance does not grant medical escort status, and such individuals are responsible for their own accommodation and return journey expenses.
 - Patients transported by air ambulance can have their return journey arranged by the NHS Highland Patient Travel Office who will determine the financial contribution payable provided they meet the scheme's eligibility requirements. Escorts for the return journey must be pre-authorised for both patient and escort to receive a financial contribution.

5.3.2. Students

- Students studying and living outside the NHS Highland area are not eligible for reimbursement, as they are considered ordinarily resident at the location of their academic institution, not their parents' address.

5.3.3. Patient visitors

- NHS Highland does not provide reimbursement for visiting expenses.
- Visitors on income-based benefits may seek assistance with visiting costs through their local DWP office.
- The Scottish Government Young Patients Family Fund (YPFF) offers support for travel and food costs for parents, parent substitutes, or siblings (under 18) of inpatients under 18 receiving hospital care. This fund is outside the scope of this policy.

5.4. What expenses can be claimed:

5.4.1. Transport

Patients and escorts are required to use the most cost-effective means of transport, considering the overall trip cost.

- **Patients travelling by car**
 - Patients using their own vehicle can claim mileage expenses at the prevailing rate (Appendix 2), subject to:
 - a) Only journeys where the patient is in the vehicle are reimbursed unless an authorised escort is travelling home after the patient's admission or travelling to collect the patient upon discharge.
 - b) If two patients from the same address attend appointments on the same day at the same hospital, only one car journey is reimbursed unless pre-approved by the Patient Travel Administrator.
- **Patients travelling by public transport**
 - Standard class bus and train fares are reimbursed upon submission of valid receipts.

- **Ferries**

- Patients residing on islands and requiring ferry travel should refer to Appendix 4 for specific arrangements, which vary by island.
- Foot passenger fares are expected unless:
 - a) A GP authorises vehicle use due to medical reasons.
 - b) A vehicle is essential to complete the journey to the hospital.

- **Patients transported by Air/Road Ambulance**

- These patients are entitled to have their return journey contributed to, provided they meet the scheme's eligibility requirements.

5.4.2. Accommodation

- Patients and authorised escorts can claim overnight accommodation expenses at the current rates (Appendix 2) when an overnight stay is unavoidable due to appointment, admission, or discharge timings.
- Escorts must return home at the earliest opportunity unless staying near the hospital is pre-authorised. Unauthorised stays will not be reimbursed.
- Escorts required to accompany patients for both arrival and discharge can choose to:
 - c) Return home between journeys, or
 - d) Stay near the hospital if the accommodation cost is more cost-effective than making two return journeys.
- Escorts for children under 16 are usually provided free hospital accommodation. If unavailable, reimbursement will follow prevailing rates. Escorts for patients ages 16-18 and care-experienced adults between the ages of 18-26 can claim accommodation expenses as per the scheme rules.
- Patients and escorts are encouraged to stay with family and friends when possible. A family and friends' overnight rate (Appendix 2) is provided for these stays.
- Final decisions on reimbursement of overnight expenses rest with the Patient Travel Administrator, following the above rules.

5.4.3. Maternity Patients

- Maternity patients who are medically required to stay near the hospital from 38 weeks until birth can claim financial contributions at the overnight accommodation rate.
- Maternity patients who are eligible for an escort may claim for two round trips: one to bring the patient to the hospital and one to collect them upon discharge.
 - Costs for partners wishing to attend the birth in addition to the above two journeys are not reimbursed under the Highlands and Islands Travel Scheme.

- Eligible maternity escorts can alternatively claim for accommodation contributions while the patient awaits delivery, up to the cost of the two round trips.
- Escort costs for routine scans and antenatal appointments are not reimbursed under this policy. Escorts are welcome to attend these appointments at their own expense.

5.4.4. Taxi Fares

Taxi fares are only reimbursed as a last resort and **must be pre-approved**. NHS Highland may consider taxi costs if:

- a) No public transport is available.
 - b) Time constraints make public transport unsuitable.
 - c) A clinician approves taxi use due to mobility issues.
- Approval may be obtained from the Patient Travel Administrator or, for patients flying from Islay, Tiree, and Campbeltown, from the officer authorising the flight.

5.4.5. Long-Term Treatment

Patients undergoing long-term treatment (more than two weeks) within or outside the Highlands and discharged at weekends can claim return travel costs.

5.4.6. Continuous Treatment

Patients attending outpatient appointments for intensive treatments (e.g. chemotherapy, radiotherapy, or dialysis) more than once per week are not required to pay the first £10 contribution for each return journey.

- Detailed guidance on qualifying treatments and claim procedures is provided in Appendix 6.

5.5. What expenses cannot be claimed:

The following cannot be claimed:

- A. Loss of earnings
- B. Meals and refreshments
- C. Travel costs of patients who have become ill while abroad or away from their home address
- D. Parking fines
- E. Childcare costs
- F. Car hire (except where this is a lower cost alternative to public transport)
- G. Transport and accommodation costs without valid receipts

5.6. Making a claim:

5.6.1. Claim forms

- Claim forms are available from hospital wards, clinics, and cash offices.
- The form should be completed by the patient or escort and signed and certified as detailed on the back of the form. This includes certification of attendance on the dates shown on the form.
- Appropriate receipts must be included with all claims. Bank statements cannot be accepted as a receipt. All taxi receipts must contain the date, travel pick up point and

destination and be signed by the driver. Hotel accommodation must be on a valid hotel receipt.

- Any receipts deliberately altered will result in the full claim being invalidated.
- The forms should then be handed into the relevant cash office for reimbursement or posted to:

Highland Council Area (North Highland):

Patient Travel Administrator
NHS Highland
Assynt House
Beechwood Park
Inverness
IV2 3BW

Argyll and Bute:

Patient Travel Administrator
NHS Highland Patient Travel Department
Finance Office
Kilmory Castle
Kilmory
Lochgilphead
PA31 8RT

5.6.2. Proof of entitlement

Patients (or their parent/guardian) claiming full expenses must provide proof of entitlement for each claim before reimbursement is issued. The proof must be dated within the previous 12 months. If proof cannot be provided at the time of the claim, the patient contribution will be deducted from the reimbursement. This amount will be refunded upon submission of valid proof of entitlement.

5.6.3. Suspected Fraudulent Claims

If there is suspicion that a patient has deliberately submitted a false claim for travel assistance, the matter will be referred to Counter Fraud Services (CFS).

- Cashiers may withhold payment if fraud is suspected until further investigations are completed.

5.6.4. Advances

Patients unable to cover the initial cost of travel can request an advance by contacting their local Patient Travel Administrator (see Appendix 3).

- Completed expense forms and receipts must be returned promptly to the Patient Travel Administrator after the hospital attendance.
- Failure to return the required documentation will result in an invoice being raised for the full amount of the advance.

5.6.5. Retrospective Claims

Claims must be submitted within three months of the hospital attendance. Claims submitted beyond this period will not be reimbursed unless exceptional circumstances apply.

5.6.6. Missed appointments

- Patients are responsible for leaving home with sufficient time to arrive promptly for their appointment. If they arrive late and cannot be seen, travel costs will not be reimbursed.
- Patients for whom NHS Highland has pre-arranged travel tickets must notify the Patient Travel Office immediately if they cannot attend their appointment.
- If an appointment is missed without a valid reason, NHS Highland reserves the right to invoice the patient, escort or guardian for any costs incurred.

5.7. Queries or feedback

For any queries or concerns regarding travel claims, patients should contact the Cashier at the hospital where the claim is being made or the Patient Travel Office listed in the Useful Contacts section.

- If the patient is dissatisfied with the decision, the query will be escalated according to the process outlined in Appendix 7.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

This section describes the responsibilities of the various parties involved in patient travel.

1. Patients and Escorts

Patients and escorts are responsible for their own expenses incurred during their travel and need to be aware of limitations to entitlements.

Patients must familiarise themselves with the policy and eligible expenses.

2. Patient's Responsibility

It is the patient's/patient's representative's responsibility to clarify their rights and entitlement directly with their local Patient Travel Office before incurring expense. Other NHS staff, including those based outside of NHS Highland, may offer patients advice on travel arrangements, which may not be an accurate reflection of the NHS Highland's policy of Financial Assistance.

Therefore, any advice received outwith the NHS Highland Patient Travel Offices should be confirmed directly with the Patient Travel Office before patients undertake travel.

3. Patient Travel Team, including cashiers, administrators and officers

Have the operational responsibility for patient travel, staff, and patient communications, and raising awareness.

They are the primary point of contact for policy queries.

4. Director of Finance

The Director of Finance will deal with escalation of non-clinical queries and complaints. It is reasonable to expect that this policy will not cover all eventualities, and the Director of Finance will consider individual circumstances not explicit within the policy.

5. All staff

Should be familiar with details of the Policy of Financial Assistance and refer any queries to the Patient Travel Teams.

7. Monitoring Compliance and Effectiveness

The policy is reviewed every two years. This will include a review of feedback received and associated complaints along with any developments on the regulatory MEL or further advice from Scottish Government.

Additionally, NHS Highland Financial Services team will monitor compliance by undertaking:

1. Audit of Claims

- a. Conduct regular audits of patient travel claims to ensure adherence to policy, including:
- b. Identify and address discrepancies or cases of suspected fraud through Counter Fraud Services

2. Staff Training Compliance

- a. Ensure staff involved in processing claims are trained on the policy.
- b. Track participation in training sessions and assess knowledge retention through periodic reviews.

And NHS Highland will evaluate effectiveness by:

1. Financial Data Analysis

- a. Review reimbursement trends to identify patterns in claims and assess cost-effectiveness.
- b. Monitor budget utilisation against projections to ensure financial sustainability.

2. Reporting

- a. Prepare periodic reports summarising compliance rates, financial performance, and identified issues.
- b. Share findings with stakeholders for accountability and transparency.

8. Consultation Details and Communication Plan

Consultation:

This policy has been reviewed and updated through extensive consultation with a range of services and departments across NHS Highland, ensuring that all relevant stakeholders had the opportunity to contribute to its development. We have actively engaged with Scottish Government representatives and collaborated with neighbouring Highland and Island Health Boards to align with national policy and regional best practices.

This collaborative approach has ensured consistency in patient travel support whilst working towards greater financial sustainability. By refining our processes and maintaining alignment with national and regional frameworks, we continue to provide essential travel assistance to patients in a fair and efficient manner.

Communication plan:

See separate communication plan.

9. Abbreviations

CFS	Counter Fraud Services
GP	General Practitioner
GPs	General Practice
YPFF	Young Patients Family Fund
HCS1	Help with Health Costs (Information booklet)
HC2	NHS Low Income Scheme Full Help Certificate
HC3	NHS Low Income Scheme Partial Help Certificate
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
HMRC	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs

10. References and Associated documents

Associated Documents

14. [MEL 1996 \(70\) "Patients' Travelling Expenses Schemes"](#)
15. [Help with health costs \(HCS1\): information booklet – August 2021](#)
16. [Claims Form](#)

11. Appendices

APPENDIX 1 - QUALIFYING INCOME-BASED BENEFITS

Full Subsidy – patient on income-based support

NHS Highland applies government guidance in determining eligibility for full travel subsidy.

At the time of writing, patients included in an award of the following are entitled to full help with their travel costs, irrespective of the 30-mile rule:

1. Universal Credit
 - a. Which includes an element for a child and/or limited capability for work-related activity, and have had no earnings or net earnings (take-home pay) of £935 or less during the most recent assessment period

- b. And have had no earnings during the most recent assessment period, or net earnings (take-home pay) of £435 or less
2. Income Support
3. Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
4. Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
5. Pension Credit Guarantee Credit
6. NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate
7. HC2 Certificate

This is not an exhaustive list and will be subject to any changes in guidance from Scottish Government.

Full subsidy – children and young people

The following are entitled to full subsidy if their parent or guardian meets the eligibility criteria above:

1. Children under 16
2. Young people aged 16-18 in full-time education
3. Young people aged 16-18 and classed as a dependent of someone who meets the eligibility criteria

Partial subsidy – patient not on income-based support

Partial subsidy is available if the distance travelled from the patient's home (or place of residence) to the hospital is thirty miles or more or involves a journey by sea of more than five miles.

For patients eligible for partial subsidy, NHS Highland will contribute towards reasonable travel expenses less the current patient contribution sum. Should the journey cost less than the current patient contribution then no subsidy will be payable.

Patients holding an HC3 Exemption Certificate may be entitled to pay a lower patient contribution sum.

APPENDIX 2 - RATES OF REIMBURSEMENT AND DEDUCTION

A list of the current standard charges and fees will always be available from Patient Travel Offices and on the Health Board's website.

Patient Travel Rates	
Patient contribution	£10.00
Mileage rate	14p* per mile
Overnight rate (maximum) – bed and breakfast	Up to £60.00 per person per night
Overnight rate – friends and family	£10.00 per night

*The rate of reimbursement is based on the HMRC fuel advisory rate for a petrol engine 1400cc to 2000cc. The reimbursement rate is updated quarterly on:

- 1 March
- 1 June
- 1 September
- 1 December

The rate can go down as well as up. Rates applied to claims are based on the date of the hospital appointment claimed for and its respective quarterly rate.

APPENDIX 3 – CONTACT DETAILS

Patient Travel Department

NHS Highland covers the council areas of Argyll & Bute and Highland.

Please make your travel needs known to us in advance; the patient travel team cannot anticipate or deal with problems if they have not been duly informed.

NHS Highland can book air, ferry, and rail travel. All your specific travel needs should be discussed with NHS Highland's Patient Travel Department.

To book transport or for further information on your travel requirements, please contact your local Patient Travel Department on the contact details below:

Argyll & Bute Council Area Contact Details

Patient Travel Administrator (Argyll and Bute)
NHS Highland Patient Travel Department
Finance Office
Kilmory Castle
Kilmory
Lochgilphead
PA31 8RT

For queries: 01546 790080 / 01546 790081

To make a flight booking or obtain a ferry warrant:

Campbeltown:	01586	552224
Islay and Jura / Tiree (flights):	01496	301031
Tiree (ferry):	01879	220323

Highland Council Area Contact Details:

Patient Travel Administrator (North Highland)
NHS Highland
Assynt House
Beechwood Park
Inverness
IV2 3BW

For bookings and queries: 01463 704902

APPENDIX 4 – FERRY & FLIGHTS FOR ISLAND COMMUNITIES

FERRY

Patients who live on the Islands of Gigha, Mull, Colonsay, Lismore, Coll and Tiree should contact their GP practice, and a travel warrant for ferry travel will be issued.

Patients who live on Islay and Jura should contact the Travel Co-Ordinator on 01496 301031 to make their ferry bookings and an electronic travel warrant for travel will be issued.

Patients who live on any other Island should make their own arrangements and reclaim the cost through the usual procedure

FLIGHTS

Patients who live on Islay, Jura & Tiree should contact the Travel Co-Ordinator on 01496 301031 to make their flight bookings.

Patients who live on Campbeltown should contact the Travel Co-Ordinator on 01586 552224.

For both ferry and flights travel should occur on the **same day** as the appointment. If travel schedules do not permit a day return, travel is allowed one day before or after with accommodation costs covered where necessary.

APPENDIX 5 - ESCORT DEFINITION

What is an escort?

An escort paid for by the Highlands and Islands Patient Travel Scheme is for a patient who needs assistance to ensure the safe completion of the journey to or from hospital who otherwise would not manage to attend their hospital appointment.

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. Escorts must be aged 16 years or older and be able to assist the patient to get to and from the hospital appointment.

Can a patient have more than one escort?

This scheme reimburses the costs of only one escort per patient unless the patient's medical condition requires a second escort for the safe completion of the journey. A second escort will not be authorised to provide emotional support to either the patient or escort.

Should you wish an additional parent/relative/friend to travel with you, or you do not qualify for an escort under this Scheme, this will be at your own expense. However, there may be financial assistance available through the [Scottish Welfare Fund](#). Please contact your local authority for further information.

What is the role of the GP or hospital consultant?

Your family doctor (GP) or hospital consultant will usually be the person deciding whether an escort is clinically necessary.

When can a patient be accompanied by an escort?

The decision on whether NHS Highland will authorise an escort is based on clinical need. In general, this will only be where the patient has a significant clinical condition that makes independent travel impossible.

NHS Highlands will specifically consider the following reason to fund an escort:

- A. A patient under 16 years of age (or is under 18 / care experienced and between ages 18 – 26 and requires overnight hotel accommodation). Only the travel costs of one escort will be contributed to unless there is a medical reason for the child to be accompanied by two adults.
- B. Patient has a Guardianship Order or has an Incapacity Certificate. (An Incapacity Certificate is a certificate provided by a healthcare provider to allow treatment for patients who are unable to make these decisions independently, the patient's main carer should be aware of this.) A copy of the patient's allowance award is required.

- C. Patient is undergoing a procedure that will require assistance on the return journey (e.g. major surgical procedure or joint replacement, medical therapy that causes significant side effects).
- D. Patient has a significant physical or mental disability that would require assistance with travel (e.g. administration of medication by an escort, assistance with baggage, toileting etc. (although please note if a patient is able to travel with the support of airport ground crew/use of a taxi then an escort is not required).
- E. Patient is attending an appointment that involves training in self-management that a carer or relative will be undertaking upon their return home.

In all other cases the criterion for authorising an escort is that it should be medically necessary for the patient to be escorted.

Social grounds, emotional grounds, fear of flying or pregnancy are **not** considered a reason for an escort.

There are 3 elements to be considered when deciding whether an escort can be supported through the Highlands and Islands Travel Scheme:

1. *Is it necessary that you be accompanied on the journey?*
2. *Is the necessity of a medical nature?*
3. *Is the medical necessity only for the safe completion of the journey?*

If you are medically fit to complete the journey unescorted, an escort will not be authorised to allow a relative, partner, or friend to be present during treatment or other forms of hospital management.

It is not possible through this Scheme to fund an escort's travel for such reasons as to allow partners to be present at the birth of their children or to allow relatives to be present during serious surgical procedures.

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

No, each individual case must be dealt with on its own merit and in accordance with the criteria above.

If you have an escort on one return journey this will not necessarily lead to the automatic authorisation of an escort in subsequent journeys where your 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 companies are accustomed and experienced in dealing with passengers who have anxieties or fears around flying, and they will deal with this as required.

APPENDIX 6 - CONTINUOUS TREATMENT

Introduction

When a patient is undergoing Continuous Treatment whereby, they are required to attend as an outpatient for a course of intensive treatment over a short period of time, i.e. more than one attendance per week for treatment for the same condition, e.g. a course of chemotherapy or radiotherapy or attendance for regular renal dialysis.

In these circumstances the deduction of £10 from each return journey claimed will not apply.

Definition

Continuous Treatment is defined as one course of intensive treatment over a short period of time, i.e. more than one treatment per week for example a course of chemotherapy or radiotherapy; rather than being admitted to hospital, the patient is treated on an outpatient basis.

NB Due to the large geographical area that NHS Highland covers it may be practical for some patients to be treated on an inpatient basis during the week and then to travel to their home address for the weekend. These journeys would be classed as Continuous Treatment for the course of their intensive treatment only.

Procedure

Where the above has been established, staff only should clearly mark “continuous treatment” when authorising a travel claim form. Patients should submit these on a regular basis to the cashier or Patient Travel Office for payment. It must be remembered that claims over 3 months old will not be paid. Finance staff may contact wards to confirm that they have certified that the claimant is, in fact, receiving continuous treatment. Please ensure that the staff member authorising the claim has clearly printed their name on the form.

Example

A renal patient can claim travel expenses under Continuous Treatment for attending dialysis appointments three times a week. Any other travel for scans, x rays etc would not constitute Continuous Treatment and a claim must be made under the normal Highlands and Islands Patient travel scheme.

Requirements of Staff

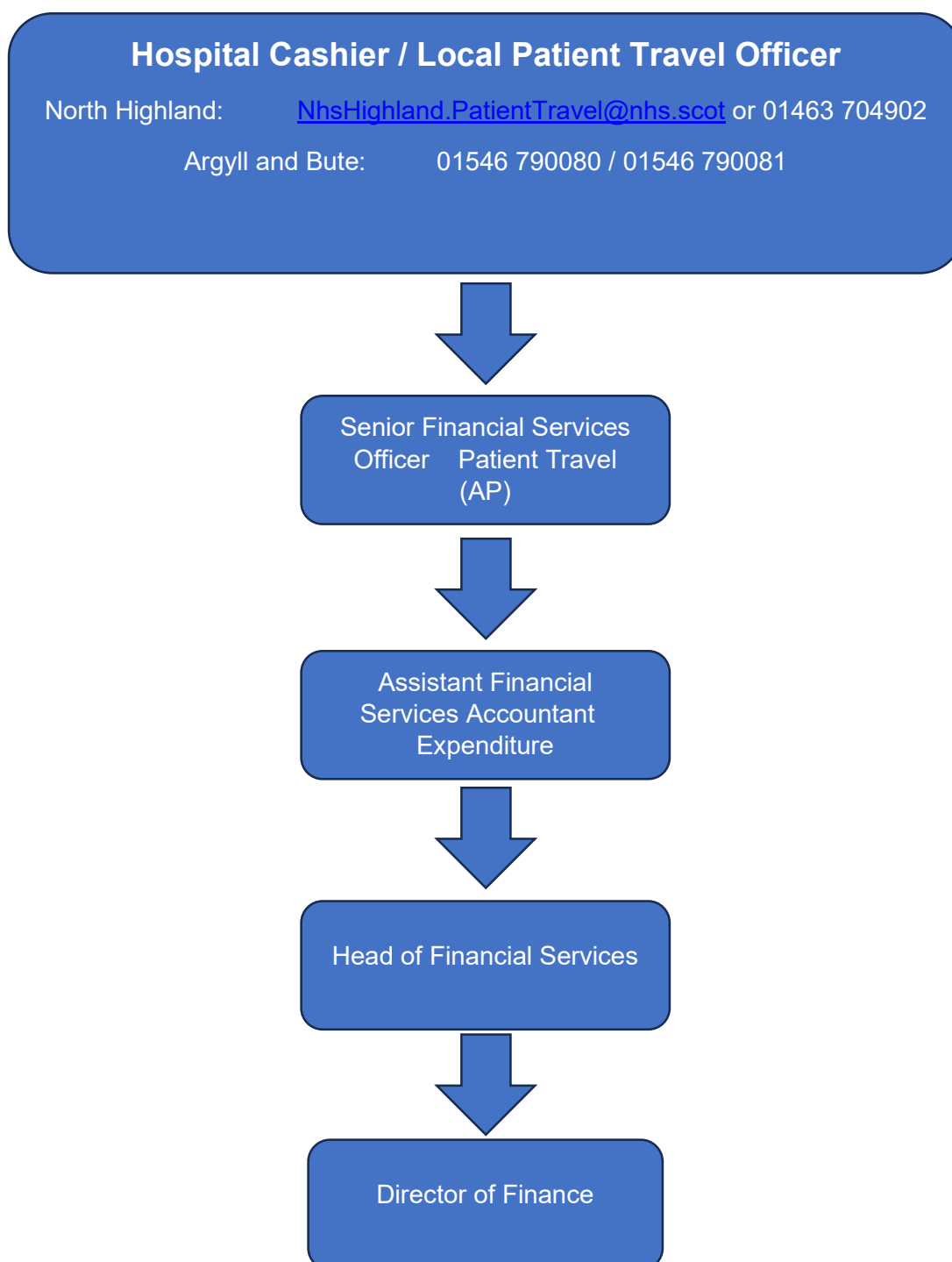
Medical, Nursing and Reception staff are asked to ensure that the above rules are followed and not to assign “continuous treatment” to a claim form inappropriately.

Requirements of Patients

Patients are asked to note the above regulations and not to expect or request additional expenses where the requirements are not fulfilled.

For further information or advice please call the Patient Travel Department on 01463 704902 (North Highland) or 01546 790080 / 01546 790081 (Argyll and Bute).

Appendix 7 - ESCALATION CHART



Escalation Process Response Times:**1. Initial Query**

- a. Acknowledgement: 2 working days
- b. Response: 10 working days, where possible
- c. If unresolved: patient can request escalation

2. Senior Financial Services Officer

- a. Acknowledgement: 3 working days
- b. Review and Response: 10 working days, where possible
- c. If unresolved: patient can request escalation

3. Assistant Financial Services Accountant – Expenditure

- a. Acknowledgement: 3 working days
- b. Review and Response: 10 working days, where possible
- c. If unresolved: patient can request escalation

4. Head of Financial Services

- a. Acknowledgement: 3 working days
- b. Full Review and Decision: 15 working days, where possible
- c. If still unresolved: patient can request escalation to the Director of Finance

5. Director of Finance

- a. Acknowledgement: 3 working days
- b. Final Decision Issued: Within 20 working days

If you are unhappy with the way that the complaint has been handled, please contact NHS Highland's Feedback Team using the information found at: [Complaints | NHS Highland](#)