

FINANCE DEPARTMENT GUIDANCE NOTE			F006 (1)
Name	Patient Travel		
Description	This guidance note describes the process for Patient Travel and any associated reimbursement		
Author	Sandra Thompson, Financial Governance Manager		
Issued Date	May 2024	Review Date	May 2026

Summary
<p>When patients are referred to one of our NHS sites for tests or treatment the expectation would be that most journeys would be made by the patients' themselves or by arrangement with family or friends. However, if they cannot arrange transport themselves other options for travel can be considered but will be dependent on what type of appointment is made, the time of the appointment and discharge, and how fit the patient would be to get themselves there or indeed get back home if the visit involves a procedure affecting their capacity.</p> <p>All referrals for appointments and admittance are confirmed by letter through the post that is accompanied by a leaflet advising the various methods of travelling to the sites.</p> <p>There is also guidance on the NHS D&G webpage www.nhsdg.co.uk where patients can obtain support with attending appointments or guidance on travel arrangements. On the NHSDG web page click on Patients/Visitors/Carers drop down and select Coming Into Hospital and then select:</p> <p>Support With Appointments this link takes patients to the Scottish Ambulance website where they are advised on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends or Family – assist patients in the travel • Traveline Scotland – listing all public transport options • Motability Scheme – helps disabled people become more mobile • Alternative Providers – such as community groups that form part of Public Social Partnership (PSP) where you are fairly mobile and don't require assistance • Ambulance Support – where there is a need for clinical or medical support during the journey • In exceptional circumstances taxis can be used. However, these must be agreed in advance and arranged by NHS D&G using our local contract. <p>Clinic staff should confirm the method of travel as a matter of course and record this in the patient notes.</p> <p>Patients that have driven themselves, arrived with the assistance of family and/or friends or by using public transport may be eligibility to recover some of these costs under the NHS Travel Scheme detailed in NHS MEL(1996)70. Patients can also make general enquiries to the General Office, DGRI by email to dg.cashiers@nhs.scot or by phone on 01387 241764 in advance of their journey.</p>

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Depending on the method of transport there will be an outlay for the journey:

- Public transport will be the cost of bus, tram, rail etc; alternative providers will levy the cost of the public transport rate etc. Where used, receipts need to be provided.
- If travelling by Car they are permitted to claim for the mileage at a predetermined rate.
- Taxis will only be paid in exceptional circumstances

In order to make a claim the following process should be used:

- **Claims made for travel to NHS D&G sites**
 - Claim form can only be completed by clinical staff, so stock should be available
 - On the day of the visit, the staff in the clinical area where the patient is attending complete all of Part A of the Travel Claim Form to confirm attendance and travel details.
 - The patient or their escort presents the completed request on site where there is a cash office, or by sending the claim to NHS D&G Cash Office.
 - Eligibility is verified and either paid in cash if claiming in person or via bank transfer or cheque for postal claims
- **Claims made when referred to an NHS site outside Dumfries and Galloway**
 - Claim form can only be completed by clinical staff, so stock should be available.
 - Patient or their escort presents the claim on site where eligibility is verified and paid in cash on site directly to the patient, or by presenting the completed request at a later time to a NHS D&G Cash Office in person or by post.
 - In addition to the normal eligibility checks, claims made at NHS D&G in relation to a referral visit to external boards will be checked by NHSD&G staff contacting the external board to verify attendance and to confirm the claim has not already been paid out
 - Claims paid out by external boards are invoiced to NHS D&G on a regular basis (monthly/quarterly), listing the claims individually. NHS D&G staff reimburse the external Board, then check for duplication and make arrangements to recovery any duplication identified
 - If a claim is found to be duplicated this would be reported to the FLO
- **Claims may be paid out in advance of travelling to an external board in exceptional cases**
 - NHSD&G staff advise the external Boards' Cashier so they do not duplicate the payment
 - NHSD&G staff check the actual attendance was made and arrange recovery if not attended
 - If a claim is found to have been made erroneously this would be reported to the Fraud Liaison Officer.

Claims are posted to the ledger using the relevant clinic cost centre and account code 3890.

APPROVED EXCEPTIONS QUALIFYING FOR EX GRATIA PAYMENTS

Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances, patients who are not entitled to help via the NHS Travel Scheme detailed in the NHS MEL (1996)70 scheme can apply to be considered for an ex-gratia payment.

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These are considered and approved by the Director of Finance and should be directed to the Externals Team within the Finance Department in the first instance (see details below). The Board can exercise discretion to reimburse travelling expenses for residents who are undertaking or receiving planned treatment and care within an NHS facility in the UK, and who do not qualify for reimbursement of travel costs under the scheme regulations.

An Ex-Gratia Payment Request Form (Appendix 1) must be completed and submitted by the patient to dg.dgexternals@nhs.scot or posted to: Externals Team, Finance Dept, Ground North, Mountainhall Treatment Centre, Bankend Road, Dumfries, DG1 4AP. The steps for processing an application are outlined below:

- Ex-Gratia Payment Request Form is completed by patients retrospectively or in exceptional cases in advance of the appointment and submitted to the Externals Team.
- The Externals Team review application in line with internal guidance
- Attendance at the referral site is confirmed and checks are made to ensure the claim has not been paid out previously
- Application is processed and managed by the Externals Team and presented to the Director of Finance for consideration
- The Director of Finance either approves or rejects the application and the patient is advised in writing
- If approved, bank details are requested from the patient to allow reimbursement to be paid into patients bank account, or claims can be paid out in cash on site. Claims are posted using the relevant clinic cost centre and account code 5522 non-staff comp ex gratia

QUERIES ON THE PROCESS

If you have any queries in relation to this procedural note please contact:

Susan Thompson, Deputy Director of Finance (TEAMS susan.thompson@dg.nhs.scot)
Sandra Thompson, Financial Governance Manager (TEAMS sandra.thompson@dg.nhs.scot)

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GUIDANCE FOR PATIENTS TRAVEL SCHEME

Patients Travel Expenses – Guidance for Patients

Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board is required to follow the NHS Travel Scheme detailed in [NHS MEL\(1996\)70](#) to ensure that patients receive appropriate help with travel costs if they are entitled to help.

The NHS Travel Scheme states:

1. All patients who are on low income or benefits as defined by the regulations are entitled to reimbursement of necessary travelling expenses and are refunded at the agreed local mileage rate or public transport costs.

Patients should take proof of entitlement to the cash office at the hospital attended along with evidence of your appointment/treatment. If evidence is not provided, the patient will be given an HC5 form to complete and submit. Payment will be made by cheque thereafter.

2. Patients, who are on low income but not on benefits defined in the regulations, might be entitled to help and should apply for assessment using an HC1 form - assessment for help with travel costs. Forms are available at the general office or information desk at local hospitals. Confirmation will be sent determining the level of support entitled to.

Retrospective claims - Patients may claim help with travel costs for up to 3 months retrospectively.

Visitors - The scheme is for travel by the patient and does not cover expenses for visitors.

Accommodation - is not covered by the NHS Travel Scheme detailed in [NHS MEL\(1996\)70](#) but may be provided in some ex gratia cases. The cost of meals will not be met as part of accommodation costs.

Escort - If it is considered medically necessary for a patient to be accompanied by an escort and the patient (not the escort) is eligible to have his or her travel costs reimbursed, the travel costs of the escort may also be reimbursed. The claim for reimbursement of the escort's expenses should be included by the patient in the claim for reimbursement of their own expenses. Eligibility for an escort may be determined by the patient's GP or by a consultant.

Guidance on reasonable expenses for all schemes

The Board will reimburse the costs of travel to an NHS facility on the basis of the most appropriate and cost effective mode of transport for the patient. The main anticipated modes of transport will be an appropriate form of public transport (bus or train) or the use of a private car. Assistance with travel costs will be made available by the Board on the following basis:

Rail fares - travel by standard class using APEX fares is considered to be the most cost effective option. Where available, claimants should take advantage of any "saver" options.

Bus fares - travel by standard class on a recognised public transport carrier. Citylink fares are considered to be the most cost effective option when travelling longer distances.

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Private car - where a private car is used, a mileage allowance of 16p per mile will be paid. The mileage claimed for the journey distance will be reviewed and verified by the Board using appropriate route planning information software. This rate will be reviewed annually by the Director of Finance.

Air fares - the use of air travel to travel to an NHS facility would only be anticipated and supported by the Board in very exceptional circumstances. The age, health status and mobility of the patient would be taken into account when determining if air travel was the most appropriate form of transport for the patient. Where air travel is necessary, the cheapest available economy or tourist rates should be used.

Taxis - In a few cases where there is no alternative (for example, in cases where patients have restricted mobility or in cases where there is little or no public transport), patients may have to use a taxi for the whole or a part of their journey. In such exceptional cases requests must be made in advance and a taxi will be arranged.

Taxis may be provided by the hospital for patients being discharged home or transferred to another hospital. This will be the decision of the General/Capacity Manager on duty and arranged for them.

For any general enquiries please contact: General Office, DGRI by email to dg.cashiers@nhs.scot or by phone on 01387 241764

Exceptional Circumstances

Patients who are not entitled to help via the NHS Travel Scheme detailed in the NHS MEL (1996)70 scheme can apply to be considered for an ex-gratia payment. The Board can exercise discretion to reimburse travelling expenses for residents who are undertaking or receiving planned treatment and care within an NHS facility in the UK, and who do not qualify for reimbursement of travel costs under the scheme regulations.

It is important to note that this is a discretionary scheme and Scottish Health Boards are not obliged to implement payment under these circumstances. The Board can exercise this discretion and reimburse reasonable expenses where either the distance or the frequency of travel means the patient is experiencing financial hardship because of meeting the expense of multiple out of region trips or where the referral is outside our normal tertiary referral route.

An Ex-Gratia Payment Request Form can be requested by contacting the Externals Team at dg.dgexternals@nhs.scot or by post at Externals Team, Finance Dept, Ground North, Mountainhall Treatment Centre, Bankend Road, Dumfries, DG1 4AP. The form outlines the supporting information that will be required within your application. The Externals Teams will process your application and present to the Director of Finance for consideration. It should be noted that ex-gratia payments are not automatic and are for exceptional circumstances only.

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EX-GRATIA CLAIM FORM

Ex-gratia claims are approved in exceptional circumstances where patients are not able to claim under other national schemes such as the Young Patients Family Fund or the schemes for patients on qualifying benefits/low income. Please provide the following details:

Forename:			
Surname:			
Home address:			
Appointment Dates:			
Type of appointment and treatment:			
Location of treatment or appointment, including address:			
Will there be further appointments?	Yes		No
	If Yes please provide details:		

PLEASE ATTACH COPIES OF APPOINTMENT LETTERS AND ALL RECEIPTS RELATED TO THIS CLAIM

Ex-gratia claims will be considered by our Director of Finance, and it is important to note that **payment of expenses is not guaranteed**. Please use the box below to provide details on the reason you wish to be considered, including information such as frequency and distance of travel and any other circumstances that you think help support your case.

Completed forms can be returned to dg.dgexternals@nhs.scot or by post to:
Externals Team
 Ground Floor North
 Mountainhall Treatment Centre
 Dumfries
 DG1 4AP