

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent care group

Standard Operating Procedure

Financial assistance for travel costs for visitors associated with the programme to find the long-term solution to the provision of mental health in-patient services in South East Staffordshire

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Introduction

The George Bryan Centre is just outside Tamworth in the Lichfield District Council area and served the population of south east Staffordshire; Burton upon Trent, Lichfield, Tamworth and surrounding areas.

It had two wards that provided assessment and treatment services for people with severe mental illness and dementia, including mood disorders, psychosis, anxiety and depression.

In February 2019, a fire destroyed one ward and the remaining ward was temporarily closed shortly afterwards, on safety grounds.

Since that time, people who have needed an inpatient bed were likely to be admitted to St George's Hospital in Stafford.

An enhanced community service is supporting people to remain in their own homes for longer.

A programme was established to find a long-term solution for the services formerly provided by the George Bryan Centre, which was paused to enable the NHS to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, visiting a person in hospital was supported using a needs-led and risk-assessed approach and considered on a case by case basis.

Contact between those in hospital and people outside of hospital was maintained using digital technologies.

In September 2021, the programme to find the long-term solution to the provision of mental health in-patient services in South East Staffordshire was re-started.

During the engagement phase of the programme in 2019, 2021 and 2022, travel was a common theme. This included the need for some visitors having to travel further, the cost of travel and the availability of public transport.

Purpose

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been developed to provide financial assistance for those visitors who are directly affected by the programme to find the long-term solution to the provision of mental health in-patient services in South East Staffordshire and who will need support during the transition.

Scope

Those visitors eligible to make a claim

Those visitors within scope of this SOP, and eligible to make a claim against it, are those who are visiting people who would previously been admitted to the George Bryan Centre, that have now been admitted to St George's Hospital, Stafford.

This will be the decision of the responsible clinician and there will be no right of appeal.

When George Bryan Centre was open, one quarter (25%) of the total number of people admitted to a mental health inpatient bed from the area served by the George Bryan Centre were admitted there. Three quarters (75%) were admitted to somewhere that better met their needs.

Criteria for making a claim

- The visitor should live within south east Staffordshire
- The visitor is in receipt of a benefit or other financial support from the Government. A self-declaration will be required.

Claim period

To support the transition from moving the inpatient service from one location to another, the claim period will be time limited from 1 September 2022 to 31 December 2023 (or on implementation of the long-term solution, whichever is first).

How to make a claim

A visitor should make their claim via the Ward Manager who will ensure that they meet the above criteria.

Evidence of the expense incurred will need to be provided.

Reimbursement rate

If the visitor has travelled by car, they will be able to claim fuel costs for the difference in the number of miles between their home address and the George Bryan Centre and their home and St George's Hospital.

The reimbursement rate will be 18 pence per mile.

The directions function on Google maps will be used to determine the number of miles. If more than one option is shown, the shortest route will be used. The mileage used to pay the first claim will be applied for each claim subsequent claim.

An example is shown below

Calais Road, Burton upon Trent – George Bryan Centre = 18.9 miles

(accessed 07.09.22: [Calais Road, Burton-on-Trent to Plantation Ln, Tamworth - Google Maps](#))

Calais Road, Burton upon Trent – St George's Hospital = 26.7 miles

(accessed 07.09.22: [Calais Road, Burton-on-Trent to St Georges Hospital - Google Maps](#))

26.7miles – 18.9miles = 7.8 miles.

7.8 miles there and 7.8 miles back.

This visitor will be able to claim 15.6 x 18p = £2.81

Other forms of support

MPFT is committed to supporting individuals with travel arrangements on a case-by-case basis.

Digital devices, including tablets, will be loaned to people on our wards to enable them to speak to people outside of hospital.

A dedicated webpage has been designed to support carers to use digital technology [Digital Training and Support :: Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust \(mpft.nhs.uk\)](http://mpft.nhs.uk).

Staff are asked to promote this offer and to signpost to the resources.

There are currently several community and voluntary transport schemes running across Staffordshire. Staff are asked to signpost patients and visitors to the following information: [Community and voluntary schemes - Staffordshire County Council](#)

Roles and responsibilities

Ward managers - process travel claims in a timely manner.

Process for monitoring compliance and effectiveness

The director of unplanned care will monitor the appropriate ward budgets to check for expenditure against this SOP.

Equality analysis summary

The programme to find the long-term solution to the provision of mental health in-patient services in South East Staffordshire conducted an equality impact assessment (EIA) a potential negative impact for a cohort of patients and carers who would need to travel further to visit a person who is admitted to a bed in St George's Hospital in Stafford.

This could adversely impact those who live in rural areas without good transport links, ability to afford the cost of travel and those in households without access to a vehicle.

Where admission is required, there is potential difficulty for carers of elderly patients to be able to travel at all (no direct transport from some areas of Lichfield / Tamworth / East Staffordshire).

This is shown on the following table

Area	Proportion of people living in rurality (2017)	Proportion of people living in deprived areas (IMD 2015)	Households without a car (2011)
Cannock Chase	9.1%	13.8%	20.2%
East Staffordshire	21.7%	18.2%	21.4%
Lichfield	29.8%	3.9%	13.6%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	20.0%	11.5%	22.1%
South Staffordshire	40.1%	1.4%	13.2%

Stafford	32.4%	5.3%	17.5%
Staffordshire Moorlands	30.5%	4.7%	14.8%
Tamworth	0.0%	17.5%	20.6%
Staffordshire	24.2%	9.3%	18.0%
West Midlands	14.7%	29.8%	24.7%
England	17.0%	20.4%	25.8%

The EIA identified the protected characteristics of age, gender and disability as the most likely to be impacted. The impacts are as follows:

- For age there is a positive impact because for patients with dementia, (which impacts more people over 65 years old), the transformed and enhanced community offer will ensure they can receive appropriate care, in their usual place of residence where possible. Evidence from the dementia care pathway (National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health, 2018) shows that hospital admissions can exacerbate the symptoms of dementia, permanently reduce independence and increase the likelihood of discharge to residential care and readmission to hospital. NICE guidelines (NG97, 2018) request that, when considering admission to hospital for a person living with dementia, the value of keeping them in a familiar environment is considered. The enhancements to the community mental health teams includes enhanced crisis home treatment with skilled older adult specialists, a nursing/therapy lead and new clinical psychologist to focus on older adults.
- For disability there is a positive impact because for those people who live in a rural location and/or have difficulties with transport, the enhanced community mental health offer will reduce admissions for a cohort of people who can be cared for at home, thus removing any barriers to access for the patient or carer. For those patients who require admission to a centralised bed in St George's Hospital, additional interventions are available that were not available at the George Bryan Centre including art therapy, music therapy and occupational therapy. This centralisation of bed provision will ensure equal access to these facilities based on need and will eliminate the need to transfer patients between these sites to access appropriate therapy, leading to improved outcomes for these patients.
- For gender reassignment there is a positive impact because it would be expected that both inpatient and community mental health services support patients who have undergone gender reassignment. The provision of an enhanced community mental health services team increases the likelihood that the patients will be cared for in their usual place of residence and by clinicians who know them.

What should I do if the SOP is not being followed?

Should you be concerned that this SOP is not being followed correctly please refer initially to your manager or their manager. If this is not effective refer to the freedom to speak up SOP for guidance;

<http://sp.mpft.nhs.uk/library/docs/Freedom%20to%20Speak%20Up%20SOP.pdf>