



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

**WHC (2025) 049**

# WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR

**Status:** Compliance

**Category:** Policy

**Title:** Patient Travel Policy

**Date of Expiry:** No expiry date

**Action by:** All NHS health boards and trusts

**Required by:** Immediate

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**Enclosure:**

- Letter from Lesley Law

# Development and implementation of the Patient Travel Policy

Chief Executives NHS health boards and trusts

19 December 2025

Dear Colleagues,

This Welsh health circular is being published to provide all health boards and trusts of the requirement for an updated Patient Travel Policy and the provision of supporting information to the public to enable them to access services in line with their individual needs.

## Rationale

### 1. RTT Guidelines April 2025

The refreshed Referral to Treatment Guidelines document was published in April 2025. Even though the underpinning principles remain unchanged, some elements were added and some strengthened to improve the way we work in partnership and communicate with the public. These elements include:

- Improving communication with patients to enable them to better understand their role and responsibilities in the Patient-NHS compactum when accessing planned care including the importance of attending appointments. This may involve travelling further for care.
- Support for vulnerable individuals.

### 2. Planned Care transformation

New service delivery models are emerging in response to the need to modernise and transform planned care in Wales. Moving forward, more services will be delivered regionally. External providers are also often commissioned to deliver care on behalf of the NHS to help manage demand and delays in care.

## **Support for patients to attend appointments**

It is recognised that some people experience challenges to attend their appointments. Those living with frailty or disability may require additional support to attend hospital appointments, whilst those living in the more rural parts of Wales have limited access to transport links. Enabling those who require support to attend their appointments will contribute to a positive patient experience and improve health outcomes through timely access to care. Person-centred booking approaches and the provision of information and support to travel to appointments will contribute to reducing DNA and CNA rates and hence contribute to maximising valuable, but finite, NHS capacity.

## **Support for health boards and trusts to comply with Policy requirements**

A comprehensive Patient Travel Policy toolkit has been co-produced by Welsh Government Planned Care Policy and representatives of NHS health boards and trusts. The toolkit provides:

- A standardised patient travel policy template which can be adapted for local application.
- Suggested public-facing information and consistent messaging for inclusion on planned care landing pages to manage patient expectation about the need to travel for care to regional or externally commissioned providers and what support is available.
- Links to relevant resources e.g., WAST Non-Emergency Patient Transport landing pages.

To ensure that all health boards and trusts comply with policy requirements, the following is expected:

All health boards and trusts:

- To have an updated Patient Travel Policy in line with policy requirements by March 2026.
- To ensure the Patient Travel Policy is communicated and made available to patients on their landing pages.
- To ensure that patients are provided with the relevant information regarding the potential need to travel for appointments and how they can access support to travel. This should be provided verbally when booking appointments as well as via

patient referral confirmation and appointment letters as well as other digital and non-digital formats.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Lesley Law

Head of Planned Care

Delivery & Performance

Health and Social Services Group

Welsh Government

CC:

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