Guidance for Prescribers and Referrers for Provision of Wheelchairs
1. Introduction

- The eligibility criteria for wheelchairs and associated equipment have been produced for the benefit of the professionals and users of Wheelchair Services, Derbyshire and to ensure a fair service to all clients referred.

- Wheelchairs and associated equipment will be *prescribed* according to a written instruction, which has been defined following an assessment of clinical need only. This will take account of the users ability, and lifestyle.

- Equipment will be prescribed from the definitive range used within the service. The service will only investigate equipment and suppliers outside of this range if the needs of the client cannot be met from within it.

- Individual solutions will be provided based on assessed clinical need, and equipment is prescribed and issued for the sole use of the individual client for whom it was assessed.

- Major changes to the service and to the range of wheelchairs supplied cannot be implemented without consultation with the Commissioners, and the Users Group.
2. **General Conditions**

Clients living in their own homes may be assessed for, and issued with a wheelchair by the Wheelchair Service if they:

- Are registered with a General Practitioner (GP) in Derby City or in Derbyshire County Primary Care Trust.
- Require a wheelchair for a **permanent or long term need**, based upon an assessment of their mobility and
- They can self propel a manual wheelchair or
- They have a relative or carer who can safely push their wheelchair for them or
- They can control an electrically powered wheelchair or
- They have a need for a special wheelchair because they are an unusual size or shape, or they have a particular medical problem which requires special supportive seating.

The Wheelchair Service does not issue chairs for only occasional or for short term use. The Community Equipment Service (ICES / DICES) or the Red Cross will provide these wheelchairs.

Clients in the terminal stages of their illness **may** be prescribed a wheelchair from the Wheelchair Service, depending upon their prognosis and their assessed need.

Procedures governing the issue of wheelchairs and equipment to residents of nursing homes are set out in **section 16**.

2.1 Referrals can be made by any **registered** health or social care professional, on a designated referral form. It is important that all sections of the form are completed as accurately as possible, as omissions will result in the form being returned to the referrer for completion. This will result in delays in provision to the client. The referrer can request a specialist assessment by Occupational Therapist (OT) or Rehabilitation Engineer (RE) on this form.

2.2 Pressure relieving cushions provided by the Wheelchair Service are for use in wheelchairs only, and not for use in armchairs. Pressure relieving cushions must be ordered separately.

2.3 Existing clients can self-refer for a re-assessment at any time.

2.4 The Wheelchair Service does not supply / leave wheelchairs for assessment purposes in hospitals wards or rehabilitation centres.
3. **Manual Wheelchairs**

3.1 **Prescription criteria.** The criteria for the provision of a standard non-powered wheelchair are:

3.1.1 The client has a permanent or long term disability, which will affect their ability to walk.

3.1.2 The wheelchair is needed as an aid to mobility indoors and/or outdoors.

3.1.3 The client agrees to and complies with the terms and conditions of use, as supplied by the Wheelchair Services.

3.2 **Standard wheelchairs.** Standard wheelchairs are provided from a range normally supplied by the wheelchair service. These will be supplied following an assessment by a trained referrer (who is a registered health or social care professional,) who has completed and returned a referral form. The client may be subject to further assessment by Wheelchair Services Clinicians if needed.

3.3 **Non-standard wheelchairs / specialist bespoke wheelchairs.** This equipment will only be supplied following a specialist assessment by a Wheelchair Services Clinician (an Occupational Therapist OT, or Rehabilitation Engineer, RE).

3.4 **Accessories.** Accessories are generally ‘off the shelf’ parts, or readily available from the manufacturer. These will be supplied following an assessment by a trained referrer (who is a registered health or social care professional,) who has completed and identified the need for accessories on the referral form. The client may be subject to further assessment by Wheelchair Services if needed.

3.5 **Standard modifications.** These may be requested by a trained referrer, (who is a registered health or social care professional,) or recommended and supplied following by an assessment by a Wheelchair Services Clinician.

3.6 **Range of standard wheelchairs.** A brochure is held by the Wheelchair Services Clinician for clients to look at if an example of the exact model prescribed is not available.
4. **Criteria for the Supply of More Than One Wheelchair**

Provision of more than one wheelchair is dependent upon clinical need, as identified by the trained health or social care professional making the referral, or as assessed by a Wheelchair Services Clinician.

Applications for more than one wheelchair will only be considered under the following circumstances:

- A second wheelchair may be issued to allow the client to access the upstairs of their property.
- Where a powered wheelchair has been issued. A *manual* wheelchair can also be issued to the Client.
- It should be noted that the second wheelchair would not necessarily be the same model as the primary wheelchair.
5. **Criteria for the Issue of a Wheelchair that is lighter than a Standard Wheelchair**

Following assessment, supply would only be made to meet the users clinical and individual lifestyle needs to promote and maintain independent mobility.

- The client will be unable to self propel a standard wheelchair, because to do so would exacerbate an existing clinical condition.

- The client is an independent driver who cannot load the wheelchair into the car.

5.1 This category of wheelchair will only be issued when it has been clearly demonstrated that a standard wheelchair, less all accessories and removable parts, cannot be lifted by the carer / client.

It should be noted that a lightweight wheelchair may be difficult to either self propel or push, depending upon the client’s weight.
6. **Active User Wheelchairs**

Following assessment, supply would only be made to meet the users clinical and individual lifestyle needs to promote and maintain independent mobility.

6.1 Assessment for this type of equipment will always be undertaken by a Wheelchair Services OT or RE (as appropriate) following a written referral from a trained health or social care professional.

6.2 Referrals for equipment of this category will be considered for issue when a client is unable to function or self-propel in a standard wheelchair.

6.3 If needed, the corrective seating system, or modifications for postural support, must be compatible with the active user wheelchair that has been selected.
7. **Guidelines for the Supply of Heavy Duty Wheelchairs**

7.1 Heavy duty wheelchairs are issued to clients exceeding the weight limit of the standard range of wheelchairs (18 - 21 stones for most models).

7.2 It is essential to have the client accurately weighed, and the weight documented. An estimate is not safe or acceptable.

7.3 Assessment of the environment in which the wheelchair will be used is essential for clients needing Heavy Duty Wheelchairs, especially where the client needs a wheelchair with a seat width of over 20", to ensure that it is safe and appropriate for the carer to lift/push this load/size of wheelchair, and that there are no problems with access / doorways.

7.4 In order for these clients to be supplied with an EPIC or an EPIOC they must meet the criteria set out in sections 12 and 13 respectively.
8. Criteria for the provision of Pressure Relieving Cushions

The service holds a range of cushions for all levels of risk / pressure relieving qualities. The cushion can be used in an NHS provided or privately purchased wheelchair. Cushions will not be issued for use in an armchair.

8.1 If the client requires a pressure relieving cushion other than a standard wheelchair cushion, then a separate referral should be made.

8.2 A pressure-relieving cushion can be issued for use within the wheelchair, and it is used as part of an overall pressure management routine.

8.3 Requests for a pressure-relieving cushion should include as much information as possible to ensure that appropriate provision can be made.

8.4 The client will need to be assessed by the referrer. If it is clinically appropriate, the requested cushion may be issued directly to the client. A Wheelchair Services Clinician may undertake a further assessment if required. Wheelchair Services Clinicians reserve the right to issue a suitable alternative cushion, or close technical equivalent.
9. **Criteria for the provision of Special Seating Systems**

Special seating can be divided into two types:

a) Off the shelf postural support or modifications.
b) Individual bespoke seating systems that are fitted to a wheelchair chassis.

Special Seating Systems are only provided where the client has specific postural needs which can only be met by the issue of the specialist or bespoke seating systems or accessories.

Care will be taken in selecting the system which best meets the health and social care needs of the client on a long term basis, taking into account cost-effectiveness.

This type of seating system will only be prescribed and supplied following assessment by the Wheelchair Services Clinician.

Only one system will be supplied.

The wheelchair service will assess on an individual basis the appropriateness of fitting NHS special seating systems into private wheelchairs.
10. **Criteria for Paediatric Provision**

Assessment for provision will be carried out in the presence of the parent or guardian. The trained referrer will be invited to attend.

10.2 Special pushchairs and special seating systems are issued to children who have significant postural problems, following an assessment by a Wheelchair Services Clinician.

10.3 Standard wheelchairs for children are provided from a range normally provided by the wheelchair service. These will be supplied following an assessment by a trained health or social care professional who has completed and returned a referral form. The client may be subject to further assessment by a Wheelchair Services Clinician.

10.4 Non-standard wheelchairs will only be supplied following a specialist assessment by a DWS OT or RE.

10.5 Double (twin) buggies will be supplied only where there is a second child (or twin) who is close in age to the Client who would normally be expected to use a buggy.

10.6 The model of double (twin) buggy chosen and any necessary postural support within it will be provided to meet the needs of the disabled child only.

10.7 **Indoor powered wheelchairs.** These will be issued to children who are unable to walk or self-propel, but are able to independently control a powered wheelchair safely indoors.

Indoor powered wheelchairs must only be used indoors at school or at home. They must not be used outdoors, except in a private garden, accessing day centres, or accessing school buildings. Limited use of the wheelchair outside will be defined and discussed with the child and their parents or guardian and the referrer following an assessment of the environment by the trained referrer or the Wheelchair Services Clinician or at handover of the wheelchair (see section 12).

This equipment will not be issued for use solely in the school environment (see Section 11).

10.8 **Indoor / outdoor powered wheelchairs.** These will be issued to children who are unable to walk or self propel, but are able to independently control a powered wheelchair safely. The child will need to use the powered wheelchair constantly, indoors and outdoors. (see section 13).

10.9 Basic (comfort) cushions will be supplied as required. Special / pressure relieving cushions will be supplied if clinically appropriate. The requested cushion may be issued directly to the client. A Wheelchair Services Clinician may undertake a further assessment if appropriate. Wheelchair Services Clinicians reserve the right to issue a suitable alternative cushion, or close technical equivalent. See section 8 for special cushions.

10.10 Clinics or Assessment visits to schools may be made by the wheelchair services clinical team upon request from the relevant approved referrers, in collaboration with the school, and in line with planned reassessments.
A list of clients to be assessed must be provided to the Wheelchair Services in advance of the school visit, together with full and relevant data on each client to be seen.

The school will be responsible for informing client’s parents of the intention to assess/reassess their child.

11. Protocol for Supply of Wheelchairs for the use by Children at School only

The service is not funded to supply wheelchairs purely for school use. It is the responsibility of the Education Authority to fund equipment used exclusively at school.

11.1 If a child travels to and from school with their wheelchair it is recommended that the child sits in a normal vehicle seat where possible and the wheelchair is folded and stowed in the boot. A child who is unable to transfer should remain in their wheelchair which will be secured by a wheelchair tie-down and occupant restraint system (WTORS.) Use of a head support must also be considered. Travel arrangements are the responsibility of the carrier or the Local Transport Authority.

11.2 When a wheelchair is no longer needed, the wheelchair service should be informed, and collection will be arranged. It remains the property of the NHS and should not be used for another child.
12. Criteria for provision of Electrically Powered Indoor Wheelchairs (EPIC)

This service provides occupant controlled wheelchairs only.

These wheelchairs are intended for indoor use only. They can be used within the curtilage of hospital grounds or in a private garden provided the environment has been assessed by a trained clinician as safe to do so. Limited use of the wheelchair outside will be defined and discussed with the Client and their carer following a risk assessment by the referrer. A Wheelchair Services Clinician will review the environment in which the user needs or intends to use the wheelchair at handover.

12.1 In order to be eligible for the provision of an EPIC, the Client must meet all of the following criteria.

a) As a result of a medical condition, the client must be severely and permanently restricted in mobility, and will need to use the powered wheelchair for all their mobility needs.

b) The client must be unable to self propel a manual wheelchair sufficiently to successfully function indoors.

c) The supply of the EPIC will significantly improve the Clients’ independence and quality of life indoors.

d) The client will have no visual, cognitive, perceptual problems, or medical problem (e.g. recurring loss of consciousness) that would affect the safe use of an EPIC.

e) The client is able to demonstrate the ability to use an indoor powered wheelchair safely and independently without endangering themselves and other people.

f) The client must have a suitable home environment including adequate space to drive the wheelchair, including the footplates in the home, and suitable space with a power supply for charging the batteries.

g) The client must ensure that the wheelchair will be adequately cared for and charged either personally or by a carer.

h) This equipment will not be issued for use solely in the school, college or day centre environment.

12.2 An OT and / or RE will carry out assessment for this type of equipment in two stages.

a) Home assessment to ensure that the domestic environment is suitable for using this type of wheelchair, including access to rooms, arrangements for storage and charging of the wheelchair and ability to use the wheelchair indoors.

b) A clinical assessment will be undertaken to assess driving abilities as well as to identify the make and model of wheelchair, which meets the individual needs of the client.
c) The OT / RE can then determine if the client meets all of the eligibility criteria, and the priority needs of the client can be determined.

12.3 Other considerations.

a) If subsequently the client fails to meet any one of these criteria, deteriorates medically, or their driving skills are deemed to be dangerous, the wheelchair may need to be withdrawn. This will be determined by regular reviews.

b) The assessors may need to seek further medical advice about individual clients from their referrers, carers, other health or social care professionals involved in their care, their GP or consultant if appropriate.

c) In order to be eligible for the provision of an EPIC, the Client must meet all of the above criteria. Clients with some medical conditions are exempt from meeting some of the criteria, but must still demonstrate safe driving skills, see section 18.
13. Electrically Powered Indoor Outdoor Wheelchairs (EPIOC)

13.1 In order to be eligible for the provision of an EPIOC, the Client must meet all of the following criteria.

a) As a result of a medical condition, the client must be unable to walk at all, and be unable to self propel a manual wheelchair at all.

b) The client will need to use the powered wheelchair constantly, indoors and outdoors.

c) The supply of the EPIOC will significantly improve the Clients' independence and quality of life, indoors and outdoors.

d) The client will have no cognitive, perceptual problems, or other medical conditions that would endanger themselves, pedestrians or other road users.

e) The client will comply with the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) requirements for motor vehicle drivers regarding loss of consciousness (e.g. epilepsy).

f) The client will have a visual acuity of at least 6/24 (i.e. can read a car number plate from at least 40 feet). Clients must also have a field of vision of 120 degrees in a horizontal plane, and 20 degrees above and below this plane. This is equivalent to class 3 vehicle visual standards.

g) The client will have demonstrated by a driving test that he has the insight and the intellectual capacity and dexterity to independently operate an EPIOC safely and responsibly without endangering themselves and other people.

h) The client will have the ability to demonstrate, in a driving test, that they are able to operate an EPIOC safely. Clients must also have responsibility to operate the EPIOC without assistance. This includes climbing kerbs where appropriate.

i) The client will have a residential environment that is appropriate for the use of an electric wheelchair, and have suitable facilities to enable independent access to the outdoor environment (e.g. a ramped access). The local outside environment must be accessible in an EPIOC, and is compatible with its use.

j) The client must ensure that the wheelchair will be adequately cared for and maintained, and charged either personally or by a carer.

k) The client must agree to the terms and conditions of supply.
13.2 Assessment.

An OT and / or RE will carry out assessment for this type of equipment in two stages.

a) Home assessment to ensure that the domestic environment is suitable for using this type of wheelchair, including access to rooms, arrangements for storage and charging of the wheelchair and ability to use the wheelchair indoors as well as outdoors.

b) A clinical assessment will be undertaken to assess driving abilities as well as to identify the make and model of wheelchair, which meets the individual needs of the client.

c) The OT / RE can then determine if the client meets all of the eligibility criteria, and the priority needs of the client can be determined.

13.3 Other considerations.

a) If subsequently the client fails to meet any one of these criteria, deteriorates medically, or their driving skills are deemed to be dangerous, the wheelchair may need to be withdrawn. This will be determined by regular reviews.

b) The assessors may need to seek further medical advice about individual clients from their referrers, carers, other health or social care professionals involved in their care, their GP or consultant if appropriate.

c) In order to be eligible for the provision of an EPIC, the Client must meet all of the above criteria. Clients with some medical conditions are exempt from meeting some of the criteria, but must still demonstrate safe driving skills, see section 18.

If the wheelchair user can transfer out of their wheelchair and into a vehicle seat (with or without assistance) they should do so. This is the safest way to travel:

- The Wheelchair users should transfer to vehicle seats whenever possible
- Wheelchair users should not travel with the wheelchair at an angle or facing sideways
- There should be sufficient free space around the wheelchair and user to avoid the user making contact with other vehicle occupants, unpadded parts of the vehicle, wheelchair accessories or wheelchairs and their tie-down and occupant restraint systems (WTORS) anchor points
- Wheelchairs should have their parking brakes applied and their power units switched off during vehicle movement. Powered wheelchairs should not be left in freewheel mode
- Wheelchairs should not block gangways and exits for other passengers in the vehicle
- A headrest should be provided for a wheelchair user when travelling in a vehicle in a wheelchair. When correctly fitted, a headrest will restrict rearward movement of the head during vehicle motion or impact (whiplash.)
15. **Guidelines Regarding Attendant Controlled Powered Assisted Wheelchairs**

15.1 The wheelchair service does not supply attendant controlled powered wheelchairs, nor does it supply add-on power-pack units.

15.2 The wheelchair service will not fit, or allow privately purchased power pack units to be fitted to wheelchairs supplied by their service.

15.3 The wheelchair service reserve the right to take appropriate action should it be apparent that a privately fitted power pack had contributed to a fault in the wheelchair or its safe use. This action may include withdrawal of the wheelchair or a charge for incurred repair costs.
16. Issue Of Equipment To Nursing / Care Homes

16.1 Newly referred clients living in nursing / care homes may be assessed for, and issued with a manual wheelchair by the wheelchair service if they:

a) Have a long-term or permanent need for a wheelchair, based upon an assessment of their mobility and needs, and they can self propel a manual wheelchair.

b) They have a need for a special wheelchair because they are an unusual size or shape, or they have a particular medical problem which requires special supportive seating.

16.2 The Service cannot provide attendant propelled wheelchairs, which are for occasional use, outings, or are used by the Nursing / care home to transport patients.

16.3 Clients living in nursing / care homes may be referred and assessed for an electric wheelchair if they are unable to self-propel and are able to control a powered wheelchair to enable them to be independently mobile. As with all referrals for powered mobility, the client must also meet all the criteria for an EPIC or EPIOC, as listed in sections 12 and 13.

16.4 Clients living in nursing / care homes who are existing wheelchair users, who have been using their wheelchairs as their main form of seating, and who wish to continue to do so, may keep their wheelchairs even if, due to deterioration in their medical condition, they are no longer able to propel themselves totally independently.

16.5 The service will not provide pressure relieving cushions for use in armchairs.

16.6 Repair or collection of wheelchairs on behalf of the client will be carried out when it has been established that the client is recorded as being the user of the prescribed wheelchair. Equipment issued by Derbyshire Wheelchair Service may only be used by the named resident to whom it was issued.

16.7 If during a visit by the approved repairer, equipment is identified which belongs to Derbyshire Wheelchair Service which is not in use by the client to whom it was issued, or is being used inappropriately, it will be retrieved and returned to the Service.

16.8 It is the responsibility of the nursing home to notify the approved repairers when a wheelchair needs repairing or collecting.

16.9 The Wheelchair Service cannot be held responsible for any accidents or injuries sustained if a wheelchair is used by anyone other than the named resident for whom it was supplied.
17. Criteria for Voucher Scheme Wheelchairs

The Voucher Scheme gives wheelchair users more choice in the type of wheelchair they can use and gives the client the opportunity to buy and own their wheelchair. The scheme applies to manual wheelchairs only.

There are two options:

a) *The standard option.* The client accepts the chair that the Wheelchair Service provides. It will be repaired and maintained by the Wheelchair Service, and there is no cost to the client.

b) *The independent option.* The client can choose any wheelchair *as long as* it meets their assessed clinical needs. The client will pay the difference between the cost of the standard prescribed chair that Wheelchair Services would provide, and the chosen chair. Maintenance and repairs will be the responsibility of the client, but a contribution is given in the voucher price to include the cost of repairs, maintenance and insurance. The wheelchair then belongs to the client.

17.1 **Wheelchairs with integral postural supports.** These will continue to be provided by the NHS including children’s special seating and cushions.

17.2 **Voucher Period.** The Voucher Chair and maintenance is valid for a *minimum* period of 5 years. The client can request a review but if the chair still meets the needs of the client *and* is found to be in good working order it will not be replaced. The chair will remain with the user and would then be subject to regular / periodic review.

17.3 **Clinical Needs.** The service will remain responsible for assessing the clinical needs of the client, and recommending a suitable wheelchair if those needs change.
18. Lost / Stolen / Damaged equipment

With the exception of equipment purchased using the Voucher Scheme, the equipment remains the property of DWS and is loaned to the client in accordance with the terms and conditions of supply. If the equipment is no longer in use, the client must inform DWS immediately and it will be collected. The equipment must be returned for maintenance/repair upon request. The client must not give the equipment to another person or dispose of it himself.

The Wheelchair Service cannot be held responsible for any accidents or injuries sustained if a wheelchair is used by anyone other than the client for whom it was supplied.

18.1 In the event of travel, at home or abroad, it is strongly recommended that the client obtain appropriate insurance cover, which will be at their own expense, as the client may have to pay the cost of any damage, loss or repair especially outside the UK. The client will need to comply with the conditions / regulations specified by the carrier concerned. It is advisable to inform the airline in advance as they can offer help and advice.

18.2 Insurance cover is recommended to all clients, because the client will be responsible for any claim made by a third party in respect of an accident or any damage involving the chair.

18.3 The client is responsible for protecting the chair against damage, and ensuring that it is cleaned, stored and maintained on a regular basis.

18.4 The client will notify the approved repairer (S) / service directly (N) when a fault or a repair is thought to be necessary.

18.5 The client must notify the service immediately if the chair supplied is involved in an accident, or is lost, stolen or damaged in any way. If the equipment is stolen, the incident must be reported to the police and a crime number obtained.

18.6 In the event of accidental damage or theft, every effort will be made to loan the client an appropriate alternative wheelchair. However, the replacement chair may be to a different specification, but where possible it will be a close technical equivalent to the original prescription.
19. Exclusions / Exceptions

*Powered Wheelchairs*

In order to be eligible for the provision of a powered wheelchair, the client must meet all of the criteria set out in sections 12 / 13. Clients with some medical conditions will be considered if they can walk and are able to self propel a manual wheelchair, but this is entirely dependent upon the presenting needs of the Client, and their diagnosis / prognosis. In this case, the client must still meet the rest of the criteria, and demonstrate safe driving skills.

19.1 Other considerations.

a) If subsequently the client fails to meet any one of these criteria, deteriorates medically, or their driving skills are deemed to be dangerous, the wheelchair may need to be withdrawn. This will be determined by regular reviews.

b) The assessors may need to seek further medical advice about individual clients from their referrers, carers, other health or social care professionals involved in their care, their GP or consultant if appropriate.

19.2 Exempt Medical Conditions

There is not an exhaustive list. Each client will be considered and assessed on an individual basis, dependent upon their presenting needs and their diagnosis / prognosis.
20. Collection of unused Equipment

With the exception of equipment purchased using the Independent Option of the Voucher Scheme, the equipment remains the property of DWS and is loaned to the client in accordance with the terms and conditions of supply.

If the equipment is no longer in use, the client must inform DWS immediately and it will be collected.

The equipment must be returned for maintenance/repair upon request.

The client must not give the equipment to another person or dispose of it himself.
21. Abbreviations

DWS  Derbyshire Wheelchair Service
OT   Occupational Therapist
RE   Rehabilitation Engineer
EPIC Electrically Powered Indoor Wheelchair
EPIOC Electrically Powered Indoor Outdoor Wheelchair