



**East Midlands Procurement and
Commissioning Transformation**

MEDIA RELEASE

NEW FLEET OF VEHICLES FOR PATIENT TRANSPORT

Patients in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, who are eligible for free NHS transport to their appointments, will be driven in a new fleet of environmentally friendly vehicles from next year. The vehicles will be equipped with satellite navigation and text messaging pick-up reminders.

Under the proposed new arrangements, announced today, all non-emergency patient transport in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland is set to be operated by Arriva Passenger Services Ltd from early summer next year.

Arriva Passenger Services Ltd emerged as the new preferred bidder for the city and two counties following a rigorous 10-month competitive tendering process by East Midlands Procurement and Commissioning Transformation (EMPACT), the NHS commissioning support unit working on behalf of the region's primary care trusts.

Long standing national guidance on who is eligible for free transport will be applied fairly and firmly to help ensure that only patients with a genuine medical need receive the NHS funded service. They are assessed using a set of national criteria.

Most patients make their own arrangements for getting to and from treatment, often helped by family and friends. But there are other patients who have a genuine clinical need for NHS-funded transport because of the severity of their condition, and who have no alternative means to access vital treatment.

Catherine Griffiths, chief executive of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland cluster of primary care trusts, said: "Patient transport services provide a valuable service to those who need support in attending appointments at health care settings. As commissioners, we have a responsibility to ensure our services are cost effective, efficient and meet the needs of all of our patients in terms of minimising discomfort and providing them with a friendly, helpful and appropriate service to and from their treatment."

The new vehicles will be fitted with satellite navigation systems to reduce patient journey and waiting times. To improve communications with patients, the new transport service will also use mobile phone text messaging to remind patients of their pick-up dates and times. It is estimated that there are currently 92,000 wasted journeys a year, partly due to staff who book journeys not cancelling them in time when they are no longer required.

Similar arrangements will apply across the East Midlands under the terms of the new contracts, which are due to be phased in between April and July 2012 when the current contractual arrangements expire.

As part of the competitive tendering process, seven organisations submitted bids for either, one, some, or all of the county-based contracts, and the preferred bidders were chosen following a process involving the assessment against pre-determined scoring criteria. This included assessments of quality, performance, management, environmental impact and financial viability.

The contract for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland is estimated to be worth about £31.3m over five years. The total value of all five contracts over the same period is around £130m.

The contract award is subject to a mandatory standstill period of 10 days which expires on the 19 December 2011. NHS Leicester City and NHS Leicestershire County and Rutland will aim to conclude the contracts after expiry of the standstill period.

Existing patient transport employees in the East Midlands will be eligible for jobs with the new operators under the same terms and conditions as their current employment contracts.

Ends

Notes to editors

1. New contracts will apply to all cities and counties in the East Midlands. Today's announcement identified the two preferred bidders for the contracts. Arriva Passenger Services Ltd is the preferred bidder for Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire including the NHS Bassetlaw area, as well as Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, while NSL Ltd is the preferred bidder for Northamptonshire, Lincolnshire, Derby and Derbyshire.

2. For more information on NSL Ltd, see <http://www.nslcareservices.co.uk/patient-transfers>. For information about Arriva, see http://www.arriva.co.uk/arriva/en/about_arriva/. We are not responsible for external website content.

3. There are an estimated million non-emergency patient transport journeys a year in the East Midlands.

4. Clearly applying the existing rules on NHS-funded patient transport fairly and evenly will mean that only clinically needy patients receive the NHS funded service. GPs, practice managers and their staff, along with hospital and clinic staff, other healthcare professionals, and patient transport service staff must check the criteria for who is eligible before booking a journey. The patient must have no alternative means of transport and at least one other criterion must apply. The checklist asks if the patient is:-

- only to be moved on a stretcher, eg, due to having a leg in cast
- in a wheelchair, cannot get into a vehicle without help
- attending treatment likely to cause severe side effects that impede driving
- disabled, unfit to travel by any other means
- a recognised parent/guardian of a child with a condition outlined above
- needing to be accompanied by a trained escort or carer, for medical reasons.

If none of the criteria applies, the patient will be invited to find an alternative, such as a voluntary driver's scheme operated by a community group. The criteria must also be checked each time a repeat NHS-funded transport booking is made, in case the patient's condition has improved and the transport is no longer clinically needed.

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