

A Guide to Highlands & Islands Patient Travel Scheme

ARGYLL & BUTE

Introduction

The Highlands and Islands Patient Travel Scheme was originally set up in recognition of the difficulties and expense involved in travelling to and from Hospital for people resident in remote mainland and island communities.

This scheme is intended to reimburse part of the patients travelling expenses on the grounds of the distance which must be travelled to UK Hospitals for NHS treatment or appointments.

The information in this leaflet is a guide to the Highland and Island Patient Travel Scheme as it operates for people who live in the Argyll & Bute Area.

Who can claim?

In the NHS Highland area patients must be resident or working and be registered with a GP in the Argyll & Bute District. They must also be referred to a hospital by a doctor or dentist or be attending a hospital by appointment. Attendances at a GP surgery or Dental Surgery do NOT qualify under the scheme.

The distance from the patients home or place of residence to the hospital must total at least 30 miles, unless the journey to hospital includes a ferry journey.

The conditions covering the distance travelled and the requirement of patients to pay the first £10.00(or current rate) of any claim do not apply to patients in receipt of:

- Income based employment & support allowance (income support)
- **Guaranteed** Element of Pension Credit
- Exemption certificate for working/child tax credit
- Income based jobseekers allowance

Which Travelling Expenses Can Be Claimed?

In general, reimbursement is restricted to the cheapest form of transport available - bus, ferry, train or car.

1. Travel by public transport—Bus, Train or Ferry

Patient's travelling by bus, train or ferry will be reimbursed for the cost of the travel (not first class) & should retain their tickets or receipt. **Patients must pay the first £10.00** (or current rate) of travelling cost—this will be deducted from any claim made.

2. Travel by private car

Where patients use a private car to attend hospital, petrol cost for the distance travelled will be reimbursed less the first £10.00 (or current rate). Mileage rate is currently 18p per mile.

3. Travel by Taxi

Patients may exceptionally be reimbursed for travel by Taxi only if necessary on medical grounds or if using public transport would not enable them to be on time for their appointment. Patients should obtain a signed and costed receipt from the taxi hire company.

4. Travel by Air

Where it is deemed necessary for a patient to travel by air, the flights are booked through the current contracted travel agent.

The arrangements are different for each location throughout Argyll & Bute.

NHS Contacts are as follows:

Islay - Ken McLean, Travel Co-coordinator – 01496 850 193

Jura – GP Surgery – 01496 820218

Campbeltown Hospital main reception – 01586 552224

Tiree - GP Surgery – 01879 220 893

Musdale – GP Surgery - 01583 421 206

Carradale – GP Surgery - 01583 431 376

Southend – GP Surgery - 01586 830 635

5. Travel by Ferry

Patients travelling by ferry should contact their GP surgery where they can be issued with a travel warrant at a cost of £10.00. Eligible islands are: - Gigha, Mull, Colonsay, Lismore, Coll & Tiree. A travel warrant including a car should not be issued where a patient could travel as a foot passenger unless the doctor deems it medically necessary. e.g Tiree to Oban Hospital.

Ken McLean, Travel Coordinator is the contact for Islay, and can be contacted on 01496 850 193.

If a patient does not use their ticket or only uses the ticket for a single journey, the unused ticket should be returned to NHS highland so that their alternative expenses can be reimbursed, e.g. bus fare or petrol costs.

6. Overnight Stay

Where an overnight stay away from home is unavoidable (for example, if transport is not available early enough to ensure arriving at the hospital on time), costs up to an agreed limit for bed and breakfast will be reimbursed at the current maximum rate of £30.00 per person per night. Receipts for the amount claimed must be included with any claim. No patient can claim money for other meals.

7. Will the Escort's Expenses Be Paid?

Patients under 16 are entitled to be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Patients over 16 will require part IV of the travel claim form to be completed by their doctor/dentist who will make this decision on medical grounds. The cost of having an escort can be claimed on the patient travel claim form.

How to Apply

Obtaining The Travel Claims Form

Highland and Island Travel Claim Forms can be obtained from hospital cash offices in Glasgow (Including the Glasgow Dental Hospital). All GP surgeries in Argyll & Bute should have a supply of these forms.

Completing the Form Correctly

Checklist

The processing of forms can be delayed when patients have not completed them correctly. Use the checklist to make sure that you have:

- If appropriate, completed escort's details (Part I)
- Signed and Dated the form (Part II)
- If appropriate, Obtained authorization for escort (Part IV)
- Complete hospital/appointment details (Part V)
- If appropriate, include proof of Qualifying benefit (Part V)
- If possible Obtain hospital staff's verification of attendance(Part VI)
- Attached all receipts securely to the form

Following the check list should help to speed up the processing of your claim

Making A Claim

Patients should ask at the desk of the hospital clinic or department they are attending if they need their appointment card to be stamped or need to obtain proof of attendance (this may be a slip confirming which clinic attended) in order to claim travel expenses.

If you have your Travel Claim Form with you, the hospital staff should complete part IV for you.

Completed forms should be sent to:-

NHS Highland Patient's Travel Department

Finance

Aros

Blarbuie Road

Lochgilphead

Argyll

PA31 8LB

Hospital Cash Offices

If patients are on a qualifying benefit, they should also take along their proof of benefit to the cash office. If the patient does not have a Highland and Island Travel Claim Form, the cashier's office will supply one which can be completed there and then. Hospitals will try to reimburse those patients who are on benefits in cash (if the hospital petty cash float can cover these expenses). If this is not possible, the claim will be passed to NHS Highland for payment. NB Hospital cash offices can only reimburse patients who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit. Claim forms processed by NHS Highland take up to 4 weeks. However, if the form is completed correctly (see page Checklist), the Finance Department usually make reimbursements more quickly.

The Highland and Island Patients Travel Scheme covers travel costs to hospitals throughout the UK. Argyll and Bute Patients referred to a hospital elsewhere in the UK should follow the same procedure as detailed for attendance at hospital in Argyll & Bute.

When Will Patients Receive Reimbursement?

Claims Processed by the NHS Highland may take up to 4 weeks when forms are not completed properly, (eg the Health Board may need to go back to the hospital to verify attendance, ect) forms which are completed correctly (using check list) should be processed more quickly

ALL CLAIMS SHOULD BE MADE WITHIN 3 MONTHS FROM THE DATE OF THE JOURNEY

Getting Help

Should you experience any difficulty in claiming reimbursement for travel costs please contact NHS Highland Patients Travel Department.

Argyll & Bute Patients Travel Department – 01546605653

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