

15 April 2016

A message from John Child, Chief Operating Officer, NHS Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group

You may have seen media reports this week about the recent problems experienced by the Sussex Patient Transport Service (PTS) run by Coperforma.

The service went live on 01 April 2016, following a procurement process led by High Weald Lewes and Havens Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) on behalf of the seven CCGs in Sussex.

PTS is a Sussex-wide service that helps people access healthcare appointments. The service provides some 25,000 journeys per month for people who are unable to use public or other transport owing to medical conditions. The service is booked for people who meet certain medical criteria which would otherwise prevent them from getting to their appointment.

PTS is free at the point of use for all eligible patients.

It is a non-emergency transport service and is quite separate from emergency and other ambulance services.

The overall standard of the service provided by Coperforma since its launch on 1 April has not been acceptable and both Coperforma and the Sussex CCGs have issued a public apology to all affected patients.

A combination of technology issues and problems with patient data and journey records created severe delays and missed appointments for some patients. This triggered a significant volume of telephone calls to Coperforma's call centres, which in turn created further issues, with patients and healthcare staff unable to get through.

The CCGs are taking this situation very seriously and have launched a formal investigation into the run-up and start of the new service. We have also requested a full report from Coperforma on call handling/waiting times since 1 April and the number of journeys missed and patients affected.

Regular operational meetings are taking place between the CCGs across Sussex and Coperforma to monitor the local position, and any ongoing impact on our patients.



1. How do patients access the Patient Transport Service?

Patients can access the Sussex PTS via a single phone line - Tel: 0300 111 2131 – between 7.00am and 11.00pm Monday to Friday and 8.00am to 10.00pm on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays.

Coperforma's online booking system is also accessible to healthcare staff 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and allows users to process any amendments or cancellations to booked journeys.

2. What are the eligibility criteria?

PTS is for patients who have been clinically assessed as having a condition that means:

- They need assistance for a journey to/from a healthcare appointment, and/or;
- It may be medically harmful to their health to travel by other means.

All patients requesting PTS are taken through an eligibility screening process that consists of a number of clinically-designed questions about an individual's condition and mobility. This process has been designed to make sure that all patients with a medical need for transport receive it.

If a patient is not eligible for PTS, they are provided with details of suitable alternative transport options. This may include Coperforma's own concessionary transport scheme, which it has established as a supplementary service to support patients who do not qualify for PTS. This service will require users to make a small contribution to the cost of their transport.

Several categories of patient journey are not covered by the current PTS in Sussex. These include: neonatal transport; paediatric intensive care transport; journeys for patients who live outside of Sussex; and journeys for patients who are detained under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act.

3. How can patients give feedback to Coperforma or make a complaint?

Should patients accessing the PTS wish to give feedback or make a complaint about the service they should email Stephen Payne, Coperforma's Business Unit Manager for Sussex, via stephen.payne@coperforma.co.uk

Brighton and Hove patients can also send feedback or complaints to the NHS Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Complaints team:

- **Call:** 01273 574899
- **Email:** BHCCG.complaints@nhs.net
- **Write to:** Complaints & FOI Officer, NHS Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group, Level 4, Lanchester House, Trafalgar Place, Brighton, BN1 4FU