



### Proposed Wheelchairs (Short-term access) (Scotland) Bill

#### Aim and approach

1. Which of the following best expresses your view of establishing a duty to provide a wheelchair to anyone who has been assessed as having a short-term need for one (defined as less than 6 months)?

- Fully supportive
- X Partially supportive**
- Neutral (neither support nor oppose)
- Partially opposed
- Fully opposed
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:

The Royal College is supportive of the general principles of this proposal to help meet the needs of people with short-term mobility issues through improving access to wheelchairs. Occupational therapists work with individuals to help them achieve their maximum level of independence and if the provision of a wheelchair supports this, RCOT welcome this. Wheelchairs support people with mobility needs, but are also important in supporting reduced social isolation.

Occupational therapy plays a vital role in assessing the needs and providing practical support to people with physical and mental illnesses, long term conditions, and/or those experiencing the effects of ageing. While we support the aspiration to ensure wheelchairs are available for those who require them, occupational therapists are a finite resource. We believe that the provision of short-term wheelchairs can be achieved with minimal input and resources being drawn from the occupational therapy service.

It is important that a proposed Bill to support the provision of short term access to wheelchairs does not over complicate the situation. Often, short term provision is a 'quick fix' solution to a temporary problem (such as recovery from an operation or accident). It is essential that this additional provision does not compound waits or increase pressures on existing services. The criteria for long-term wheelchair loans or equipment provision for adaptations must remain the same.

2. What is your view on setting a target for providing a wheelchair to a person who (a) has been assessed as having a short-term need for one and (b) is otherwise ready to use it?

- Target of 24 hours
- Target of 48 hours
- Target of 72 hours
- Another target (please specify)
- X No target in the legislation**
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:

**No target set in legislation:** This should be detailed under supplementary guidance, not legislation, and set locally dependant on local need and geography.



3. Which of the following best expresses your view of where the Bill should place the duty to provide short-term access to wheelchairs to people assessed as needing them?

Duty placed on NHS Boards

Duty placed on NHS Boards, but with a requirement to delegate it to Integrated Authorities (Health & Social Care Partnerships)

**X** **Duty placed on Integrated Authorities (Health & Social Care Partnerships)**

Other (please specify)

Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:

RCOT believe that the duty is best placed on Integrated Authorities to provide short-term access to wheelchairs. This is due to the shift to locality-based working and is in keeping with IJBs knowledge about their communities, demographics and specific geography.

The more complex needs of those who require longer term wheelchair provision is provided (and will remain) through NHS and it is important that the provision of short term wheelchair loans does not impact on this.

4. Which of the following best expresses your view of how further provision about wheelchair access (e.g. assessment criteria and eligibility) should be made?

Ministers should have power to make regulations, give directions, and guidance.

**X** **It should be left to NHS Boards or Integrated Authorities (as the case may be) to develop the criteria for themselves.**

Other (please specify)

Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:

IJBs should be left to set local criteria dependant on local need and geography.

5. Which of the following best expresses your view of requiring Scottish Ministers to report back to the Scottish Parliament on the operation of the legislation?

Duty to report every year

Duty to report every two years

**X** **Duty to report every three years**

Duty to report every five years

Unsure

Other (please specify)

Please explain the reasons for your response:

It is important to monitor how this is working - but reporting more frequently than 3 years is too often and waiting until 5 years is too long.



**Sustainability**

9. Do you consider that the proposed Bill can be delivered sustainably, i.e. without having likely future disproportionate economic, social and/or environmental impacts?

Yes

No

**X** **Unsure**

Please explain the reasons for your response:

These proposals have the potential to save costs in relation to reduced delayed discharges, reduced social isolation and people being able to get back to work or school quicker. However, there will be a greater cost for provision and maintenance of wheelchairs if short-term loans were made more widely available.

**General**

10. Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the proposal?

The Royal College is supportive of the general principles of this proposal which helps meet the needs of people with short-term mobility issues through widening access to wheelchairs.

There are currently services which provide temporary wheelchair loans and function well without occupational therapy involvement. These services are usually operated by third service providers (such as Red Cross); however, they are only available in some areas of Scotland.

It would, therefore, be sensible not to over complicate the process and build on what already works well. If a statutory duty to provide short-term access to wheelchairs was introduced, the Royal College believe that any new service must be available throughout Scotland and sufficiently resourced to meet changing population demographics and expectation.

It is important that those with longer term needs do not get mixed up with those who require short-term provision. Patients with longer term conditions which may have variable functional presentations (i.e. "good days and bad days") should be supported to consider a longer term wheelchair provision as part of their self-management of their condition, rather than needing to seek a short term loan in an emergency.