

The Wheelchair Quality Framework



A helpful guide for
wheelchair users



RIGHT CHAIR
RIGHT TIME
RIGHT NOW

WHEELCHAIR
ALLIANCE

Introduction



The NHS Wheelchair Quality Framework (QF) sets the standard for high-quality wheelchair services. It helps ensure you get a wheelchair that fits your day-to-day needs, **helping you live the life you choose**.

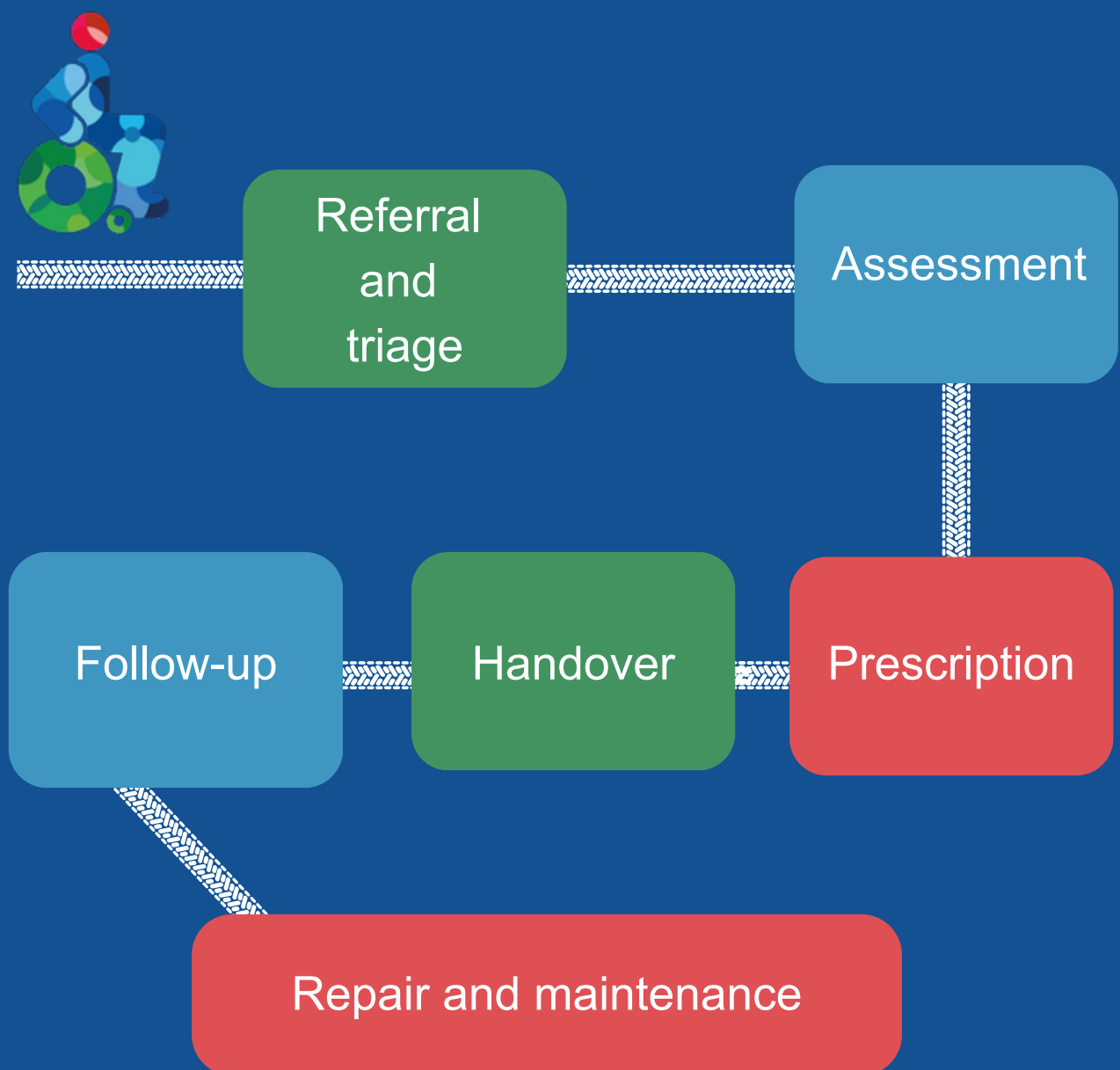
This guide, from the Wheelchair Alliance, makes the NHS document **simple and clear**. It's a tool to help you receive the wheelchair and service you deserve.

To get an NHS wheelchair, you must meet specific criteria. Start the process with a referral from your GP or another relevant healthcare professional.

This guide explains what a **good service** looks like. If your experience is different, use this information to **talk with your wheelchair service team** (providers/clinicians) and those who fund and manage the contract (the commissioners).

A full copy of the Quality Framework can be found here:
www.england.nhs.uk/publication/wheelchair-quality-framework/

How the process should work





Referral
and
Triage

Assessment

Prescription

Handover

Follow-up

Repair
and
maintenance

Step One: Referral and triage

This step covers getting into the NHS wheelchair service - from referral and prioritisation to assessment, an appointment, or direct provision of a wheelchair.

Your service must:

- Have a website with clear contact details.
- Provide accessible information and updates.
- Work with other organisations to appropriately prioritise your needs.
- Provide you with a wheelchair directly if your referral information shows this is appropriate.
- Provide information on other providers if you don't meet the NHS criteria.

Ask yourself:

1. Do you know where to go and who to contact for clear, accessible and timely information and advice about how to be referred to your wheelchair service?
2. Do you know if your referral has been received and will be reviewed promptly?
3. Are you confident the wheelchair service will request further information if it's missing?
4. Do you feel well informed throughout the referral process?



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Step Two: **Assessment**

This step covers how your individual needs - physical, functional, environmental, and lifestyle - are considered and defined.

Your service must:

- Assess you in the most appropriate location for your needs.
- Provide you or your carer with information to help you prepare for your assessment and considers your needs and those of your carer.
- Discuss what you want to achieve with your wheelchair. You and the service team must consider your health, social, work, and education needs.
- Have skilled therapists (physiotherapists, occupational therapists and rehab engineers) to assess you and your wider needs.
- Discuss funding options like personal wheelchair budgets, which can help cover extra modifications to your wheelchair.

Ask yourself:

1. Have you had enough time and information to prepare for your assessment?
2. Do you feel listened to and involved in a personalised assessment that considers your health and wider needs, as well as those of your carer?
3. Is your own expertise about your health and wellbeing needs valued and respected?
4. Do you feel you can involve others to support you during the assessment if you wish?



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Step Three: Prescription

This step informs the decision on what equipment best meets your assessed needs.

Your service must:

- Offer you a wheelchair based on the outcomes you and your therapist/rehab engineer have agreed. This should be documented in a personal care and support plan.
- Have therapists with up-to-date knowledge of available equipment, considering higher-cost wheelchairs when clinically necessary.
- Consider and explain other additional funding options such as statutory services (social care/education), Access to Work, charities etc.
- Explain any responsibility you have for the ongoing care and maintenance of your wheelchair.

Ask yourself:

1. Have you been provided with and do you understand all the options available to meet your needs and do you feel supported to make an informed choice?
2. Do you feel well informed about personal wheelchair budgets and the budget options available, including how and when they can be reviewed?
3. Are you confident that the equipment prescribed will meet your assessed needs?
4. Do you have a timeframe for receiving your equipment and details on who to contact for queries and interim support?



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Step Four: Handover

This step is when your prescribed equipment is provided and fitted to ensure it meets your needs.

Your service must:

- Provide your wheelchair within a maximum of 18 weeks. Exceptions may apply for specialist seating, complex adaptations, or equipment.
- Ensure your wheelchair has all necessary parts and adjustments made during the handover to ensure you have the best mobility and function.
- Explain how your wheelchair works and how to maintain it. You should be given an information pack with key details like battery charging and contact details for repairs/maintenance.
- Ensure you and your carer (if appropriate) can safely and effectively use your wheelchair.
- Provide you with details on where to get additional wheelchair skills training.

Ask yourself:

1. Are you confident your wheelchair and necessary equipment will be handed over at a time and a place appropriate to you?
2. Do you understand your responsibilities regarding how to use and maintain your wheelchair and access repairs when necessary?
3. Do you have adequate time and guidance to support you to use your wheelchair, including signposting to training if required?



Step Five: Follow-up

This step encompasses planned clinical reviews, patient-initiated follow-ups, and capturing feedback on outcomes.

Your service must:

- Provide a follow-up appointment either on a pre-arranged date or if you request one (e.g. if your needs change or your condition deteriorates).
- Provide clear contact information.
- Ask how your wheelchair is supporting your needs and document the answers.
- Enable you to give feedback - verbally, in writing, or via a focus group.
- Ensure there is a clear and easy-to-access process should you need to make a complaint.

Ask yourself:

1. Do you have accessible information on how to request a follow-up?
2. Do you have accessible information about any planned review, what is expected, and a timescale?
3. Do you know who to contact if you have concerns throughout the process?
4. Have you been given the opportunity to feedback about your experience?



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Step Six: **Repair and maintenance**

This step includes regular maintenance of your loaned wheelchair, as well as repairs when it or any associated parts wear out or stop working.

Your service must:

- Give you the necessary contact names and details.
- Provide an integrated repair and maintenance service that adheres to manufacturer guidance, aiming to fix your wheelchair at the agreed time.
- Provide a same-day loan wheelchair if a 'first-time fix' is not possible and you don't have alternative equipment. This may not be identical to your own but must be a suitable short-term solution.
- Refer you back for re-assessment if your clinical needs have changed or your wheelchair is beyond repair.

Ask yourself:

1. Do you have accessible information about the maintenance and repair of your wheelchair including who, when and where to contact if needed?
2. Are you confident that repair and maintenance appointments will be at a time and place appropriate to you?
3. Have you been informed of the progress of the repair of your wheelchair?
4. Do you have appropriate interim support whilst your wheelchair is being repaired?
5. Do you know who to contact in an emergency?

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admin@wheelchair-alliance.co.uk
www.wheelchair-alliance.co.uk



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Registered number: 13761260

167-169 Great Portland Street, London, W1W 5PF