



Patient Charter for Clinical Homecare Providers

Version 1 Approved 4 June 2025

This charter provides information for NCHA Members and other interested stakeholders regarding the provision of Clinical Homecare Services to patients. Its main purpose is to assist Homecare Providers who may want to use this document as a foundation for creating their own Patient Charter when delivering homecare services. Patients are referred to homecare services by their hospital clinical team, which may include the NHS, HSC, or a Private Provider. The charter outlines what patients can expect from a homecare service and offers guidance on their rights and responsibilities.

Introduction

The National Clinical Homecare Association (NCHA) was introduced in 2006 as a non-profit organisation to provide Homecare companies with expert advice and support so they can deliver high quality homecare services to patients.

There are over 600,000 patients in the UK receiving Clinical Homecare Services (March 2024). The NCHA develops high quality homecare guidance which are provided across the UK. The focus is to ensure patients who are suitable for and wish to, can access high quality homecare services.

Currently, the NCHA has over 16 full members who are homecare companies that hospitals can choose to work with to provide clinical homecare services to people. Additionally, we have more than 16 associate members who, while not providing clinical homecare services, have an interest in this sector.

We are delighted to introduce you to the NCHA Patient Charter which aims to highlight some of the main features you may wish to include in the development of a patient charter for individuals who are registered on service with you.

Although services may vary among different homecare providers, this Patient Charter serves as a standard for good practice. It's important to understand that each homecare provider may have its own patient charter. The NCHA Charter is intended to guide the homecare provider on what a patient charter should contain and to detail some of the main benefits and features of a clinical homecare service. It also explains what patients can expect from their provider and how to reach out for assistance.

What is a homecare service designed to do?

Homecare services are mainly used to support long-term or chronic health conditions, conditions that would otherwise require regular visits to a hospital or pharmacy. While every patient's needs are different, the services fall into three service pathways.

1. Medication management services are carried out by a homecare provider, typically bringing medications directly to the patient's home, along with clinical waste collection and disposal.
2. In addition to the services mentioned above, virtual training is offered to individuals registered for the service, usually provided by a clinician who may be a pharmacist or a nurse.
3. In addition to the service outlined in point 1, clinical support for treatment in a patient's home is normally provided by a clinician.

It is important to note that when a person is receiving clinical homecare services, the responsibility for the clinical management of that individual lies with the clinical referring centre team at the hospital, the hospital is known as the clinical referring centre). It is the clinical referring centre that determines and agrees the service pathway. The homecare provider will collaborate with the clinical referring centre to deliver the agreed service pathway and will maintain regular communication with the patient and clinical team to ensure the service meets the needs of each individual and adheres to the expectations set forth by the clinical referring centre (public or private provider). This service is available across the UK and supports both adults and children.

What are the benefits of being on a homecare service?

The use of a Clinical Homecare service offers a range of benefits, it helps people access healthcare in a place that best suits their needs, with further benefits to the NHS and society at large.

For Individual People

- Improved experience and personalised healthcare delivery
- Reduced need to travel to appointments – allowing people to work and retain independence
- Reduced need to travel to hospital to access medicines
- Improved geographical access, helping to tackle inequalities
- Improved adherence to treatment
- Safeguarding opportunities as specialist clinical staff visit patients at home
- Some services include additional wrap-around care, e.g. telephone helplines, clinical assessments or digital adherence support

For the NHS

- Increased capacity by extending services outside of hospital
- Financial savings and value
- Reduced wastage and improved medicines adherence
- Reduced do-not-attend rates
- Improved medicines stock keeping and management
- Improved patient satisfaction
- Efficient switching of medicines - with significant financial benefits
- Prescription management services
- Clinical management support

For Society

- Improved patient participation in employment and education
- Reduced carbon emissions and traffic congestion
- Improved pharmacovigilance, supporting safe medicines for all

How do people gain access to a homecare service?

The decision to use a Clinical Homecare service is based on several factors: the patient's diagnosis, the type of medication being prescribed, and whether the service is available through the NHS or a private sector provider.

It is important to emphasize that the decision to proceed with homecare services is made collaboratively between the individual patient and the medical team at their clinical referring centre prior to any referral to a homecare provider.

If the service is available and the patient agrees to it, the hospital will then refer them to a homecare provider. There are agreements in place between the hospital and the homecare provider to ensure that the services provided meet the expected standards.

How can each individual expect to be treated?

Every individual can expect to be treated with both dignity and respect. Each homecare provider aims to deliver services that support patients' needs to minimise any impact on their normal life regardless of age or ethnicity, people on service should always receive polite and respectful service.

We believe that supporting people outside of the hospital allows them to maintain independence while managing their conditions. The support people receive from the provider will be tailored to the specific needs of the individual; this will depend on what has been agreed upon with the clinical team.

Although homecare providers who are members of NCHA are not part of the NHS, they work closely with the NHS to ensure that treatment pathways operate as smoothly as possible. The NHS remains the individuals' primary health service, so if people have health concerns, they should consult their GP or their clinical team at the hospital.

How confidential is this service?

Data protection legislation dictates how personal identifiable information is handled by organisations, including businesses and government departments. In the UK, data protection is governed by the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. All homecare providers are legally required to comply with these regulations.

Therefore, NCHA and its members are committed to protecting and respecting people's privacy. We take privacy very seriously and we ask that all people on service read the homecare provider Privacy Notice carefully as it contains important information on:

1. the personal data collected about people on service.
2. how homecare providers look after personal data including when websites are visited (Regardless of where you visit from).
3. with whom personal data might be shared, and individual privacy rights and how the law protects people.

The NCHA also provides guidance to our members which recommends how they can fully comply with managing the privacy of all people on service which includes the appointment of a Data Protection Officer (DPO) which is a legal requirement.

Each of the homecare providers will have a DPO and a privacy policy and this will be provided to all people on service and available via the homecare provider website.

NCHA members work closely with their NHS colleagues to provide high-quality services to both the individuals in their care and the NHS staff. Regular communication is conducted with the utmost confidentiality and is focused on the well-being of those receiving services. An example of effective communication between the homecare provider and the NHS clinical team may be in discussing queries related to an individual's prescription.

What are the safety standards of a clinical homecare service?

All people on service can expect the service they receive to be provided by highly skilled, trained and suitably qualified team members. Whether that be the customer services team, the delivery team, or the nurse or pharmacy team all are trained and qualified to fulfil the roles they are employed to undertake. All our homecare provider members are committed to supporting their staff in continuous training.

Clinical homecare nurses, pharmacists and support workers play a pivotal role in delivering specialised care to people outside the traditional hospital settings. All nurses and pharmacists are registered professionals with extensive training, which enables them to administer specialised medicines and therapies, closely monitor patients' conditions, educate patients and their families about managing health issues and treatments, and collaborate with healthcare teams to achieve optimal outcomes.

The NCHA also collaborates with an organisation called 'Skills for Health', their function is to help Healthcare organisations across the UK to develop the skills, roles, competencies and strategies that provide better patient outcomes.

Who can people on service go to for help?

It's important to remember that while homecare providers work closely with the NHS, they are not the NHS. However, both parties collaborate to provide the highest levels of service possible to each individual.

If an individual has a health concern, they should refer to their GP or Hospital Clinical Team. Out of normal hours, they should seek guidance from the NHS 111 service. If they have a medical emergency then they should call 999, this includes life-threatening emergencies like cardiac arrest, strokes, heart attacks, and serious road traffic accidents.

If individuals have queries, need clarification or are struggling with any aspect of the homecare service they receive they should contact their homecare provider in the normal way. This includes queries with deliveries, appropriate storage of medication, taking medication on holiday etc.

How can people on service give feedback?

Each homecare provider will be delighted to hear patient / carer views and feedback on the service they provide, this includes compliments and concerns. All feedback is taken seriously and used to improve the service, so it is important that homecare providers are given feedback.

Sometimes a homecare provider may proactively seek feedback from individuals on service via a patient survey. These surveys are important, the results of feedback are reported back to the NHS on an aggregated and anonymised basis. If individuals are asked to take part in a survey, they can rest assured that their individual responses remain confidential. Surveys are important to the homecare provider and the NHS to help them understand the level of service that is provided and if any improvements need to be made.

When unexpected things happen?

Occasionally, the homecare provider may be affected by factors beyond their control. For instance, severe weather or road conditions can hinder delivery routes or travel and there could be a medical supply shortage. However, the homecare provider will make every effort to maintain a smooth service. If they cannot deliver the service, they will communicate with the patient, and in some cases, the individual receiving the service may need to go to the hospital for treatment. Rest assured, all patients on service can expect to be kept informed throughout the process.

How can people on service make a complaint?

All homecare providers have a complaints process, the details of which should be readily available to people on service. Any issues raised will be taken seriously and corrected as soon as possible. All feedback will be dealt with in a confidential manner and will not affect the care that individual patients receive.

If any individuals are uncertain about the complaints process, they should speak to a member of the homecare provider's team for clarification. They will guide the individual on how to raise a concern and inform the individual about the expected duration of the complaint process, as well as provide a response. If an individual makes a complaint to the homecare provider and they are still not satisfied, the homecare provider will have an escalation procedure. If they are not satisfied with the final response, they can escalate the complaint to the Hospital Clinical Team or to an external body such as one of the following organisations for assistance:

For complaints in England and Wales contact:
Health Service Ombudsman
phone: 0345 015 4033 **website:** www.ombudsman.org.uk/making-complaint

For complaints in Scotland contact:
Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee DD1 4NY
phone: 01382 207 100 or 0345 600 9527 **emails:** enquires@careinspectorate.com

For complaints in Northern Ireland contact:
The Regulation & Quality Improvement Authority
9th Floor Riverside Tower
5 Lanyon Place
Belfast BT1 3BT
phone: 02890 517 500 **emails:** info@rqia.org.uk

How can you help your homecare provider?

Respect the way we work – On the delivery day

All homecare providers know the importance of delivering medications and supplies on time. However, providing a UK wide service can be a real challenge. Weather and road conditions can be a factor that results in delays. So, it is important to be understanding if a homecare provider is running slightly ahead or behind schedule.

It is essential that individuals are at home for the entire delivery window period to receive their treatment. If they are not present at the agreed location, for the full duration, it could affect their treatment and impact other people as well.

Each homecare provider understands that emergencies can arise, and individuals may have to cancel the delivery or visit. In this case, the individual needs to inform the relevant homecare provider as early as possible so they can rearrange the delivery.

Receiving treatment at home by a healthcare professional. To ensure individuals treatment is given safely, the homecare provider will require a safe, clean and tidy working environment. Pets should be secured in a different room if possible and individuals should refrain from smoking while staff are in your home. Additionally, no individual should be under the influence of alcohol, drugs or illegal substances when consenting to treatment.

If the homecare provider is caring for someone under 16, a parent, chaperone or guardian must be present. If a patient needs a carer or another person to accompany them, that carer/person can also be in attendance.

Respect our staff

Every homecare provider staff member who supports individuals during treatment, whether they are drivers, nurses, pharmacists or members of the Customer Services team, all deserve to be treated with respect. If there is a perceived or actual threat to any homecare employee, the homecare provider may collect GPS and audio information from their safety devices. Any individual who verbally or physically threatens staff may have their services terminated. This decision would be significant, and the homecare provider would discuss it with the individual patient and the referring NHS clinical team.

Your homecare provider is here to assist with your health, so patients should follow the advice of the highly skilled nurses and pharmacists involved in your care. Any instances of unacceptable behavior directed at homecare staff will be handled in accordance with the individual homecare provider's Zero Tolerance Policy.

Let us know if your circumstances change

Sometimes, an individual's situation might change in a way that affects the delivery of the homecare service, such as moving to a new house, going on holiday, or spending time in the hospital. If this happens, the homecare provider will need to be informed as soon as possible, especially if the individual won't be available to receive their delivery or clinical visit. The homecare provider will then be able to reschedule the visit and rearrange the delivery or visit for another time.

It's also important to designate a friend or family member who can communicate with the homecare provider on all aspects of care. The homecare provider should be made aware that this person has permission to liaise with them on behalf of the individual patient.

If an individual becomes unwell, they should seek medical advice from their GP or hospital clinician. After discussing this with the clinical team, if a patient's treatment has been withdrawn and the individual has been put on hold, the medication has changed or switched to another medicine the homecare provider must be notified. This is essential to ensure that medication is delivered on time and to prevent any excess medication from being supplied. All people on service need to collaborate with the hospital clinical team and the homecare provider.

What happens if the provider cannot deliver medication as they have no prescription for an individual

All individuals should feel assured that each homecare provider has systems in place to work closely with the NHS to ensure they have an up-to-date prescription on file. However, due to various reasons sometimes there are delays in receiving prescriptions from the hospital team or delays in processing a prescription. The homecare provider will do their best to liaise with the clinical team but are unable to release medication without a legally valid prescription.

Withdrawing from the homecare service

All people on service have the right to change their minds about being on a service with a homecare provider and they have the right to inform that homecare provider that they wish to withdraw from service.

It is essential that the patient's clinical team is involved in the decision to withdraw from treatment. This conversation is important as it allows the NHS to explore any available options and discuss any implications of the decision.

If individuals still wish to withdraw, they can tell the homecare provider this when they call, visit, or by calling or writing to the homecare provider. If an individual wishes to restart the service, then the individual needs to discuss this with their clinical team who should then and contact the homecare provider to inform them as soon as possible.

For further information please contact info@clinicalhomecare.co.uk

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History

Version Status:	Date	Reason for Change	Author(s)
001	4 th June 2025	New	E M Keating

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