**East Sussex Wheelchair Services Collaborative** is the service user and carers group for adults and children representing around 15,000 NHS wheelchair users in East Sussex. Concerns have been raised with the Collaborative about personal, direct experience of wheelchair users using both powered and manual wheelchairs not being able to be transferred to Emergency Departments in emergency ambulances with their bespoke wheelchairs and essential mobility equipment (such as transfer boards). There are also serious concerns in relation to the experiences of patients with complex medical needs and postural related impairments being transferred out of their wheelchairs in an emergency situation, where it may injure them or cause significant harm if the person is placed in a prone or semi prone position (for example people with limb disorders, congenital disease and respiratory/pulmonary conditions). There are specific concerns related to the experiences of children and young people, including a lack of awareness of the needs of those who use specialized, bespoke wheelchairs, postural seating support, respiratory equipment and communication aids.

**Patient Safety Expert Advisor (Ambulance Services) at NHS Improvement provided this response in relation to the above queries from the Collaborative in October 2017:**

‘I am not aware of any national ambulance service guidance on the specific issue of conveyance of mobility aids and essential equipment.  My own experience is borne out by colleagues that I have discussed this issue with and the general view is that if a patient wishes to take equipment that is essential and that can be conveyed safely, then ambulance crews will do their best to accommodate this in the patient’s best interests and for continuity of care. On the subject of wheelchairs specifically, the ten English ambulance Trusts may have standing local guidance for conveyance of these.  Such local protocols as do exist will take account of health and safety obligations, which require equipment to be properly secured so as not to cause harm in the event of a road traffic collision.  You are therefore correct in your assessment of the problems of conveying wheelchairs.  They need to be conveyed in vehicles with adequate stowage and the focus on the patient’s clinical condition means that moving wheelchairs is not a priority for emergency ambulances. At this point I feel that the onus should be on non-emergency ambulance conveyance of specialist wheelchairs as soon as possible to enable patient’s mobility.  You are also correct in the assumption that hospitals are expected to be able to accommodate a patient’s mobility needs.

Given the seriousness of your concerns about posture and the relationship with complex medical needs, I think further information is required regarding the possible harm to patients that are moved into different postural positions as a result of not having essential equipment.  I would suggest at this stage we (NHS Improvement) interrogate the national reporting database further on this subject and also canvas the views of other subject experts for their experience of this issue.  I will suggest this course of action to my colleagues and that we write back to you with our findings’.

**GAPS AND BARRIERS: KEY QUESTIONS FOR WHEELCHAIR USERS AND THEIR CARERS IN EAST SUSSEX**

1. **Are you a:**

A. **Wheelchair user**? YES\* **(**\****please delete answers as appropriate)***

B. **Parent or Carer of a child or young wheelchair user aged *under* 18?**

C. **Parent or Carer of a wheelchair user aged *over* 18?**

D. **What is your age group or the age group of the person you care for?**

Under 18/18-25/25-50/50-65/over 65

1. **Has the wheelchair been provided by the NHS?**  YES/NO

**What type of wheelchair is it?**

A. Powered wheelchair Manual wheelchair

B. **Please describe the approximate size and weight of the wheelchair?**

Approx size: Approx weight:

1. **In the event of an emergency could you or the person you care for be *safely* transferred out of the wheelchair into a different postural position and onto an emergency ambulance?** YES/NO

**If NO, please tell us more about any postural needs, and what would be the safest way for either you or the person you care for to be moved. Please describe any postural needs that would arise whilst accessing an emergency ambulance from home, and what would be needed if an emergency should arise away from home?**

1. **Do you or the person you care for have other essential medical or mobility aids, such as respiratory support equipment, transfer boards or communication aids?**

YES/NO

**If YES, please describe them**

1. **If you or the person you care for needed an emergency ambulance to travel to Accident and Emergency (A and E) (or be transferred in an emergency between hospitals for essential treatment) could you or they manage without the wheelchair, as well as without any essential medical, mobility or communication aids?**

YES/NO

**If NO, please tell us why:**

1. **Please describe in more detail what happened on occasion(s) when you or the person you care for called for an Emergency ambulance (999 service) in East Sussex? Please tell us if there were any problems with transporting the wheelchair and any specialist aids or equipment either to A and E, or for other emergency transfers between hospitals?**

**ANY FURTHER COMMENTS:**

**NAME: (optional)\***

**EMAIL ADDRESS:**

**(\*Please see notes below and important information about how we can keep in touch with you).**

**Please email Liz (co-chair and wheelchair service user) at** [**wusges@gmail.com**](mailto:wusges@gmail.com) **with your response please by Friday 7 September 2018. The consultation will close on 7 September 2018.**  Your response will then be communicated (**without using your name or contact details**) directly to South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECAmb). Please let us know if you would like to receive updates on the results of the consultation.

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| A Consultation Feedback Meeting is being held with the Patient Experience Manager and Head of Fleet and Logistics at South East Coast Ambulance Service in September 2018 with a core group of wheelchair users and their carers to address concerns and feedback responses from the consultation. Healthwatch East Sussex have been invited to support service users and carers at the meeting. |

We would be delighted as service users ourselves to keep in touch with you. If you would like to receive updates on the consultation and **join the mailing list for the East Sussex Wheelchair Services Collaborative, please email us at** [**wusges@gmail.com**](mailto:wusges@gmail.com) **to let us know you are happy for us to keep in touch by email.** General data Protection Regulations 2018 require that any personal information must be kept securely and contact can only be made with individuals who have given written permission to do so. Your personal information will never be shared with any other individual or organization. At any time should you wish not to receive further communications please let us know and your contact information will be deleted immediately.