

28 January 2021

[REDACTED]

By email: [REDACTED]  
Ref: H202009231

Dear [REDACTED]

### Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 11 December 2020 for:

*"If a patient is made to leave a public hospital after their operation but they have no way of looking after themselves do they have to pay for the assistance they need privately? How do they get home?  
If the patient does not have access to a vehicle to get to and from the hospital and no one to take them how do they get there and back?  
If they don't have the means to pay for anything privately, what kinds of publicly funded care are available to them?  
Who provides the care and who ensures that it is actually provided?  
What limits are put on care at home? E.g. I've been told by a hospital official that after care is not usually available but if it is necessary, there is a limit of only one hour per week. Is that true?  
I understand there is a Travel Assistance fund but the hospital will only help with kilometres. What if a patient can't drive and has no access to a vehicle or a ride?"*

Any issues with transport or care following surgery should be identified in an outpatient's appointment prior to surgery by staff managing the patients care at the district health board (DHB). DHB websites are the best place to contact for immediate advice and answers to any questions on transport or help at home following surgery. DHBs are also able to provide access and advice on Needs Assessment and Service Coordination services (NASC) if a patient has a long-term disability.

General practitioner's (GP) can also arrange nursing or medical help at home depending on the situation, as well as NASC services. A patient can talk to their GP about the range of healthcare options available and the criteria that needs to be met to be eligible to receive care services to help manage and support any short-term or long-term health concerns.

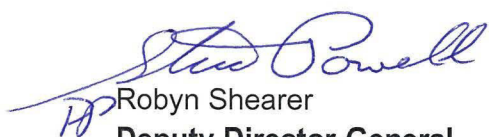
Health care service are responsible for supporting patients with appropriate care and support. If a patient feels that they are not receiving the care required, the Health and Disability Commissioner (HDC) is available to investigate complaints about health care services independently of health care providers, the Ministry and the Minister of Health. The role of the HDC is to promote and protect the rights of people receiving health and disability services. The HDC can be contacted by email ([hdc@hdc.org.nz](mailto:hdc@hdc.org.nz)) or by calling freephone 0800 11 22 33. You can find more information at: [www.hdc.org.nz](http://www.hdc.org.nz).

The National Travel Assistance (NTA) scheme provides financial assistance to those New Zealanders who may find it difficult to access specialist health and disability services without such assistance. The NTA scheme is administered by each DHB, and they use the NTA policy to guide their decision-making according to the eligibility criteria. Assistance with travel costs may cover private vehicle, public transport and specialised transport needs (for example, taxi, mobility taxi or air travel). Details of the scheme and eligibility criteria can be found on the Ministry's website at: [www.health.govt.nz/your-health/services-and-support/health-care-services/hospitals-and-specialist-services/travel-assistance](http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/services-and-support/health-care-services/hospitals-and-specialist-services/travel-assistance).

I trust this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website at: [www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests](http://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robyn Shearer', with a small 'HS' monogram to the left.

Robyn Shearer  
**Deputy Director-General**  
**DHB Performance and Support**