



**NHS**

**Yorkshire  
Ambulance Service**  
NHS Trust



# **Patient choice in Emergency and Urgent Care**

**April 2026**



# Patient choice in Emergency and Urgent Care

Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust supports your legal right to make informed decisions about your care, as outlined in the NHS Constitution for England (March 2012) and the NHS Choice Framework (April 2016, updated October 2024).

## What is patient choice?

The NHS Choice Framework (linked at the end of this document) outlines patients' right to choose where they receive treatment. It describes how you have the right to choose:

- Where to receive **planned outpatient care**.
- Your **healthcare provider**, if they deliver NHS-funded services.
- Whether to **accept or refuse treatment**.

However, **choice is not always available in urgent, emergency, or crisis situations** due to clinical concerns that require specialist care or support.

Additionally, in cases where a patient has been deemed to not have mental capacity but requires emergency treatment, the attending clinician can overrule patient choice and transport the patient to nearest most appropriate receiving facility to provide the care needed.

## Emergency and Urgent Care: What you need to know

In most emergencies, it is **clinically inadvisable** to bypass the nearest suitable hospital or unit. Transporting a patient further than necessary may pose risks to their welfare.

Additionally, in cases where a patient has been deemed to not have mental capacity but requires emergency treatment, the attending clinician can overrule patient choice and transport the patient to nearest most appropriate receiving facility to provide the care needed.

## Case study one:

Patient A is walking through Leeds City Centre when he collapses to the floor complaining of chest pain that is radiating to his jaw and neck.

The ambulance has arrived and advised he attends Leeds General Infirmary as the nearest Emergency Department, and the crew are unable to rule out a Myocardial Infarction (heart attack) without a blood test.

Patient A states that he lives in Wakefield and would prefer to be taken to Pinderfields Hospital as it would be easier for his daughter to pick him up.

This would be an occasion where choice is not available and transporting the patient to a hospital further away could be detrimental to the patient's health, as emergency care is required to treat or rule out an emergency condition.

However, exceptions may apply, including:

- Pre-agreed open access arrangements with specialist units or wards, for example: cancer patients or children with complex needs. Our staff will contact the unit to confirm if bypassing nearer facilities is appropriate.

### **Case study two:**

Patient B lives in Bridlington who has called with severe pain.

On assessment the crew have found the pain is related to a diagnosis of cancer and she is treated at Castle Hill Hospital Oncology Centre and has a weakened immune system due to on-going chemotherapy treatment. The patient is unable to remain at home due to the severity of her pain and wishes to be taken to oncology for treatment, where she has open access.

The patient when at home is 19 miles from the nearest emergency department and 27 miles from oncology.

Her presentation appears consistent to her cancer diagnosis. There are no immediate clinical concerns or red flags present, so in this scenario patient choice may be appropriate following a conversation with the Oncology team. The team agree that her symptoms are something they can treat safely and are happy to support her.

### **Case study three:**

Patient C lives in Malton, and her GP has dialled 999 on her behalf due to social problems.

From her address she is 18 miles to York Hospital and 22 miles to Scarborough, with a similar journey time to both destinations. She has asked to be transported to Scarborough as it is closer to her family, and they will be able to assist her on discharge and with transport home. With no immediate clinical concerns, in this occasion it may be appropriate to transport to her preferred destination, following a conversation with our Emergency Operations Centre (EOC).

### **Case study four:**

In some cases, patients may be assessed and a need for emergency department attendance identified but transport by ambulance may not be required. In these instances, patients could be asked to or decide to make their own way and, in this situation, they may attend a hospital of their choice. For example:

Patient D lives in Bradford but wants to travel to Airedale Hospital as has not enjoyed her previous experiences at Bradford Hospital. It is rush hour and there is a significant difference in journey times. The crew assess Samantha to have mental capacity and to be independently mobile with no red flag symptoms so agree with her that she can make her own way to Airedale by taxi.