PATIENTS USING OXYGEN THERAPY OUTSIDE THE HOME (SECONDARY SUPPLY): INFORMATION FOR LHBS

1. A primary supply of oxygen will be that delivered to the patient’s permanent home. However, patients may also need a secondary supply of oxygen outside their main home, delivered to another address on a regular basis or for a defined period. For example,

- a weekend away, a holiday, or admission to a hospice or care home for a period of respite care
- the patient has a second (holiday) home, where he stays on a regular basis or where a patient stays with family or friends each weekend
- where a patient is able to attend school or work

2. This note provides information on secondary supply of oxygen outside a patient’s main home, including

- ordering a secondary supply
- arrangements between suppliers providing a home oxygen in England and Wales where the secondary supply is delivered by a supplier outside the patient’s “home” service region
- arrangements to support continuity of supply to patients, resident in England and Wales, who require oxygen when visiting Scotland or Northern Ireland, and patients resident in Scotland and Northern Ireland who are visiting England and Wales
- the supply of oxygen to UK residents travelling abroad
- the supply of oxygen to overseas visitors to the United Kingdom.

Secondary Supply – Supplier Responsibilities

3. Four suppliers provide an integrated NHS home oxygen services in 10 service regions in England and one covering Wales.

4. Many patients using oxygen away from home will continue to receive a service from their usual supplier - for example, where delivery is to another location in a region served by the same supplier (such as the patient’s school or where a patient is admitted to a local hospice or nursing home).

5. The same supplier may also deliver a secondary service outside the patient’s “home” region. For example, Air Products will deliver a primary service to a patient’s main home in Wales and secondary supply to meet the patient’s needs when on holiday in Yorkshire, as Air Products is the supplier in both Wales and Yorkshire and Humberside service regions.
6. Under the service contract, where a patient requires secondary supply in a region with a different supplier, the “home” supplier is required to arrange continuity of supply with another supplier to support a patient when he or she is away from home. Delivery of a secondary service in a service area not supplied by the “home” supplier is the responsibility of the supplier for that service region.

Secondary Supply – Health Professional Responsibilities

7. Where a patient requires a supply of oxygen at another address, as well as to his/her permanent home, a health professional should

- complete a second HOOF and send it to the usual supplier. The second HOOF does not cancel supply to a patient’s permanent home and there is no need to complete a further HOOF to resume supply on the patient’s return home.

- The second HOOF must provide clear, accurate and legible information if the supplier is to deliver a secondary supply to a location other than the patient’s permanent home. Experience shows that problems arise where a health professional does not include
  
  ➢ the address to which secondary supply is to be delivered (eg holiday address, care home)
  ➢ the period that secondary supply is required (eg the date a patient enters a hospice for respite care and the date for the patient’s return home)
  ➢ contact details at the alternative address to arrange installation or take delivery of equipment and collect equipment when the patient returns home
  ➢ any changes in the patient’s need for oxygen whilst away from home (eg changes in hours of use for an ambulatory service if a patient is more active when on holiday)
  ➢ any other information that the health professional can provide that will support the supplier in delivering the required service to the right patient at the right address

- Experience also shows that problems will arise where a health professional allows insufficient time to support arrangements for delivery of a secondary supply – for example, where a patient does not give advance notice of holiday plans. However, where secondary supply is part of planned care (eg admission to a hospice or a care home), a health professional should be able to give the supplier time to make arrangements rather than order urgent supply.

- Ensure the LHB receives a copy of any HOOF requesting a secondary supply of oxygen to a patient.

- Ensure the second HOOF is cancelled where there is a change of plan or the service is no longer required – and inform the LHB
8. A health professional or a supplier is not responsible for obtaining permission from owners of holiday or other accommodation for the installation, storage or use of oxygen equipment by a patient staying there. This is a matter for the patient or the patient’s family. However, a health professional will wish to support parents requiring a secondary supply of oxygen for children able to attend school or a patient seeking permission from an employer for secondary supply in the workplace.

Secondary Supply – Patients’ Responsibilities

9. Advice is available to patients on their responsibilities, including allowing time for their GP or other health professional to order a secondary supply of oxygen and allowing the supplier time to make the required arrangements. See the Oxygen Contract website – http://howis.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/home.cfm?orgid=521

All patients using the home oxygen service received an information leaflet in December 2006. The key messages are

- Before you go, confirm that the owner of the place where you will be staying is happy for you to store, install and use oxygen equipment. This is not the responsibility of your GP or the supplier
- Tell your GP or other health professional about your plans as early as possible so that an order can be set to the supplier in good time (at least 2 weeks notice is helpful) – particularly if going away during peak holiday times
- Check with your GP or health professional that you are well enough to travel and discuss any changes to your usual oxygen supply that you may need when you are away
- Make sure your GP or health professional has all the information he/she needs to complete your order.
- It is easier to cancel an order than make last minute arrangements that cannot guarantee delivery on the required date
- Tell the usual supplier of any plans to take equipment, which must be brought back when returning home
- Leave any equipment supplied to you when away from the home – this will be collected by the supplier in that area
- Contact the supplier if there are problems with supply or equipment
- If you change plans, tell the supplier immediately. Also, tell your GP/health professional so he can cancel the order.
- Complain to the supplier in the first instance but also involve the LHB.
- If unwell when away from home, seek advice from a local GP or in an emergency visit A&E or dial 999.

10. LHBs will wish to ensure that patients receive consistent advice on the above arrangements for oxygen supplies when staying away from home.
Secondary Supply – Delivery

11. On receipt of a HOOF for delivery of a secondary supply of oxygen, the “home” supplier will

- Check HOOF information supports supply as and when required.
- If incomplete, return to health professional
- If complete, contact the patient or healthcare professional, as appropriate to check and finalise arrangements.
- Where necessary, liaise with a supplier in another service region to arrange delivery to the specified location. If secondary supply supports holiday arrangements, the supplier responsible for delivery of the service will make a further check with the patient a week before travelling and confirm arrangements
- Collect equipment when the patient returns home

Continuity of Supply in the United Kingdom

12. The NHS home oxygen service is available throughout the United Kingdom. However, delivery is different in Scotland and Northern Ireland where GPs continue to use a prescription to order a cylinder service from community pharmacies with a separate service contract supporting delivery of the concentrator service.

13. The 4 UK Health Departments have agreed arrangements, in consultation with suppliers, to ensure continuity of supply to patients from England and Wales visiting Scotland and Northern Ireland and vice versa. A copy of the memorandum of understanding between the Health Departments is on the Oxygen Contract website at http://howis.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/home.cfm?orgid=521

Patients Resident in England or Wales Visiting Scotland or Northern Ireland

14. The patient’s GP or other health professional should complete a second HOOF (NOT ISSUE AN FP10) providing details of the secondary supply required and send it to the usual supplier. The supplier will liaise with Scottish Healthcare Supplies in Scotland (Tel: 0131 314 0724) or the Central Services Agency in Northern Ireland (Tel: 028 9053 2963) to arrange supply. The SHS or the CSA will confirm delivery details with the “home” supplier and the patient concerned. Although orders will be made via a HOOF, patients in England and Wales need to be aware that they will need to pay a prescription charge on cylinders obtained from pharmacies during their stay in Scotland or Northern Ireland, unless they are exempt.

Patients Resident in Scotland or Northern Ireland Visiting England or Wales
15. Advice to patients living in Scotland and Northern Ireland is to arrange supply in England and Wales before they travel, as they will be unable to obtain cylinder oxygen from a community pharmacy in England or Wales.

16. Scottish Healthcare Supplies or the Central Services Agency will liaise with GPs in Scotland and Northern Ireland to ensure that suppliers in England and Wales receive a HOOF (not a prescription) setting out the patient’s requirements to support delivery. The supplier in England or Wales will confirm delivery details with the SHS or CSA and the patient concerned.

**Patients Using Oxygen When Travelling Abroad**

17. The NHS home oxygen service does not include the supply of oxygen abroad. There is no change in policy or advice to patients on accessing medical treatment and supplies abroad, including oxygen. The new HOS contract clarifies these arrangements rather than replacing former “custom and practice” in which patients often obtained cylinder supplies on prescription from pharmacies and took these abroad without informing the pharmacist or the gas supplier.

18. As under previous arrangements, oxygen equipment belongs to the supplier, not the NHS. Therefore, patients should not take equipment out of the UK without informing the supplier and obtaining agreement to do so. They should seek advice from the regional supplier on any arrangements that the supplier may offer on providing oxygen supplies abroad. These are private arrangements between the patient and the supplier - not funded by the NHS under the HOS contract.

19. Advice on obtaining oxygen supplies abroad is included in the Department of Health leaflet *Health Advice for Travellers*, which is available on the Department of Health website ([www.dh.gov.uk/travellers](http://www.dh.gov.uk/travellers)). This provides advice on obtaining oxygen supplies within the EU states and a number of other countries with which the UK Government has reciprocal health care agreements.

20. It is essential that UK citizens travelling abroad obtain a UK issued European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) before they go to demonstrate their entitlement to healthcare services. The EHIC only covers care that becomes medically necessary during a temporary visit in these countries. Patients apply for an EHIC either through an application from their Post Office or through the Internet. Advice is also available from the Department of Health customer service centre:

Customer Service Centre - 020 7210 4850 (Lines are open from 09:00 to 17:00, Monday to Friday)
Textphone (for deaf and hard of hearing) - 020 7210 5025 (Lines are open from 09:00 to 17:00, Monday to Friday)
Overseas Visitors to the UK

21. Anyone (of any nationality) is eligible for free NHS care where ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom. If they are an overseas visitor but meet one of the exemption categories outlined in the NHS (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 1989 then they may also be eligible for free NHS care.

22. Advice to overseas visitors – as to UK patients wishing to travel abroad - should be that they make prior arrangements before they travel.

23. Information on hospital treatment of overseas visitors is available on the WAG website (www.wales.gov.uk/overseasnhsguidance) relating to the NHS (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 1989. However, the home oxygen service is part of treatment provided to patients outside hospital, where the usual first point of contact will be a local GP practice. An overseas visitor can approach the local LHB for the area which he/she is visiting or may approach a practice directly.

24. PLEASE NOTE: Under the new General Medical Services contract a practice is required to offer free NHS treatment to anyone requesting it if, in the opinion of the clinician, it is immediately necessary (including where this is required to treat a pre-existing condition that has become exacerbated during the person’s stay in the UK). In these circumstances, the GP practice may consider it appropriate to order home oxygen on an urgent basis for the minimum three-day supply. **Cost of the service is borne by the LHB in which the GP practice is located.**

25. A GP practice has discretion to accept someone on to its list as a temporary resident if they are living in the area for more than 24 hours or less than 3 months. This does not automatically entitle them to free NHS treatment – WHC (99) 32 relates to overseas visitors’ eligibility for primary medical services.

26. Where a GP practice does not accept someone on the list as a temporary resident, the practice can continue to provide treatment on a private basis for which the GP practice will charge. Where a practice treats a patient privately, the practice may contact the local supplier (or any other oxygen supplier) to provide a supply of oxygen whilst the patient is resident in the area. **In such circumstances, the GP practice should not use a HOOF to order a supply of oxygen.** The GP practice should issue a private prescription to obtain supply, with the patient meeting the practice and supplier charges for this service as necessary.

27. Alternatively, the patient may contact a supplier directly - oxygen is a general sales list (GSL) medicine and there is no requirement to obtain supply through a pharmacy. However, it is likely that the supplier will wish to supply against a prescription – either one issued privately by a GP practice or by the patient’s own medical practitioner in his/her home country.