

Patient information service
Regional Services

Retrieve Adult Critical Care Transfer Service



Retrieve is the specialist adult critical care transfer service for South West England. Our highly-skilled and experienced team of doctors and practitioners coordinate and support the safe transfer of critically ill and injured patients between hospitals.

What is critical care?

Critical care is needed when a patient is seriously ill or injured and requires intensive treatment and close monitoring. Many critical care patients are suffering with life-threatening or life-changing illnesses and injuries and require advanced monitoring, medical interventions and treatments whilst being transferred between hospitals.

Why do critically ill patients need to be transferred between hospitals?

We know that transfer away from your local hospital is unsettling. However there are times when critically ill patients need to be transferred between hospitals. The main reasons are:

- To receive specialist treatment and care (eg. for a brain injury or for cardiac surgery) in a hospital that specialises in this. In the South West, this often means the hospitals in Plymouth or Bristol
- To return to your local hospital after specialist treatment and care or when you have fallen ill in another area. This is called 'repatriation' and ensures you are closer to your loved ones and support network as you recover
- To ensure you receive the critical care you need in the rare circumstance where there is insufficient available capacity in the hospital you are in

In many cases the patients requiring Retrieve will not be conscious during the transfer. Having a loved one who is seriously unwell is a very stressful and anxious time. Retrieve aims to provide care and support for both their patient and relatives and hope that this information is helpful. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Who will tell me/my next of kin when the transfer is happening?

The hospital where you are a patient currently will let you, and your next of kin, know that you are being transferred, the reason and where you are being taken to. If you have any questions, please ask them.

How will my next of kin know that I have arrived at their destination?

The receiving hospital will receive your next of kin's contact details and should inform them when you are safely settled in. Where possible, the Retrieve team will endeavour to try our best to inform your next of kin after your safe arrival and handover of care.

Will Retrieve contact my next of kin when they are looking after me?

Retrieve's priority is to continue to provide critical care and ensure the safe transfer of our patients. As part of the process of managing the transfer, Retrieve endeavours to try our best to ensure that your next of kin have been informed that it is happening. On arrival at the receiving hospital, Retrieve will ensure the contact information for your next of kin is handed over.

Can my next of kin travel with me?

Our dedicated specialist ambulances have limited space and unfortunately that does not usually allow us to carry patient's next of kin.

Can my next of kin follow the ambulance?

For their own safety, and that of other road users, we ask next of kin to please not directly follow our ambulance. We ask next of kin to make their own way to the receiving hospital when they are able to. Often, people find that a friend or another family member can be helpful accompanying them in these difficult circumstances.

Why can't I take all of my property with me?

We have limited space in our ambulances as much of it is taken up with our specialist equipment. We will endeavour to transfer essential items (eg. glasses, hearing aids, dentures, mobile phones and a change of clothes) with our patients and hand them to the receiving team.

How does the Retrieve service support transfers?

Retrieve's principle aim is to ensure that all of our patients continue to receive the intensive care that they require during their journey, including in the back of our ambulances. Our clinical team consists of a senior doctor who has specialised in intensive care medicine or anaesthesia and a highly-experienced intensive care nurse. Each team member has specialist knowledge, experience and training in supporting patient transfer.

We provide all of the same medications, breathing machine support and moment-by-moment vital signs monitoring as they would receiving on a modern intensive care unit. We also have specialist transfer equipment and dedicated ambulances that mean we can ensure your safety, comfort and dignity.

Our ambulances are equipped with blue lights and sirens which we use during urgent and emergency journeys to ensure you reach the receiving hospital in a safe and timely way.

What happens when I get to the receiving hospital?

When we arrive at the receiving hospital, we will take you to the location of the specialist team or receiving department to ensure your hospital care can continue immediately. For some patients, this means we take you to the Emergency Department for further assessment, including additional x-rays and scans whilst others go to the Intensive Care Unit or emergency operating theatre. We remain responsible for each and every patient until we have provided a detailed handover to the receiving team.

How can I find out more information about Retrieve or ask a question?

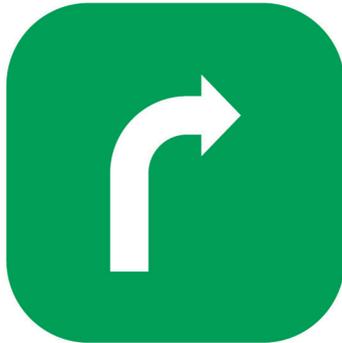
Please visit our website www.retrieve.nhs.uk for more information about our important service. Our contact details are on our website and we encourage you and your next of kin to ask any questions to our team when they are transferring you.

It is very important to us that we continue to provide a high quality and caring service. We are continually working to improve Retrieve and welcome any feedback that you wish to share with us.

Please scan the QR code below or visit:

www.retrieve.nhs.uk/feedback.





www.retrieve.nhs.uk