**Position statement for staff and Call handlers re MAS Scotland closure. June 2023.**

Any media enquiries should be directed to media@redcross.org.uk

Other enquiries can be directed to masscotlandenqs@redcross.org.uk

**Response to public enquiries**

The Red Cross in Scotland will be retiring its wheelchair hire service at the end of June.

Following a successful advocacy campaign by British Red Cross, in 2021 the Scottish Government took the decision that they would provide short-term loan wheelchairs through local Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCP). Many more people than we could ever hope to reach will now be given access to a wheelchair free of charge.

Our last wheelchair hires will take place during June with the last hire being June 30th.

From this date, we will signpost users who are attempting to access our service to the Health and Social Care Partnership that covers the area in which they reside via the Ask Sara Website for Scotland. As we will no longer be hiring wheelchairs in Scotland, anyone who does not meet the state criteria will be signposted to an alternative commercial provider for support. We will continue to offer a limited service to those who can demonstrate that they are in financial hardship.

Details of this hardship scheme will be available via our contact centre on 0300 456 1914.

**All our other services (Independent living, refugee services, emergency response, fundraising) will continue to operate as usual.**

**Questions and Answers:**

When is the last date I can hire out a wheelchair for?

From the 5th June, we will reduce the maximum hire duration as follows:

* + w/c 5th June onwards: 12 weeks
	+ W/c12th June onwards: 11 weeks
	+ w/c 19th June 10 weeks
	+ w/c 26th June : 9 weeks

We will not be hiring out a wheelchair after the 30th June 2023

What are the arrangements for returning the chair

Wheelchairs should be returned to the spoke from which they were hired/loaned by the end of the agreement period or the end of August (whichever comes soonest)

If I need a chair after the 30th June, then what should I do ?

Once the hire service has been retired, users will need to contact their Health and Social Care Partnership where their need of a chair is for a purpose as outlined in the guidance link below:

<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2021/03/guidance-provision-wheelchairs-short-term-loan/documents/guidance-provision-wheelchairs-short-term-loan/guidance-provision-wheelchairs-short-term-loan/govscot%3Adocument/guidance-provision-wheelchairs-short-term-loan.pdf>

The guidance indicates the following circumstances for short term wheelchair loans-

Assessment for a wheelchair on short-term loan should form part of the wider assessment of on-going needs by appropriately trained staff (e.g. Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist or nurse)

**When to provide** It is recommended that, as a minimum, wheelchairs are provided for short-term loan in the following circumstances:

* + To support those recovering from surgery, and are temporarily non-weight bearing following illness.
	+ To reduce social isolation.
	+ To provide improved quality of end of life care.
	+ To support service users awaiting a permanent wheelchair who are otherwise fit for discharge from hospital. (This will be dependent on the complexity of need, and whether a standard (attendant or self-propelled) wheelchair would be suitable).

**When not to provide**

* + People resident in care homes – it is the responsibility of care homes to meet the short-term/temporary needs of their residents.
	+ People requiring the long-term provision of a specialist wheelchair. It is likely that their needs would not be adequately met with a standard wheelchair, and they should be referred to wheelchair specialist services to address their immediate and long-term needs.
	+ Where the home environment is not suitable for wheelchair access (unless the chair is required for outdoor use only).
	+ People with fluctuating long term conditions may be better supported by the provision of a permanent wheelchair as part of the self-management of their condition, rather than seeking a short-term loan in an emergency.

Ask Sara website for Scotland will provide the contact details for the relevant HSCP.

If they do not meet the conditions of the regulations, then a user will need to arrange a hire from one of the commercial providers that operate in Scotland

People who are in financial hardship ***may*** be able to secure support from the British Red Cross if they meet our criteria. Further advice can be obtained from ringing our One Contact number, as cases are assessed on an individual basis.

I have a chair on hire that is due back after the 30th June – can I extend it’s hire ?

There will be no facility to extend the hire beyond this time. The wheelchair and accessories will need to be returned by the date agreed when the hire was first taken out.

I have a chair on loan on the AP, that is due back after the 30th June – can I extend it’s loan ?

This ***may*** be possible, subject to the user being able to agree to some additional conditions within the AP+ scheme. The user will need to contact our One Contact line to make those arrangements the number for this is 0300 004 0374

I have a chair out that I would like to keep – can I buy it from you instead of returning it?

Dependent upon the age of the chair, we would be willing to sell it (subject to the transfer of ownership forms being completed). Any chair that is less than 5 years’ old would not be suitable for selling. Any chair that is more than 5 years’ old can be purchased for £75. Elevated leg rests will need to be returned though.

I have a chair that I need to return, but cannot get into one of your spokes. Will you pick it up?

In some cases we may be able to collect (for a fee of £12.50), subject to the availability of drivers.

Do you still need volunteers after the 30th June ?

Yes we do – very much. We will be closing down our spokes on a rolling basis from the end of August, and will need volunteers to help us recover outstanding equipment until that time. This includes the staffing/opening of the spoke and potentially the collection of equipment from service users

What are you going to do with the equipment in my spoke ?

All wheelchair stocks in the spoke will be returned to Livingston for onward redistribution within the service.

Similarly all office equipment, technology and shelving will also be returned to Livingston.

Once the spoke is emptied (dates will vary here – but it will be after the end of August), we will close the spoke.

How will service users know about what is happening in Scotland ?

The British Red Cross (Hire-a-wheelchair website) will be updated to reflect the service in Scotland.

We will also write to every service user who has used the service in Scotland in the past 12 months, to let them know what is happening

Our call takers will receive a briefing that will update them on the arrangements in Scotland

The same briefing will be provided to staff and volunteers operating close to the Scottish border in the Carlisle hub area.

How will we recover overdue monies and any other debts.?

Overdue fees will be chased up via SSC.

When will my spoke close?

Spokes will remain open during July to September to facilitate the return of wheelchairs, we will still be needing volunteer support throughout this time to help us recover the on loan chairs.

How can payments be taken after 30 June 23

 All payments / donations that are needing to be taken after the 30 June 23 will be sorted through via the Sheffield Hub.

What is the go live date for AP+?

AP+ in Scotland will go live on 1 July 2023.

What happened to the AP+ volunteering role?

The AP+ volunteering role will not at this time be going ahead, dependent on level of need in the future we may reassess the role.

Have other services in Scoland been informed of closure? – they'll need signposting information too (Refugee Services etc often direct people to MAS for support; what do CR do if they need wheelchairs etc to help with a response)

Rob Murray the Director for Scotland has briefed all sister services in the new processes.