

FACT SHEET 6

HELP WITH EQUIPMENT

ITEMS FOR DAILY LIVING

Under the chronically sick and disabled persons act 1970, local authorities have a statutory responsibility to arrange for provision of equipment and adaptations to the home that will help people to maintain their independence and secure their greater safety, comfort and convenience. If you live in a residential home, you may also get help. Any equipment and adaptations will be provided on the basis of a professional assessment of your needs.

Suitably adapted or specialised equipment is a key factor in **enabling** a person to live as independently as possible. The range of items is large – **so don't buy anything without getting expert advice and if possible, using the equipment on a trial basis to see if it really works for you.** If your occupational therapist recommends an item of equipment, ask if there is a centre where you can see the equipment. Equipment provided by local authorities or by the NHS is generally considered to be long term loan.

Items for daily living include items to make it easier to use the toilet, to wash, dress, use cooking facilities, etc: for example, hand rails next to the bath and toilet, raised toilet seats, widened doorways, a bathroom on ground floor etc.

Social Services Departments may be the best people to turn to initially for advice and help. However, all personal and health care professionals may be able to give help and advice – eg a social worker, district nurse, health visitor, or your GP. More detailed information may also be available from your local DIAL, Disability Information Service or Wheelchair Users Group.

WHEELCHAIRS – FREE, LONG-TERM LOANS FROM THE NHS.

According to the National Health Service Act 1997, anyone who has a permanent mobility problem is entitled to a **FREE**, long-term loan of a wheelchair from the NHS. Under the NHS, wheelchairs (including powered wheelchairs) and hand and pedal propelled tricycles are supplied and maintained free of charge to a disabled person whose need for such a chair is permanent.

To obtain a NHS Wheelchair you should contact your GP or Health Professional who will make a referral to the NHS Wheelchair Service

If you already have a NHS Wheelchair and your clinical needs have changed because of your medical condition, contact your local wheelchair service for re-assessment.

Both occupant and attendant controlled electrically propelled wheelchairs are supplied.

Provision is made for:-

MANUAL WHEELCHAIRS

For full time, or occasional use.

POWERED INDOOR CHAIRS

For people who are unable to propel themselves indoors in a non-powered chair.

POWERED OUTDOOR CHAIRS (Attendant Controlled)

For people who are unable to propel themselves indoors in a non-powered chair and rely on an attendant who is unable to propel them outdoors without a powered chair.

POWERED INDOOR/OUTDOOR WHEELCHAIRS

Are provided for severely disabled people by the NHS as from 1st April 1996.

Eligibility criteria:

Each Health Authority will assess **local needs** and determine **local eligibility** for the supply of powered indoor/outdoor wheelchairs. This should be within the broad national framework that the severely disabled person is:-

- **unable to propel a manual wheelchair outdoors.**
- **able to benefit from the chair through increased mobility leading to improved quality of life.**
- **able to handle the chair safely.**

THE TWO MAIN POINTS TO BEAR IN MIND WHEN APPLYING FOR AN INDOOR/OUTDOOR POWERED CHAIR ARE:

To qualify you must be unable to walk and unable to push a manual wheelchair independently indoors or outdoors.

State clearly how one of these chairs will enable you to become more independent and how it would improve your quality of life.

VOUCHER SCHEME

This scheme was introduced to give wheelchair users more choice and financial aid from the NHS if they choose to buy a wheelchair from the private sector.

PLEASE NOTE: INITIALLY THE VOUCHER SYSTEM WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE FOR THE PURCHASE OF INDOOR/OUTDOOR POWERED CHAIRS.

Aims.

The aim of the scheme is to give disabled people more choice of wheelchair within the NHS by offering them three options:

a. to accept the wheelchair prescribed, **as at present**

or

b. to contribute to the cost of a more expensive wheelchair of their choice. They will own the wheelchair and responsible for its maintenance and repair.

This will be called the **independent option**.

c. to contribute to the cost of a more expensive wheelchair of their own choice from a range selected by the local wheelchair service. The NHS will own the wheelchair and be responsible for its maintenance and repair.

This will be called the **partnership option**

Principles:

The key principles of the scheme are:

- a. universal eligibility- anyone assessed as meeting the local eligibility criteria for a wheelchair may apply
- b. assessment and review of needs by the wheelchair service and prescription of a suitable wheelchair in consultation with the user (and where appropriate, their carer or representative).
- c. Supply of the wheelchair through agreed suppliers
- d. Continued access to NHS provision of special seating/pressure-relieving cushions if needed.

YOUR LOCAL WHEELCHAIR ASSESSMENT CENTRE SHOULD BE ABLE TO PROVIDE YOU WITH FURTHER DETAILS.

WHEELCHAIR SERVICES AND THE EQUIPMENT THEY SUPPLY WILL VARY FROM ONE HEALTH AUTHORITY TO ANOTHER, AS EACH AUTHORITY MANAGES ITS FINANCES AND RESOURCES AND HAVE AUTONOMY.

KENT WHEELCHAIR CENTRES

Wheelchair Assessment Service – Bexley.

0181 308 3040

0181 308 3229 Fax

Wheelchair Assessment Service – Canterbury

01227 812393

01227 812289 Fax

Wheelchair Assessment Service – Dartford & Gravesham

01322 622068

Occupational Therapy Admin.

01322 622069 Fax

Wheelchair Assessment Service – Folkestone

Contact Lorraine Gillen – Clerical Officer

01303 850378

Wheelchair Assessment Service – Maidstone

01622 225677

Wheelchair Assessment Service – South West Kent Primary Care Trust, Tunbridge Wells

Home Loan Equipment 01892 512577

Wheelchair Assessment Centre 01892 516025

Wheelchair Assessment Service – Medway

Disablement Services Centre

Contact The Manager

01634 830000

01634 401065 Fax

Wheelchair Assessment Service – Orpington

01689 815009

01689 890787 Fax

If you live outside the County, please contact the Enquiry Line 01303 226500 and we will supply you with the details of your local centre or visit www.wheelchairmanagers.nhs.uk