

# Self-directed support

## Community equipment

Many disabled people living in the community may need equipment to help them live their daily lives.

This fact sheet tells you about how you can get the equipment which will best support your needs and help you stay mobile.



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## The basic facts

There is equipment available for many different types of support needs. Some people may need basic equipment such as a walking stick or crutches; others may need bigger pieces of equipment such as a wheelchair, a special bed, or a hoist.

When your support plan is written, it will include details of your activities of daily living. This could include simple activities such as getting up in the morning, or washing and dressing it may include visiting a school or day centre.

If equipment is needed to help to do these activities, an assessment of your needs will be made. Specific equipment will then be matched to your individual needs and preferences.

## More information

This part of the fact sheet explains what equipment you may be entitled to and how to get it.

### Getting the correct equipment for your needs

Health and Social Care services are changing and becoming more person centred in their practice. Professionals and Health and Social Care staff must be willing to work with you and your family to make sure that you are involved in your own care planning and assessments. This includes talking with you about the equipment which will be used by you and your carers.

There is legislation, which provides guidance about what should be included in an assessment. If you need to be moved and handled by a carer, an ergonomic assessment should be completed.

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When deciding what equipment you may need the following five areas should be considered:

- Environment
  - This could be a bathroom, a bedroom or day room. The environment around you may cause problems when using equipment because it may be a small space or there may be a lot of other furniture that gets in the way.
- Load: This looks at how well you can move about at the moment
  - **Low risk** – can walk with a little bit of assistance using small equipment such as a walking frame.
  - **Medium risk** – can stand but no longer able to walk for long distances and may need a wheel chair.
  - **High risk** - cannot bear weight, may have complex needs and may need large pieces of equipment such as a specialist bed or a hoist.
- Individual capability
  - This means considering the capability of the carers who will move and handle you. The carers may have their own health problems or may not have had any training in the use of equipment. This could increase the risk to both you and the carer.
- Task
  - Tasks can include activities of daily living, such as going to the toilet or having a bath. It may also include leisure activities which you may enjoy. The more complicated the task, the more detailed the assessment should be.
- Equipment
  - When the support plan is being drafted, the environment has been checked, the carers identified and the tasks you want to do have been agreed: the equipment you may need to help you should then be identified.

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## How do I get equipment that will meet my needs?

If your assessment is completed by Social Services, the social worker will usually ask a nurse, physiotherapist, occupational therapist or moving and handling assessor to assess your needs and provide you with advice about the equipment which would be suitable. This equipment is usually obtained from an equipment loan store.

Over time your needs may change, for example:

- Your physical needs may change.
- Your ability to stand may vary.
- You might lose or gain weight.
- You may experience or pain or discomfort when equipment is being used.

If your needs do change, you or your carer can arrange for a review of the equipment you have been supplied.

## Buying your own equipment

It is also possible to buy your own equipment, rather than loan it.

You may buy your equipment from a shop, a charity or online store.

Be aware that some shops may only be able to provide you with guidance about how the equipment works. They may not be able to provide advice about your physical condition or where the equipment meets your specific needs.

It is often very important to have an understanding of your personal needs or challenges when selecting suitable equipment. Professional help from a social care worker can help you make your decision and avoid costly mistakes.

Some charities also have professionals working from them who can provide good advice and guidance about the suitability of the equipment for your needs.

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## More detail

### Legislation related to the use of equipment

There is legislation which provides guidance about equipment provision, for example, large equipment such as hoists and bath lifts must be regularly serviced and the carers using the equipment must be trained.

**If you have bought** equipment it is good practice to follow these guidelines, in order to reduce the risk of injury to you or to your carers.

It is important to check the equipment for any sign of damage or fraying of materials.

### Using hoists

If you use a hoist, your assessor should make sure that the sling is compatible with the hoist which has been selected for you.

If you go on holiday or if you use a hoist in a public changing room make sure that the hoist is compatible with your sling. If the hoist and sling are not compatible, accidents may occur.

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## An example

John is a 19 year old man who has a learning disability and physical disabilities. He needs carers to help him to get washed and dressed in the morning. John lives with his family but also has paid carers to assist him.

John uses a wheelchair and needs to use a hoist for all of his transfers including when he wants to go to the toilet.

John uses a computer at home and during John's assessment with his social worker John has identified that he wants to attend a centre so that he can socialise with other people and use a computer.

The social worker suggested a local centre and asked the assessor to visit so that an assessment of the environment could take place.

Unfortunately although the centre had very good computer facilities, the disabled toilet was too small as it was not big enough for John's wheelchair and there were no changing facilities in the toilet. If John attended that centre he would not have been able to use the toilet.

If there had been changing facilities which had a hoist, John's social worker and the assessor, would have needed to make sure that the hoist was compatible with John's sling and that the staff at the centre were able to use the equipment following appropriate training.

## Happy ending

The social worker was able to find a centre which had adequate facilities for John's needs. There was appropriate equipment which was clean and properly maintained. John's carers also received training in how to use the equipment and how to transfer John safely.

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There is a lot more information  
on the In Control web site:  
[www.in-control.org.uk](http://www.in-control.org.uk)

### Or visit:

The PHACS (Person-centred Handling and Assessment  
in challenging Situations):

[www.thephacsapproach.com](http://www.thephacsapproach.com)

### For further information you can also contact:

#### shop4support

An online store catering for social care needs.

Includes a large range of equipment:

[www.shop4support.com](http://www.shop4support.com)

#### Living Made Easy:

Clear, practical advice on daily living equipment:

[www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk](http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk)

#### Age UK

More advice and information on buying equipment  
and daily living aids

[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

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### About the In Control and Me project

A three-year project to produce accessible information for everyone who wants to direct their own support, funded by the National Lottery through the BIG Lottery Fund. You can find out more at [www.mencap.org.uk/incontrol](http://www.mencap.org.uk/incontrol) or [www.in-control.org.uk/icandme](http://www.in-control.org.uk/icandme)