

Wheelchair information for care homes



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This leaflet aims to provide information for care home staff about the use of wheelchairs in their nursing and residential homes.

How can our residents get a wheelchair?

Residents must be referred into the Wheelchair Service by a qualified healthcare professional, such as a GP, therapist or nurse. Once they have been referred, your residents will be fully assessed for their wheelchair needs. This assessment takes into account postural requirements, medical history, and lifestyle. Residents must fulfil eligibility criteria in order to get a wheelchair.

Can our residents get a powered or self-propelled wheelchair?

The type of wheelchair prescribed will depend on the outcome of the assessment at the Wheelchair Service, as a number of factors must be taken into account.

Are wheelchairs the property of the resident or care home?

No, wheelchairs prescribed from the Wheelchair Service belong to the NHS service. Chairs are on loan to individual residents, and are not the property of the care home.

How long should residents use wheelchairs for?



Where possible, users should spend no more than 3-4 hours in their wheelchair at any one time. It is important to change positions regularly to avoid developing pressure sores.

A wheelchair should not be used as a replacement for static seating. Pressure relief and postural support needs to be provided in a static chair and in the user's bed, as well as in their wheelchair, if it is required as part of a 24/7 postural approach.

What are the key things to remember when assisting wheelchair users?

It is important to help users maintain a good level of comfort and safety. The following tips cover some of the key elements:

1. Encourage regular movement, where possible, such as leaning forward and backwards, to avoid the development of pressure sores.
2. Ensure your resident uses cushions to help with comfort and pressure relief. The Wheelchair Service can advise which cushions should be used, how to position them correctly in the chair, and how to maintain them.
3. Lap straps should be worn at all times for safety and to ensure correct positioning of the pelvis. They should be worn snug across the pelvis.
4. Brakes must be applied when the chair is stationary or the resident is getting in or out.
5. Footplates should be adjusted to the correct height: knees should be level with hips. When a resident is transferring between chairs, the footplates should be moved to one side. Users should never stand on footplates.
6. Help your residents to maintain a good posture. Whilst each individual is different, the general rule is that hips should be centred in the middle of the seat, with buttocks at the back of the chair. Try to avoid slumping to one side or sliding down the seat.

What should we do if a resident's wheelchair breaks or develops a fault?

If the wheelchair has been prescribed by the Wheelchair Service, please contact us to arrange a repair free-of-charge.

If it is a privately owned wheelchair, we recommend you contact a reputable mobility supplier to arrange the repair.

We also recommend that all wheelchairs, both those belonging to the service and privately owned chairs, are insured by the individual resident.

What if we think a resident requires a review, or their clinical needs change?

Please contact our service so we can address your concerns.

A resident no longer uses their wheelchair. What should we do with it?

Please contact the Wheelchair Service to arrange a collection or to drop off at the service. All returned chairs are repurposed and can be prescribed to other users. Under no circumstances should the wheelchair be used by another resident.

Do you supply wheelchairs for portering use?

No. This is the responsibility of the care home; chairs can be purchased from any reputable mobility supplier.

As these chairs are only used for very short periods of time to transfer residents from one location to another, they can be shared amongst individuals. We recommend that a risk assessment is carried out prior to use to ensure the wheelchair is suitable for your purposes. It is also important that the chair is adjusted to every individual user each time it is used, to ensure safety.

Do you loan wheelchairs for short-term use?

No, the Wheelchair Service does not supply chairs for short-term use. Wheelchairs can be hired from many mobility suppliers.

Who should I contact if my question has not been answered?

Please contact the Wheelchair Service; we will be happy to assist.