



Draft factsheet for reader feedback

# Choosing Children's Daily Living Equipment

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DLF Factsheet

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Disabled Living Foundation, 4th Floor, Jessica House, Red Lion Square, 191 Wandsworth High Street, London, SW18 4LS, Tel: 020 7289 6111, Fax: 020 7266 2922, Helpline: 0300 999 0004 10.00am-4.00pm, Email: [helpline@dlf.org.uk](mailto:helpline@dlf.org.uk), Website: [www.dlf.org.uk](http://www.dlf.org.uk)

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## Choosing Children's Daily Living Equipment

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# INTRODUCTION

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The aim of this factsheet is to provide preliminary information on the equipment available to help children with routine tasks. If you are looking for equipment solutions for an older child it may also be useful to refer to other [DLF factsheets](#) that cover equipment for adults.

For up-to-date product and supplier information, contact the DLF's equipment helpline which is open Monday to Friday from 10am – 4pm, Tel: 0300 999 0004 (calls charged at local rate) or if phoning from a mobile, it is cheaper to ring 020 7432 8018.

Alternatively, write to our letter enquiry service or contact us via email at [advice@dlf.org.uk](mailto:advice@dlf.org.uk). To help us give you a concise and informative reply, please provide us with as much detail as possible including information on difficulties and the solutions you are considering, including equipment ideas.

## ADVICE AND INFORMATION - WHO CAN HELP

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Before you buy equipment for your child we would advise you to seek specialist advice to help you plan for both immediate and long term needs, to increase awareness of the alternatives on the market, and to check whether the equipment you need can be provided by the statutory services.

Everyone, including carers, has the right to ask social services for a community care assessment. The council assessor will consider the type and level of need and suggest a range of solutions that may include provision of equipment.

Since April 2003 people have the right to ask for a direct payment of money instead of a council community care service. This includes the right to ask for money towards alternative equipment if this is preferred to the equipment offered by the council.

A council is unlikely to help directly if needs are few or simple, but may advise on alternative ways of meeting the need, e.g. where you can buy equipment locally or via mail order, or suggest a visit to a local Disabled Living Centre.

Disabled Living Centres provide impartial advice and the option to try out equipment. Not all centres display equipment for children. You will need to contact your nearest centre to find out if it can help you. Contact details for your nearest Equipment Demonstration Centre can be found on the Disabled Living Foundation's web page [Equipment Demonstration Centres](#) in the UK.

### Help from statutory sources

Several professionals working within the NHS or local council social services can give you help and advice on daily living difficulties.

A paediatric occupational therapist (OT) has specialised in matters relating to children and can advise on different techniques for managing tasks that you find difficult and on ways of promoting the independence of your child. He/she can also give advice on the use of assistive devices to help with day-to-day activities. The OT can be contacted via your local hospital Child Development Centre or through the Children with Disabilities Team at your local council's social services department.

The community nursing service can provide equipment for nursing care, incontinence pads and nappies.

A speech and language therapist can advise on communication difficulties, and on feeding and swallowing difficulties. Therapists work within NHS hospitals and clinics. You can contact your local speech and language therapy service direct or ask your GP to refer your child.

### The BHTA

Be cautious of sales people who try to persuade you to buy equipment that may not meet your needs fully or is over-priced. Buying from a company that belongs to a trade association, such as the British Healthcare Trades

Association (BHTA) may give you some reassurance. BHTA members have signed up to a code of practice governing standards of customer service (see Useful organisations).

## VAT relief

You don't have to pay VAT on products designed for disabled people if you have a long term illness or disability, or are terminally ill. Mobility shops may automatically sell you equipment without charging you VAT, but you may have to ask. Individuals with a temporary injury such as a broken arm or hip do not qualify for VAT relief. For more information, and to check for any changes in the regulations visit the GOV.UK, [VAT relief on products and services for disabled people](#) or the [HM Revenue & Customs reduced rate VAT webpage](#) (their Charities Helpline covers VAT relief for disabled people: Telephone: 0300 123 1073)

## Help from the voluntary sector

Charitable trusts may sometimes provide funding for equipment. A useful resource is [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk), a website that allows you to search for organisations that give grants, including for equipment and other services. You can refine / filter your search by specific health issues such as 'physical disability', 'mobility'. Charities will only give awards in accordance with a predetermined criteria, so it is important that you carefully select the trusts you apply to.

Most libraries hold directories of suitable funders in their reference section, such as the [The Directory of Grant Making Trusts](#)

The Grants for Individuals website is run by the Directory of Social Change and lets subscribers search for grants but is intended for organisations searching for funding for individuals.

<http://www.grantsforindividuals.org.uk>

Many national organisations can give information on specific childhood conditions and illnesses, often providing support and contact with other families in similar situations. The Disabled Living Foundation helpline has information on many support groups but, for more unusual conditions or medical difficulties, get in touch with Contact A Family. (Please see [Useful Organisations](#)

for more details).

## Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)

A Disabled Facilities Grant may be available for some home adaptations including major adaptations. This may include extensions and structural work to accommodate fixed hoists, stairlifts, downstairs bathrooms, shower units etc. If this type of adaptation is needed, a local occupational therapist (OT) will come to assess your needs and then contact the relevant council departments. Applications for grants should be made via the OT to the local councils

A means test (including household income and household savings over £6,000) is used to decide how much financial assistance can be provided. Depending on the outcome of the test, the amount of assistance offered can vary from 0-100% of the cost. Disabled children under 18 can get a grant without their parents' income being taken into account. You must own the property or be a tenant (or be a landlord and have a disabled tenant) and you must intend to live in the property during the grant period (currently 5 years). A ceiling of £30,000 in England (£36,000 in Wales) will normally be put on each DFG, irrespective of your assessed contribution. Please note that you may not receive any grant if you start work on your property before the council approves your application.

For more information on Disabled Facilities Grants, visit the [GOV.UK website](#).

Before considering the building of a downstairs bathroom for someone who cannot use the stairs, check that all other options have been considered. For example, it may be more practical and cheaper to install a stairlift or through-floor lift to provide easy access to the first floor.

General Points to consider:

When choosing any equipment for you child it is important to remember:

- Don't rush into making a decision as mistakes can be costly.
- Whenever possible try to arrange a trial or demonstration; often companies will be happy to do this on a free, no obligation basis. Many areas have Independent Living Centres (ILCs) where a wide range of equipment is available to try. Do bear in mind that the layout and size of your home and fittings will be different and may well affect what is workable.
- If your child's condition fluctuates consider what equipment you will need to manage on a good day and a bad day.
- Children grow; have this in mind as you consider the options. Sometimes one piece of equipment will meet their needs over many years. At other times an item of equipment may be perfect but for only a few months. Be prepared to be flexible as things change and your child develops.
- If you are considering privately purchasing some equipment or buying second hand, do consider additional costs such as insurance, maintenance, servicing and repair costs.
- Many charities offer grants in order to purchase specialist equipment for children but often they will not fund items that should be available through statutory services e.g. specialist chairs and standing frames. In addition they often won't cover the costs of insurance and/or maintenance or warranty

## BATHING EQUIPMENT

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Bath time for children is usually an opportunity to play with parents, sisters and brothers. This should not be any different for a child with additional needs although supportive equipment such as a bath chair may restrict the range of play activities.

Busy schedules and time constraints may make encouraging independence difficult. This is especially true on a school day, when there is so much to do in a limited time. Parents will often find that it is much quicker for them to wash their child themselves. However, try to use more relaxing times, such as evenings, weekends and holidays, to encourage the child to be more independent.

## GETTING INTO THE BATH

Often the biggest barrier to bathing is actually getting into the bath. This is physically quite demanding and your child may not have enough strength or balance to do this by themselves. There is a variety of equipment available to make this easier and safer for you and your child.

Bathing babies and small children in the bottom of a standard bath can be difficult and uncomfortable for parents. Baby baths placed at a more comfortable height on a stand or over an existing bath can provide a solution for a short time. As children with additional needs, particularly those with mobility difficulties, grow big enough to use a standard bath, lifting them in and out together with the twisting and bending involved in this manoeuvre can increase the risk of back injury. There is a small but useful range of devices to assist your child to get in and out of the bath. This increases their independence and reduces the strain on your back as you assist them.

### Bath overlays

A limited range of removable, bath-shaped overlays are available. These sit across the rim of a standard bath enabling the child to be bathed at a higher level. The overlay bath is filled from the bath taps, and the water drains into the bath after use. Storage of these overlays can be difficult when not in use due to their size.

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[View our impartial list of bath overlays](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=3126>

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### Bath lifts and hoists

A small range of manual and powered lifts designed for children make it easier for your child to get over the

side of the bath and up and down from the bottom of the bath. They allow the child to sit in a supported position and either lift their legs over the side of the bath or the whole seat is lifted up and over the side of the bath. Most bath lifts offer support in a reclined or semi-reclined position. In their lowest position these are often several centimetres off the base of the bath so more water is needed if your child likes to sit in the water. A small range of inflatable bath lifts are available. These offer little or no back support but the advantage is that, when deflated, they allow the child to sit on the base of the bath with plenty of space to play. However, they will need to be able to reposition themselves correctly onto the lift and have sufficient sitting balance to sit safely as the lift inflates. Bath lifts are removable so that the bath can be used by other members of the household. They can be heavy and cumbersome to lift.

It may be possible to adapt an adult bath lift or floor-mounted hoist by using a vacuum support cushion on the seat to provide a smaller, more supportive seat for an older child. A harness may be necessary for security. An older child that does not need a great deal of postural support might only need a harness.

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[View our impartial list of bath lifts](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2864>

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## **Adjustable height baths**

The height of all these baths can be raised, either mechanically or electrically, so that a parent does not need to bend over the bath to wash the child.

An older or more able child may be able to step into the bath at its lowest level and then be raised to a convenient height for the parent to assist with washing. This style of bath is not often used in a domestic setting.

## **Bath boards and seats**

A child with good sitting balance may be able to use a bath board and/or seat. A bath board spans the bath rim to provide a platform to sit on whilst they lift their legs over the side. TheA child with good sitting balance could sit on the bath board to use an over-bath shower if this is acceptable to them. A bath seat provides an intermediate seat between the top and bottom of the bath and is fixed to the base of the bath with suction cups. This combination leaves limited space in the bath, particularly for an older child, and requires good upper body strength to move between the board and seat. Some bath boards have integral handles for support, alternatively grab rails positioned on the wall alongside the bath board/seat provide a secure handhold when transferring in and out of the bath. A slip-resistant mat on the bottom of the bath reduces the risk of the feet slipping.

Consider the following:

- What is your child able to do for themselves e.g. sitting balance, lifting their legs? Consider trying equipment that encourages them to use and develop these skills.
- Will your child need support once they are in the bath? If so try to find equipment that will meet these needs as well as helping them in/out of the bath (see information below).
- If your child is unable to access the bath using these methods but still enjoys or needs a bath consider whether an overhead hoist would enable you to get them safely in and out.  
Further information is available on another factsheet. Carefully consider what support they will need once in the bath (see advice below).

## **FOR CHILDREN WHO NEED SUPPORTING IN A SEMI- RECLINED POSITION**

### **Foam and ergonomic supports**

These are sponge foam cushions or shaped plastic supports designed for infants and sculpted to provide a

degree of support for the head and body whilst allowing for limb movement. They can only be used in a shallow-filled bath and may be particularly useful for stabilising a small, floppy baby.

## Hammock supports

The majority of hammock bath supports comprise a frame with a fabric or mesh cover that supports the child in a semi-reclined position. Again there is a range available for infants. For older children who need additional support there are products available that enable you to place the child on the support at the level of the top of the bath and then operate a simple lowering system to take them down into the water. Some have straps or foam blocks attached by Velcro that help to keep the head, trunk or legs in position.

A range of mesh supports are available that offer considerable flexibility in the angle of recline and the seat height from the base of the bath. The mesh can often be adjusted to alter the amount of give.

Consider the following:

- the sizes on offer and whether the hammock support will fit in your bath;
- the position of the support in the bath. Compromises may have to be made. The lower the support sits in the bath, the less water will be needed to surround the child for washing and playing, but the parent will have to stoop further down;
- Will there be sufficient leg room for your child once the support is in position.
- the material of the support. An open mesh will allow the water to circulate around child and is more pliable than a close weave plastic mesh; a child with poor skin integrity may be uncomfortable on a mesh fabric.
- the material of the frame. A plastic frame will be lighter making the support easier to lift in and out of the bath;
- angle adjustment to offer a choice between a more upright or reclined position. Flexion at the hips may be required to prevent extensor spasm. A larger angle of recline can make hair washing easier. A more upright position may make it easier for the child to play with bath toys;
- detachable mesh at the head end, again to assist with hair washing;
- storage and transportation. You will need to store the hammock support after use somewhere where water can drain so that the mesh can dry, and where it will not impede other family members from taking a bath. Models that fold up or flatten out can make storage and transportation easier.
  
- Does your child require any additional support for head control or leg positioning?

## Bath cushions and bath inserts

These are either contoured or mouldable to provide the child with additional support. In some instances they can be used to decrease the depth of the bath so that it is easier to access, or to reduce the need for a parent to bend.

The mouldable supports are filled with polystyrene beans and will shape themselves around the body of the child. The shape can be fixed semi-permanently if air is extracted using a foot pump. They are secured to the sides and bottom of the bath with suction cups. Mattresses are available which work on a similar principle except that the air is dispelled into a separate chamber.

Head floatation devices designed for swimming can also be used to keep the head above water, although a child with poor head control is likely to need a more complete body support.

Consider the following:

- Whether the support will allow adequate access for washing;
- Where the support can be stored when not in use. They can be quite bulky.

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[View our impartial list of bath cushions](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2866>

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## FOR CHILDREN WHO NEED SUPPORT IN A SITTING POSITION

### Sitting supports

These have a seat, backrest and sometimes side supports to provide support for children who cannot sit upright unaided.

Bath lifts (discussed above) can often provide additional sitting support such as lap/chest straps, pommels, seating wedges and head support. Some allow the child to have their legs supported in a long sitting position.



Consider the following:

babies and small children may be able to use some of the standard baby bathing equipment, such as the support rings that attach to the base of the bath with suction cups;  
the height of the back support. A lower back support may provide greater freedom of movement; a higher backrest gives more support;  
the type of support straps, i.e. a lap belt or full harness;  
whether a pommel that can help to keep the hips abducted and to maintain the position of the child in the chair is required; however, it may impede personal cleansing;

- how high up in the bath the seat sits. Compromises may have to be made. The lower the support sits in the bath, the less water will be needed to surround the child for washing and playing, but the parent will have to stoop down further;
- check how easy it is to lift the seat in and out of the bath.
- safe, suitable storage of the bath chair to leave the bath free for other family members to use.

[View our impartial list of bath chairs](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2865>

### Suction backrests and grab bars

These are available for children who need a limited amount of support when sitting with their legs stretched out in the bath. The width of most backrests is adjustable and suction cups secure them to the sides of the bath. The grab bar can be used in conjunction with a sitting support. The suction cups may deteriorate with age and lose their grip so they should be regularly checked for wear.

## DESIGNING AN ACCESSIBLE BATHROOM

The following need to be considered:

- the needs and preferences of the child and the parents;
- the age of the child - the facilities may need to reflect their changing needs as they grow and their emerging independence and need for privacy;
- other bathroom users; • access and space;
- structural alterations, and whether a grant is available to help cover costs;
- type of floor, i.e. wooden or concrete;
- sanitary fittings - what is currently being used, assistive devices and the alternative, more specialised fittings e.g. push button showers, lever taps or wash/dry toilets.

Information and advice on design issues is available from Centre for Accessible Environments (see useful

addresses).

This organisation keeps a database of architects, surveyors and similar professionals with experience of designing for disabled people, and has a number of useful publications and design sheets.

## **OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER**

- Children who are not able to move around easily may get cold very quickly when undressed. Additional safe heating in the bathroom may be required.
- The therapeutic benefits of bathing in warm water, e.g. children with tight muscles may find it easier than usual to move in warm water. The warmth can also ease muscle cramps.
- Does the child need additional head support
- Safety for children with poor sitting balance or head control.
- Safety for children with sensory loss.
- Children with epilepsy and the risks to them whilst bathing. Children with epilepsy who use a bath chair or hammock may need quick release fastenings on the equipment.
- The storage and cleaning of equipment.
- The size of the bath and whether it can accommodate supportive bathing equipment.
- How will you dry and dress your child once they have bathed. Do they need a safe space to sit or lie down during this process?
- For older children who prefer more independence consider installing a wall mounted body dryer.
- Using simple methods of increasing independence such as automatic soap dispensers, lever taps and shower controls that are easy to reach and operate.

No child should be left unsupervised in the bath even if in a supportive bath chair. Similarly, young brothers and sisters should not be left in charge of a child in a bath seat.

## **SHOWERING EQUIPMENT**

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Getting an older child in and out of a bath can be difficult. Showering can offer a safer and more manageable alternative. Showering may also make it possible for the child to be more independent.

The needs of other family members must be considered particularly if there is not enough space for separate bath and shower facilities.

It is sometimes possible to build an additional bathroom or adapt an existing space to provide secondary washing facilities, with the help of a Disabled Facilities Grant see additional information.

Shower facilities can be provided:

- over an existing bath;
- as a separate shower area/cubicle.

## **FOR CHILDREN WHO CAN SHOWER IN A SUPPORTED SITTING POSITION**

Shower chairs and stools provide support for children who can sit to shower. Wall mounted options are available (see below). There is a range of styles and models, so check the size and shape of the seat, the level of support it provides and whether it allows adequate access for washing. For more supportive seats see the section below on mobile shower chairs.

Supportive shower chairs can make it difficult to access and wash the areas of the body supported by the backrest, seat, straps and side supports. Many areas have an Independent Living Centre or similar facility allowing people to try products before they purchase them. Alternatively many companies offer a free assessment at your home. This gives parents an opportunity to learn about the product, see it in situ and consider if it will meet their child's immediate and longer term needs.

When using a shower chair there needs to be plenty of room around it so that the parent can move around

freely, move the chair or help the child, without injuring themselves or getting soaked in the process. Portable half-height shower screens are available to protect the carer from splashes.

## Static shower chairs and stools

These are freestanding so can be lifted in and out of the shower as required. They are more appropriate for an older, more independent child. Stools tend to have little or no back support; chairs have a higher, more supportive backrest.

Selecting the correct height is important. To support him/herself safely in a sitting position, the child must be able to place both feet flat on the floor. An adjustable height stool/chair can be altered in height as the child grows.

Arm rests can provide additional security and enable a child to stand independently.

Ensure that all toiletries are within reach to encourage independence and reduce the risk of slipping.

## Wall-fixed shower seats

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These fix to the wall, usually via hinged brackets, so that they can be folded up out of the way of other family members who want to use the shower. The seat should be fixed at a height to suit the child's needs. Bear in mind that this will change as they grow. A limited number of adjustable height seats are available which could accommodate growth.

## Mobile shower chairs

A range of wheeled shower chairs are available for those requiring more postural support. These range from simple shells to more complex modular seating including support for the pelvis, chest and head.

User-propelled and attendant-propelled versions are available. Larger wheels can make it easier to push the chair in and out of the shower but will take up more space.

## Shower chairs with a toileting facility

Many mobile shower chairs offer a toileting facility. They can either be positioned over a toilet or used with a commode pan. This type of chair reduces the number of transfers that need to be made between the bed, toilet and shower. Larger children who are physically less able may need to be hoisted into the chair.

Consider the following:

- is wheeled access into and around the WC/bathroom possible?
- the clearance over the WC - the chair must fit easily over the toilet bowl, but too wide a gap means splashing may occur;
- the height and position of the toilet cistern and the push handles of the chair to ensure positioning of the chair is not impeded;
- the size of the seat and aperture. The seat must be supportive but should also allow for the child to clean him/herself or to be assisted with cleaning after he/she has used the toilet.
- If the child is to be hoisted in or out of the equipment is there enough access to be able to fit and remove the sling? It may be beneficial to use a mesh bathing sling. See advice on hoisting.

Shower chairs for children generally have a range of supportive accessories including a pommel/splash guard, head and trunk supports, foot supports and safety belts and harnesses. An assessment with a company rep is recommended to make sure that the chair offers the right level of support.

Larger children or children requiring less support will be able to use an adult shower chair which can be fitted with cushion inserts to reduce the internal seat dimensions. Always make sure that their feet are well supported.

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[View our impartial list of Multi function shower and commode chairs](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2902>

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## **FOR CHILDREN WHO NEED TO BE SHOWERED IN A LYING OR SEMI-LYING POSITION**

### **Shower cradle**

There is a small range of shower cradles that comprise a mobile chassis onto which a nylon mesh cradle or a hammock-type bath support is fixed. The angle of the mesh cradle is fixed on some models and adjustable on others. The more upright the support, the less space it will occupy. If a cubicle is to be used, check its size as many of these supports are too long for a standard cubicle.

On some cradles, the mesh supporting the head can be detached and folded down to make it easier to wash the hair.

Accessories are often available to assist with head and body positioning and safety.

Some tilt-in-space models offer a toileting aperture.

### **Tilt-in-space/reclining shower chairs**

A range of shower chairs for children have a reclining backrest or a tilt-in-space seat unit so that the child can sit in a semi-reclined or tilted-back position. These also offer a toileting aperture. These chairs could be considered as an alternative to a shower cradle and generally take up less space in the bathroom.

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[View our impartial list of mobile shower cradles and trolleys](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2870>

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### **Shower stretchers**

Wall-mounted shower stretchers can also be used as changing tables and fold up against the wall when not in use. They are made of a perforated material and can be used over a bath - folding down to rest on the bath rim - or in a shower area with two supporting legs which rest on the floor. On some, the angle of the backrest can be adjusted, while the height of others can be adjusted electrically to position them at a comfortable height for the parent.

How the parent will lift the child onto the shower stretcher must be considered. A hoist may be required. Always try to work out a washing and dressing routine that involves the fewest moves from one item of equipment to another as this saves time and effort for the child and parent.

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[View our impartial list of wall mounted shower chairs and stretchers](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2869>

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### **Shower trolleys**

These are mobile showering tables, often with a reservoir to catch the water during a shower. They are large and not often used in the family home because they are difficult to manoeuvre in a restricted space.

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[View our impartial list of mobile shower cradles and trolleys](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2870>

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# TOILETING EQUIPMENT

Toilet training can be an extremely stressful time. Parents can feel pressurised into getting their child out of nappies in time for the start of playgroup or school. It is important to begin toilet training only when the child is developmentally ready, and then there should be a co-ordinated approach between all parties involved with the child. Children with developmental delay will generally take longer to learn the toileting routine. The child must be able to:

- understand the sensations in his/her bladder;
- be able to communicate his needs to a parent/carer.

And, as the child develops their new skills further and moves towards independence, he will need to:

- move to and transfer onto the toilet/potty;
- manage clothing;

Due to the intimacy of toileting tasks, the aim is to encourage and enable children to be independent so that as they get older they can have as much privacy as possible.

Consider the following difficulties:

- non-verbal children will need an easily recognisable way to communicate their need to use the toilet;
- extra time is needed to remove a child from his supportive equipment, perhaps a standing frame or seat - remove his/her clothing and then transfer him/her onto the toilet equipment;
- if the only toilet is upstairs it may be more practical to have alternative facilities downstairs for ready access and use.

## EQUIPMENT TO REDUCE BACK STRAIN FOR PARENTS OR CARER

There are many different tasks and activities associated with toileting. These include:

- removing and adjusting clothing;
- changing nappies/pads;
- transferring the child on and off the potty or toilet;
- supporting the child during bottom wiping.

The twisting and bending involved in these actions can increase the risk of back injury and this should be reduced where possible. This could be done in the following ways:

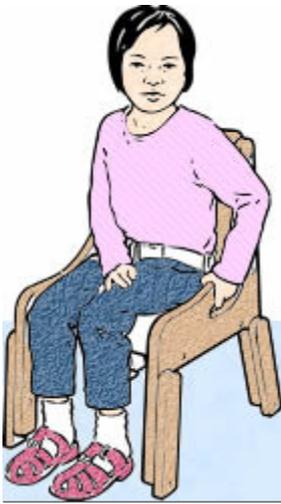
- by careful choice of clothing, e.g. elasticated waist bands, Velcro fastenings, and stretchy fabrics;
- by using a changing bench set at a height to meet the requirements of the carer, or by adjusting the height to make it possible for the child to get him/herself onto the bench then raising it to a suitable height for the parent;
- by using a hoist to assist with transfers;
- by installing a bidet/drying facility.



## FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WHO NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT ON A POTTY

An increasing range of potties are widely available from shops with an integral backrest and arm rests for additional support and are more like a chair as they are higher from the floor. These may provide adequate support for a child with mild difficulties and enable them to transfer on and off without support.

- Potties with oval apertures provide a more comfortable and supportive seat than a round aperture, in which children with narrow hips tend to get their bottom stuck. A wide ledge each side for support under the



bottom is also more comfortable with the result that the child performs more easily. Some potties have a pommel moulded into the front of them which will keep the legs apart and in a more relaxed position. This will also provide a splashguard for boys. For some children however this may make it difficult for them to get on and off the potty without help.

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[View our impartial list of potty chairs](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2892>

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## FOR OLDER CHILDREN WHO NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT ON A STANDARD ADULT TOILET

### Trainer seats

These plastic seats, commonly available in high street shops, reduce the toilet seat aperture to give a more appropriate size seat. Trainer seats are secured either by positioning them under the standard toilet seat, or they snugly fit into the toilet seat aperture from above.

Older children will need one that will take their extra weight. Those with a front splashguard are useful for keeping the legs apart but may make it harder for the child to get onto. Consider the following:

- the child will find it easier to remain stable on the seat and manage toileting tasks better if their feet are supported on a box step;
- a front pommel/splash guard will make it more difficult for the child to get on and off the toilet. A box step should help with transfers;
- a child may also need wall rails or a toilet frame for additional support during transfers and while sitting on the toilet.

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[View our impartial list of trainer toilet seats](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2893>

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### Toilet support seats and frames

These comprise a more supportive seat unit (usually incorporating a backrest, side support, lap strap or harness) that either clamps to the WC bowl or is freestanding. The toilet-fixed units tend to be less stable than freestanding ones and fixing must be routinely checked to ensure the seat remains secure. Freestanding frames are more bulky and awkward to move away and store.

Any additional equipment used with a standard WC can be inconvenient for other family members. A storage place for items when they are not being used will need to be found.

Consider the following:

- support seats made of shiny rigid plastic may be uncomfortable and hard to sit on and the skin may stick to it after a few minutes;
- the size and shape of the aperture is critical for comfort. An oval shape is usually preferred;
-

the size of the pommel - if too wide it may dig into the inner thighs; rigid plastic pommels can be uncomfortable for a child who has spasticity in their legs causing them to 'scissor'.

- moulded armrests may provide support for the child when he/she is sitting on the toilet, but may hinder assisted or sideways transfers;
- some models provide foot support which is more stable and comfortable for the child. Also the best position for bowel evacuation is to have the feet supported, with the knees slightly higher than the hips - i.e. mimicking a squatting position;
- for children who find it difficult to sit up straight, check the level of support provided by the straps and harnesses.

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[View our impartial list of toilet seats and cushions](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=3139>

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## FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT ABLE TO USE A STANDARD TOILET

This may be due to a number of reasons including:

- having only one family toilet which cannot be adapted to suit the needs of the child or to do so would affect other users;
- difficulty getting a child upstairs to the toilet;
- not enough support provided by the toilet support seats.

### Static toileting chairs and commodes

Toileting chairs comprise a standard potty inserted into a chair frame to provide a higher sitting position and better all round support. Many have a grab rail at the front for added security. Commodes tend to have a slide-in/lift-in pan, similar to adult commodes, but with more postural support provided by a lap strap, harnesses or hip/trunk support pads. On most models the seat height or the height of the footboard can be adjusted to give a supported sitting position.

- Ensure that the size is appropriate for the child and that this is reviewed regularly.
- Some designs encourage the child to lean forwards, which has been found to be a more effective position for bowel action.
- Consider the comfort of the equipment particularly for children with sensitive skin.
- Splash guards/pommels encourage the child to keep his legs apart - which will help him to perform. This can make it more difficult to get on and off without help.
- The wider the base, the more stable the potty chair will be. However, if their feet are on the floor the child may be able to push the chair over backwards.
- Some models can be folded or dismantled for storage or transporting.

### Mobile potty chairs

These can be used either with a commode pan or can be wheeled over the toilet. They have a huge advantage if space within the WC bathroom is limited because the child can be transferred onto the chair in an adjacent room where space is less restricted. Door widths, floor surfaces and thresholds should be checked to ensure that it is as easy as possible to move the chair from room to room.

Some chairs are also waterproof and can be used as shower chairs. This can reduce the number of transfers required. See the section in this factsheet on mobile shower chairs. Mobile chairs tend to offer more support than static chairs, have a wider range of accessories and are generally more adjustable.

It is important to enable the child to retain his/her dignity and privacy. If



clothing needs to be adjusted in another room in preparation for toileting, then a blanket or similar covering should be provided whilst the child is in transit.

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[View our impartial list of static and mobile commodes](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2900>

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## **FOR CHILDREN WHO NEED AUDITORY STIMULATION TO ASSIST WITH TOILETING**

### **Musical potties and toilet trainers**

These are potties or accessories for a standard WC with an integral electronic sensor which detects temperature increase or moisture and plays a tune to encourage toileting. These are increasingly available from mainstream shops.

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[View our impartial list of musical potties and sensors](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2891>

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## **FOR BOYS WHO ARE UNABLE TO CONTROL THE DIRECTION OF THEIR URINE FLOW**

### **Urine deflectors**

These are moulded into many potty chairs and trainer seats, but can also be bought as an accessory to be clipped onto a standard toilet bowl/seat. Consider the size carefully as it will affect comfort and transfers. Also consider if your child will tolerate it. The fixings are not designed to withstand forces so consider if the equipment will be durable enough for your child's needs.

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[View our impartial list of urine deflectors](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2895>

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## **FOR CHILDREN WHO REQUIRE NAPPIES OR INCONTINENCE PADS**

### **Changing mats**

In some areas continence pads and nappies are supplied free via the NHS for children with disabilities over the age of three years. Contact your health visitor for information on local services.

Nappies and pads should be changed in a designated area where there is a high degree of privacy and where items are to hand. The changing area should be at a suitable height for the parent to reduce strain on the back. Ideally, there should be easy access to a toilet and washing facilities.

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[View our impartial list of changing mats](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2874>

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### **Changing mats**

A limited range of changing mats for older children is available, but it may also be possible to use an exercise mat, e.g. an Airtex mat. These are lightweight, cushioned, can be cleaned and feel warm to the touch. A child

who may roll off will need a raised border cushion around the edge of the changing mat. If a changing mat is used on the floor parents need to consider their backs when lifting the child on and off the mat and when attending to him/her. Encourage your child to lay down and stand up as independently as possible.

## Changing tables

These provide a surface on which children can be cleaned, changed and dressed. Height adjustable models reduce the amount of manual lifting and bending involved. The child should be encouraged to transfer on and off as independently as possible. Mobile versions are also available. It may be necessary to use a hoist to help with transferring an older or more dependent child.

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[View our impartial list of changing tables and mats](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=3133>

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## CHAIRS AND SEATING SYSTEMS

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A child may need several different types of seating throughout the day, depending on the environment and associated activities. For example, supportive, functional seating may be needed in school; whilst at home both comfortable seating for relaxation and functional seating for homework and meal times may be required. Many seating systems offer the option of a height adjustable base and/or a tilt-in-space option.

It is important that the OT and physiotherapist working with the child are involved in the choice of chairs. They can advise on positioning to encourage head control and sitting balance, and on chairs that will encourage a symmetrical sitting posture.

### The benefits of good seating

Good seating is the key to many activities. By reducing the amount of effort and energy used trying to stay sitting up straight, a child will find it easier to carry out important daily activities, such as feeding, playing and learning.

Good seating will provide the following benefits.

- It will reduce the automatic reflexes and abnormal movements associated with some disabilities, e.g. cerebral palsy which results in whole body movements such as an extension spasm.
- It will provide support for children with floppy muscles who need extra support to sit up straight.
- It will allow for further development of postural control.
- It can help to prevent permanent postural problems from developing or getting worse e.g. joint contractures, scoliosis or hip displacement.
- It may also help to keep the body in a particular position once corrective surgery has taken place.
- A more upright position can improve head control and lead to improved eye contact, communication and social skills.
- It will improve hand and arm control. A good, supportive seating system will allow children to use their hands for functional activities, such as using communication equipment, propelling a wheelchair, writing, feeding and accessing computers.
- It will increase independence.
- It will improve comfort.
- It will allow the heart, lungs and digestive system to work more efficiently.

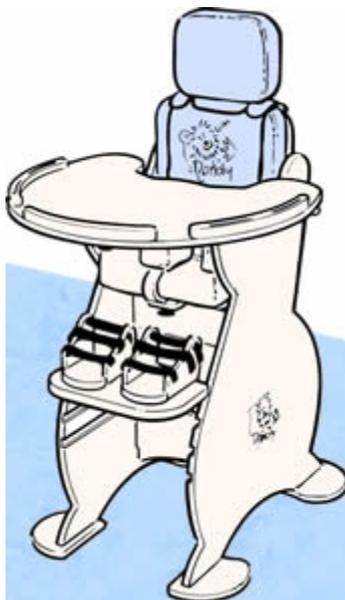
## PROVISION OF SEATING EQUIPMENT

Generally, it is the responsibility of the Occupational Therapist to advise on seating. However, occasionally children with severe seating difficulties may be referred to a specialist seating clinic run by the NHS, which will provide advice on seating and special seating units for chairs, wheelchairs and buggies.

If specialist seating is required at school, then funding may be available through the local education authority. To make procurement of equipment easier, it may be appropriate to refer to it in the child's Education, Health and Care Plan (formerly known as a Statement of Educational Need).

## SPECIFIC FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- The cost of a seating system should not be the deciding factor when choosing. Systems that appear to be expensive may turn out to be more cost effective in the long term, e.g. if the system can be adjusted for comfort or adapted as the child grows or his/her condition changes.
- Seating systems should be practical and easy for the parents and the child to use. Look, for example, at ease of adjustability, manoeuvrability and cleaning.
- The measurements taken to determine the correct seat size for a child are the same as those for an adult., i.e. seat height, depth and width, backrest and armrest height.
- Children often grow in height more quickly than they do in width.
- Children requiring postural support will need a chair with adjustable seat dimensions and support pads so that an exact fit is possible.
- Many chairs have activity trays as accessories but if they are always used in preference to a group table this may prevent the child interacting as effectively with his/her peers.
- Trays and tables with a semi-circular cut-out will allow children to have their forearms supported while they play/work which can make functional activities much easier.
- Meal times may be more integrated if a supportive chair has a hi/low facility so that it can be positioned at the same height as the family's dinner table.
- The appearance of the equipment. Whilst seating should be functional and appropriate, consideration should also be given to aesthetics.
- If you are purchasing the equipment privately consider the costs of regular servicing, maintenance and repairs.



## FOR CHILDREN WHO NEED SEATING FOR LEISURE

### Beanbags

These are filled with polystyrene beads and covered in a flame retardant material which may also be waterproof. The beads mould around the body and, whilst they might provide a relaxing medium they are unstable, do not encourage a symmetrical position and are difficult to transfer in and out of. They are not recommended for prolonged sitting.

There is now a range of bean bag seating that incorporates a moulded shell. The shell is formed for each individual child and enables them to be supported more symmetrically in the bean bag. Do consider that your child will soon grow out of the mould and it will need to be replaced before it becomes uncomfortable and unhelpful.

## Seating for behavioural or sensory needs

### Cube chairs

These are generally made of foam and are shaped to look like cube-shaped armchairs. They can have a backward sloping seat, high sides, wide padded armrests and easy-to-clean vinyl or fabric covers. Some have seat inserts that can be removed as the child grows.

They are useful for children with learning disabilities who tend to rock repetitively, putting a strain on ordinary wooden framed chairs. They are also useful for children who have epilepsy or self-injurious behaviour as there are no solid structural components on which the children can injure themselves.

They have a backward-sloping seat that makes it more difficult for the child to slide forwards out of it: however,

transferring in and out of these chairs can be difficult. Some have the option of a tilt-in-space seat unit. Some models have an activity tray that fits between the armrests.

There is an increasing range of seating designed to connect to a stereo to enable the user to feel the music through their body. These generally offer minimal postural support in an upright or semi-reclined posture.

Seating a child who rocks significantly can be challenging. However, there is now a limited number of chairs that safely allow a rocking action in the seat and backrest. This facility can also be locked off if required.

## **Upholstered seating**

These chairs are generally popular with families for home use as they look like ordinary armchairs and the upholstery can be chosen to match other chairs.

Some models are multi-adjustable so that they meet the needs of the growing child. They also enable him/her to sit in a variety of supported positions including:

- a reclined position;
- with legs stretched out in front on a leg rest;
- in side lying;
- Some also offer a prone lying option

Most have adjustable width armrests and a contoured backrest, with head support and wings to help to support the child when sitting up. Harnesses, lap straps and trays are available for some models as well as waterproof covers that can be put on under the upholstered covers. Pressure relief can usually be incorporated into these chairs if needed.

These chairs are usually adjusted by the company reps to provide the correct amount of support for the needs of the particular child. Later, a therapist or parent can be shown how to alter it as the child grows or his condition changes.

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[View our impartial list of chairs](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2842>

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## **FOR CHILDREN WHO NEED SUPPORTIVE SEATING AT FLOOR LEVEL**

Small children will want to spend a lot of time on the floor, as this is the usual place for playing and is relatively safe. Floor sitters will provide support for children who find it difficult to sit up unaided and will enable them to interact more easily with other children and make eye contact. It will also provide them with opportunities to further develop their postural control.

### **Corner seats**

These chairs have a V-shaped backrest that provides support at the back and sides of a child sitting on the floor. They are useful for children that are developing sitting balance but who are inclined to fall back or sideways if they overstretch. Many have aommel at the front to keep the legs abducted which may benefit children with cerebral palsy who often find it difficult to sit with their legs out in front of them and have a tendency to go into extensor spasm. A backrest below shoulder blade height can reduce extension tone. The likelihood of extensor spasms can also be reduced by raising the seat a few centimetres up from floor level, or by sitting the child on a forward angled wedge.

These seats make it possible for the parent to play and interact freely with the child without needing to support them in a sitting position.

### **Tumble forms**

This style of seating is made from firm density foam which has a stain- and urine- resistant surface. The seats

are shaped to provide a slightly concave interior to give some side support, head support and a pommel to keep the legs apart. They are non-adjustable so sizing must be reviewed from time to time. They are used for floor sitting with a wedge to alter the angle from a more upright to a more reclined position. Due to their 'bucket' shape they can be difficult to transfer out of independently.

Care should be taken as the plastic covers may split and unless these are patched, the foam inner will get damaged.

The outer plastic cover can be hot and sweaty to sit on; a stretch towelling cover is available.

Consider the following:

- transferring an older child in and out of a floor sitter can be difficult for parents. Always encourage your child to crawl in and out if possible. A removable pommel will make transfers easier;
- many of these chairs are quite portable and therefore easy to use in different environments;
- lap and chest straps are available to secure the child into the seat;
- padded cushions will give added comfort to wooden corner seats;
- some of the hammock-type bathing supports can be used as floor sitters and will provide some postural support;
- low level tables are available from some suppliers for use with floor level seating.

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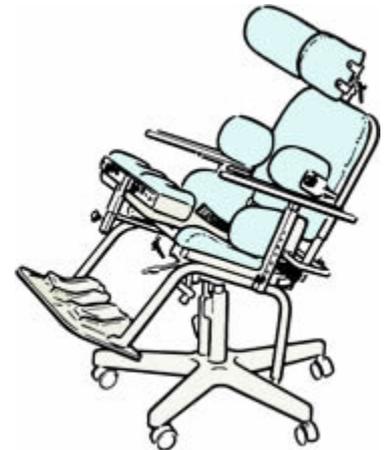
[View our impartial list of corner or floor sitting chairs](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2843>

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## FOR CHILDREN WHO NEED A FUNCTIONAL SCHOOL OR ACTIVITY CHAIR

A wide range of activity chairs are available and they vary in the degree of adjustability and support they offer. The aim of these chairs is to support the child in an upright position to assist them to participate in everyday activities. A basic activity chair is simply one step up from a standard school chair for children who just need a small degree of additional support. Multi-adjustable chairs have a wide variety of components that can be mixed and matched according to the amount of support the child needs.



### Basic Support chairs

Most of these chairs are made of wood and have a range of accessories which bolt or screw into them to provide support and good positioning. They are used mostly in schools and nurseries.

Some have flat seats; some have a choice of seat angle to provide a more stable sitting position; others have a contoured, moulded or bucket seat that will provide more stability, but will be less flexible as the child grows.

Consider the following:

- chairs are often available either as a basic chair with an optional range of accessories, or as a complete package including a variety of accessories. Sometimes it is cheaper to buy the complete package and not use all the accessories;
- comfort needs to be considered because it can be difficult for the child to change position. The thin foam upholstery provided on many of these chairs may flatten and need replacing;
- These chairs can be heavy making it difficult for the child to independently tuck the chair up to the table or push it away in order to stand up.
- children do not seem to be as prone to developing pressure sores as adults, but the risk increases with age and body weight. The skin condition of older, immobile children should be monitored daily. Also the

type, position and tightness of harnesses and straps needs to be considered, and the clothes should be free from wrinkles under their back and bottom;

- check how easy it is to remove harnesses, straps and pommels in order to get the child out of a chair, especially in an emergency;
- pommels and lap straps should not be used to stop a child from sliding forwards in the seat - a proper seating assessment needs to be done;
- chairs with wheels or castors are not necessarily designed (or stress tested) to be pushed around with the child seated in it. They may be provided only to help manoeuvre an unoccupied chair. Check with the manufacturers;
- knee blocks should only be used under strict guidance from an OT or physiotherapist as they can put undue pressure on unstable hip joints;
- the footrests or footboard are generally not designed for weight bearing whilst the child is transferring in and out of the chair. The chair may tip forwards if used in this way;
- children of small stature or those working in chairs with a high seat which raises them up to the same level as their peer group may need to be assisted in and out of the chair;
- children who sit down heavily in a chair, rock repetitively or fall sideways will need one with splayed legs, a larger base board or skis for increased stability;
- the ease with which chairs can be adjusted varies. Some require an Allen key, others have large, easy-to-turn knobs. Ease of adjustment may need to be weighed up against the possibility that the set-up may be inadvertently changed by other children turning, twisting or taking off the knobs - if the knobs are lost the chair may become unsafe and unusable.

## Multi-adjustable, Modular Support chairs

There is an increasing range of functional chairs that are highly adjustable. These chairs are designed to grow with the child and a wide range of accessories can be added or removed as the child's needs change.

Accessories include;

- head supports – a wide range is available offering different levels of support. For a child with reasonable head control it can simply be a place to rest your head when tired. Headrests can also provide side support to help keep the head in a midline position although this may obscure side vision. Often head supports can be mounted on multi-adjustable frames allowing accurate positioning. Switches for communication devices or powered mobility can be placed on the headrest. Some headrests can be fitted with a head strap or cap to prevent the head from falling forward. Alternative products are available that can be compatible with modular seating such as a 'roller coaster' style head support which supports at neck level. This prevents the child from getting their head stuck under or behind a conventional head rest. More recently a dynamic head support has been developed that suspends the head from above. Check the compatibility of the product as a bespoke bracket may be required.

Head position is crucial. A good head position is reliant on good positioning of the pelvis and trunk. Once this is achieved make sure that the head rest provides the support your child needs. Try alternatives if possible to see what works best.

- side supports - support the upper body to help maintain an upright and symmetrical position; these come in a variety of sizes and offer varying levels of support. Swing away supports are useful to enable access to fit and remove slings for hoisting.
- lumbar supports - to support the curve in the lower back;
- adductor wedges - added to the outer edge of the seat to prevent the legs rolling outwards. Useful for children with low muscle tone;
- pommel - positioned centrally at the front of the seat to stop the legs from rolling or pulling together in an adduction spasm;
- chest pads, straps and harnesses - to provide support for children with weak upper body muscles who tend to slump forward;
- foot restraints/sandals - to keep the feet on the footrest in alignment.
- Knee blocks – these are positioned in front of the knees to help keep the pelvis in a neutral position and the legs in a neutral, symmetrical position.

For the child who enjoys rocking in their chair there are a limited range of chairs with a built in mechanism to allow safe rocking of the seat base and back rest. This function can be easily switched off when required.

For the older child with significant postural support needs there is now a modular system offering a highly adjustable back rest that is in three sections, all of which can be adjusted in every direction. This enables the chair to be altered specifically to prevent or accommodate spinal changes. This can be a useful product to postpone use of moulded seating.

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[View our impartial list of activity chairs](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=3184>

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## **Types of seat**

Many chairs have a backward sloping, ramped or human shaped cushion to encourage the child to sit with his/her thighs horizontally with the pelvis in a neutral position. This promotes an upright position and reduces the risk of sliding forwards.

Some children benefit from leaning slightly forwards in a seat that angles down towards the front of the chair combined with chest and foot support. This may increase the child's ability to use his/her arms for activities such as feeding, working and playing. The multi-adjustable seating can often be provided with a tilt-in-space function and height adjustable base. This enables the child to gain the benefits from different seat angles.

## **Chairs with a straddle/bolster seat**

This type of seating is useful, for example, for a child with cerebral palsy who has good upper body strength but whose legs pull tightly together. Sitting astride the bolster forces the legs apart and induces more normal muscle tone making it easier for the child to have control of his/her arms for activities such as eating and school work. A frequent problem with this type of chair is how to get on and off it. More able children may find it easier to step on and off, otherwise lifting or hoisting may be necessary.

## **CHILDREN WHO NEED MOULDED/MADE-TO-MEASURE SEATING**

This type of seating tends to be used for children who cannot attain a good, comfortable position in off-the-shelf, adjustable seating. Some systems are made up of interlinking components (modular seating) that can be re-shaped when necessary; others are permanently moulded into a particular shape. Children requiring this type of seating also often require hoisting. Consider how you will fit and remove slings or whether an 'in-chair' sling would be most practical.

### **Modular seating**

Modular systems are made of lots of small interconnecting components that can be re-adjusted as the child grows or if his/her support needs changing. Some modular systems can only be adjusted by a company representative or therapist who has had special training. These systems are usually covered in stretch, padded towelling.

### **Permanently moulded seating**

A permanently moulded seating system is a unique system moulded to match the contours of a particular child. The shell is then padded to increase comfort. A well fitting mould will support the weight evenly and not cause pressure areas to develop. If the system is to be used as a static seat indoors as well as on a mobile base outdoors, care must be taken to try to accommodate indoor/ outdoor and winter/summer clothing. Re-moulds are necessary as the child grows or needs alter so regular review is essential.

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[View our impartial list of moulded seating](#)

## **BEDS AND BED ACCESSORIES**

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Common problems associated with night time/sleep management include:

- transferring the child on and off the bed;
- transferring the child on and off the bed;  
assisting with bed-centred activities;
- positioning the child in bed;
- maintaining the child's safety.

### **HELP WITH BED TRANSFERS**

If the height of a bed can be lowered, children that can climb in, and children who can transfer sideways from their wheelchair seat may be able to transfer independently. After transfer, bed height can be raised to a more practical level for the parent/carer.

There is a small but useful range of equipment to assist with movement in bed such as bed blocks, bed ladders and mattress elevators. These items can help to maintain independence.

A bed that has a profiling mattress platform can assist the child to sit up in preparation for getting out of bed.

Sometimes it is necessary to use a hoist for transfers. Beds with an open base rather than a divan base make positioning a mobile hoist over the bed easier. Alternatively ceiling track or bed head hoists can remove the need to store a large mobile hoist.

### **ASSISTING WITH BED-CENTRED ACTIVITIES**

An adjustable height bed will reduce the risk of back strain to the parent or carer, particularly if the bed surface is used as a changing and dressing table.

A bed that can be tilted is useful for a child that needs postural drainage. If a specialised bed that offers this feature is not available, then wedge cushions can be used on top of the bed.

### **FOR CHILDREN WHO NEED POSITIONING SUPPORT WHILST IN BED**

Some children, particularly those with altered muscle tone, may need help with positioning 24 hours a day to prevent muscle shortening and joint contractures. Night time can be the best time to achieve body symmetry. During sleep they will need to be positioned symmetrically - side-lying, prone-lying (on front) or supine-lying (on back). N.B. research into cot death syndrome has shown that it is not advisable to lay young babies on their tummies (prone) to sleep. Some children require turning during the night if they become uncomfortable. Consider how this will be achieved with minimal sleep disturbance for the parent and child.

There is a range of wedges, rolls and positioning systems designed for use in bed. Often, the simpler the equipment is the more likely it is that families will continue to use it. Components do not need to be complex, often a favourite stuffed toy placed correctly can be all that is needed with the added bonus of emotional comfort.

Consider the following;

- which position does the child prefer to sleep in?
- Do they move around at night – if this is the case then they may not tolerate night time positioning equipment.
- If the child over heats consider choosing products that allow increased air flow.
- If there are continence issues how will this be managed; two or more top covers may be required to allow

for washing.

- Some systems involve Velcro fastenings which can be noisy to deal with in the night and may trigger a startle reaction in some children.
- If the system is to be fitted to a profiling bed this can increase the risks of entrapment. Consult an Occupational Therapist as a compromise may be required between the benefits of the profiling function and the postural support product.

## MAINTAINING SAFETY OF THE CHILD

Children making the transition from cot to bed may be safer if they sleep on a mattress on the floor, although assisting a child down onto and up off the floor may increase the risk of back strain.

Often parents worry about their child falling out of bed. Small mesh sides are readily available from mainstream shops. There are a range of beds that include safety sides however, these do present a risk of entrapment. Before resorting to this type of equipment monitor your child's position in the bed over a week or so. If they rarely move much then you needn't be concerned. Bed sides should not be used to restrain a child within the bed. A child can be put at higher risk of injury if he/she is likely to attempt to climb over the sides.

Pairs of safety sides can be added to an existing bed. Most are designed for adults, so parents should ensure that the width

between the rails is not so great that there is a risk that the head of a child may slip between them. Some can have mesh infills and some safety sides can be padded to make the bed environment safer for a child that self-injures or who has uncontrolled movements. Check with the manufacturer that the product meets current regulations for use with children

For children whose behaviour is unpredictable (including those who regularly have seizures at night) and are therefore at high risk, it may be necessary to introduce a 'safe space'. This is often in the form of a low mattress surrounded by padded low walls. These items can be made to measure.

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[View our impartial list of beds](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=3166>

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## Ensuring the safety of a child that is inclined to wander

An alarm system that monitors pressure can be used to alert the parents that the child is getting out of bed. A pressure mat alarm can be placed at the bedroom door to alert the parents that the child is moving out of the bedroom. To give the child the freedom of the bedroom but to prevent him/her from moving to other rooms, two sets of door handles - one above the reach of the child or just one handle high up – or an alarm sited at the doorway may provide a solution.

Parents can also use baby alarms to monitor activities; video versions of these are now widely available. As the child gets older, he/she should be allowed a degree of privacy if at all possible.

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[View our impartial list of walking alarms from bed or chair](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=819>

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## Requesting assistance

A standard baby alarm can be used by the child to call for assistance, but not all baby alarms allow for two-way communication so the parent is unable to re-assure the child that help is on the way.

A two-way intercom can be a better solution. Some systems are hands-free operated. Older children should be

able to turn off their intercom station if they require some privacy.

## Epilepsy alarms

Epilepsy alarms that monitor the vital signs or movement of a child and trigger an alarm should a fit occur, can greatly decrease the anxiety felt by parents about the safety of their child at night. There is an increasing range of this equipment available to meet different needs and budgets. Charitable funding may also be available from specialist charities

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[View our impartial list of epilepsy sensors](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=1375>

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## Anti-suffocation mattresses and pillows

Standard anti-suffocation mattresses and pillows are available from high street nursery shops. These are made of foam with a dimpled surface which creates air cavities between the pillow and the cover, even when supporting the weight of the head.

## EQUIPMENT TO HELP WITH DRESSING

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Dressing a disabled child and teaching independent dressing can be a very time consuming process. A changing bench, shower stretcher or an adjustable height bed can all be useful to make dressing a dependent child easier. It is important to have all that is necessary to hand so that the child is not left unattended.

For children who are learning to dress themselves, equipment which provides support during sitting and standing may be required. For example, a low level bench may enable the children to sit with their feet flat on the floor (i.e. well supported). Their clothes need to be close by and there should be room for an adult to demonstrate and assist with the more difficult dressing tasks.

A wall rail or ladderback is a useful support for a child to hold onto when getting up from sitting to standing when dressing and adjusting garments. A ladderback allow the children to move their hands progressively up the rungs to pull themselves up.

There is a small range of dressing aids available for adults that may also be useful for your child such as dressing sticks and sock aids.

## Clothing

Careful choice of clothing can make dressing a child easier, and can give him/her a higher level of independence. Look for large, front fastenings; Velcro; elasticated waist bands; loose styles; stretchy fabrics; and make sure that garments are easy to wash and iron.

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[View our impartial list of clothing for children](#)

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/products.php?groupid=2593>

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## REFERENCES

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## USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

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### **Demand - North**

Onyx House  
303 New Mill Road  
Brockholes  
Holmfirth  
West Yorkshire  
HD9 7AL

Telephone : 01484 666 261

Fax : 01484 666 869

Email : [demand.yorkshire@demand.org.uk](mailto:demand.yorkshire@demand.org.uk)

Website : [www.demand.org.uk](http://www.demand.org.uk)



### **Demand – South**

The Old Chapel  
Mallard Road  
Abbots Langley  
Hertfordshire  
WD5 0GQ

Telephone : 01923 681800

Fax : 01923 682400

Email : [info@demand.org.uk](mailto:info@demand.org.uk)

Website : [www.demand.org.uk](http://www.demand.org.uk)

## **DISABILITY EQUIPMENT REGISTER**

A list of second hand equipment. The largest single source guide of used second hand  
Disability Equipment in the UK. Established 1991.

Telephone: 01454 318818

Email: [disabreg@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:disabreg@blueyonder.co.uk)

### **Disability Equipment Register**

### **The Act Foundation**

The Grants Manager  
61 Thames Street  
Windsor



Berkshire  
SL4 1QW  
Telephone: 01753 753900  
Email: [info@theactfoundation.co.uk](mailto:info@theactfoundation.co.uk)  
Website: [www.theactfoundation.co.uk](http://www.theactfoundation.co.uk)

Provider of grants which, if awarded, can cover funding for work such as stairlift installation, bathroom adaptations and vehicle adaptations. They will not make grants which would replace statutory funding, nor pay for work that has already taken place.



**British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA)**

New Loom House  
Suite 4.06  
101 Back Church Lane  
London, E1 1LU  
Telephone: 020 7702 2141  
Fax: 020 7680 4048  
Email: [bhta@bhta.com](mailto:bhta@bhta.com) (and [bhta@bhta.net](mailto:bhta@bhta.net))  
Website: [www.bhta.net](http://www.bhta.net)

The British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) is the UK's largest healthcare association. Members of the BHTA sign up to a code of practice designed to ensure the public can trust that members will give a good service, and a high standard of behaviour. You can search for members on their website.



**Caudwell Children**

Minton Hollins,  
Shelton Old Road,  
Stoke-on-Trent,  
Staffordshire,  
ST4 7RY  
Telephone: 0845 300 1348  
Email: [charity@caudwellchildren.com](mailto:charity@caudwellchildren.com)  
Website: [www.caudwellchildren.com/](http://www.caudwellchildren.com/)

Caudwell Children is a national Charity helping children aged 18 or under who live in the UK and fit the Charity's financial criteria.

Logo of Centre for Accessible Environments

**Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE)**

4th floor, Holyer House  
20-21 Red Lion Court  
London EC4A 3EB  
Telephone: 020 7822 8232  
Email: [info@cae.org.uk](mailto:info@cae.org.uk)  
Website: [www.cae.org.uk](http://www.cae.org.uk)

The Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) is the UK's leading authority on inclusive design. Their aim is to help secure a built environment that is usable by everyone, including disabled and older people.

**Cerebra**



2nd Floor Offices

The Lyric Buildings  
King Street  
Carmarthen  
SA31 1BD

Telephone: 01267 244200

Email: [enquiries@cerebra.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cerebra.org.uk)

Website: [www.cerebra.org.uk](http://www.cerebra.org.uk)

Cerebra grants are to help children aged 16 or younger who have disabilities because of a brain related condition or injury. The condition may be of a physical nature, a learning disability or both. Cerebra offer direct and practical assistance to improve the quality of life of children and young people, e.g. sensory toys, tricycles and quadricycles and touch screen computers. Applications must be supported by two references, one of which must be from a medical professional. Grants are paid to suppliers, not directly to the child/family.



### **Children Today**

The Moorings  
Rowton Bridge  
Christleton  
Chester  
CH3 7AE

Telephone: 01244 335622

Email: [info@childrentoday.org.uk](mailto:info@childrentoday.org.uk)

Website: [www.childrentoday.org.uk](http://www.childrentoday.org.uk)

Children Today can provide grants to purchase special equipment such as electric wheelchairs, walking aids, trikes, educational toys (specially designed for children with disabilities), communication aids, adapted car seats, lifting and sleep equipment.



### **Contact a Family**

209-211 City Road  
London EC1V 1JN  
Tel: 020 7608 8700

Helpline: 0808 808 3555

Fax: 020 7608 8701

Email: [info@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:info@cafamily.org.uk)

Website: [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)

Contact a Family provide information, advice and support. They bring families together so they can support each other. They campaign to improve families with disabled children's circumstances, and for their right to be included and equal in society.



### **Elifar Foundation**

22 Florentine Way  
Waterlooville  
Hants  
PO7 8JU

Email: [info@elifarfoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@elifarfoundation.org.uk)

Website: [www.elifarfoundation.org.uk](http://www.elifarfoundation.org.uk)

Elifar Foundation can help with funding for a wide range of specialised equipment, therapies and respite, which would otherwise be unavailable because of a lack of funds or because there is no statutory provision.



### **Engage Mutual Insurance**

Engage Mutual Customer Service Department  
Hornbeam Park Avenue  
Harrogate  
HG2 8XE  
Telephone: 0800 169 4321  
Email: [mail@engagemutual.com](mailto:mail@engagemutual.com)  
Website: [www.engagemutual.com](http://www.engagemutual.com)

The Engage Foundation can help customers in need in the form of Personal Grants. The Personal Grants can include applications from parents needing help to pay for equipment for disabled children.



### **Family Action**

24 Angel Gate  
City Road  
London  
EC1V 2PT  
Telephone: 020 7254 6251  
Website: [www.family-action.org.uk](http://www.family-action.org.uk)

Family Action has small grants available for medical treatment, services, facilities or equipment (including communication aids) for those who are sick or physically disabled. Supporting evidence is required from a relevant professional. There is also a general grants program which can meet needs such as clothing, fuel bills and household needs such as beds, cookers and washing machines. Funds are not available for items covered by statutory funding.



### **Family Fund**

4 Alpha Court  
Monks Cross Drive  
York YO32 9WN  
Telephone 01904 621115  
Email [info@familyfund.org.uk](mailto:info@familyfund.org.uk)  
Website: [www.familyfund.org.uk](http://www.familyfund.org.uk)

The Family Fund helps low-income families caring for a severely disabled child up to age 17 in Scotland and Northern Ireland and up to age 18 in England and Wales. They give grants for things that make life easier and more enjoyable for the disabled child and their family, such as washing machines, driving lessons, hospital visiting costs, computers and holidays. Family Fund cannot assist where there is a responsibility on a statutory agency to help with the requested item.



### **Fledglings**

Wenden Court  
Station Approach  
Wendens Ambo  
Saffron Walden  
CB11 4LB

Telephone: 0845 458 1124 / 01799 541 807

Email: [enquiries@fledglings.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@fledglings.org.uk)

Website: [www.fledglings.org.uk](http://www.fledglings.org.uk)

Fledglings source and supply products to help make life a bit easier for a parent, and more fulfilling for their child. They specialise in finding those unusual items, and as they are a charity their products are priced to try to make them affordable to anyone who needs them, many of them being subsidised, or sold at cost price.



**Gov UK**

Website: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

GOV.UK is the website for the UK government. It's the best place to find government services and information. GOV.UK has a section devoted to providing information on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). This grant (providing you meet the relevant eligibility criteria) could be used towards the adaptation of your living environment: [www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants](http://www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants)



**Independence at Home**

4th Floor, Congress House

14 Lyon Road

Harrow

HA1 2EN

Tel 9-5 (Monday to Thursday) 020 8427 7929

e-mail: [iah@independenceathome.org.uk](mailto:iah@independenceathome.org.uk)

Website: [www.independenceathome.org.uk](http://www.independenceathome.org.uk)

Independence at Home can provide grants for people with a disability or long-term illness towards the cost of adaptations to their home. The grant must go towards an item to assist a child to live at home. Independence at Home cannot provide grants when the item may be provided through public funds. Applications must be supported by a professional involved in the child's care, usually an occupational therapist or a social worker.



**Joseph Patrick Trust**

Muscular Dystrophy Campaign

61A Great Suffolk Street

London

SE1 0BU

Telephone: 020 7803 4800

Email: [info@muscular-dystrophy.org](mailto:info@muscular-dystrophy.org)

Website: [www.muscular-dystrophy.org](http://www.muscular-dystrophy.org)

The Joseph Patrick Trust (JPT), the welfare fund within the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign, provides grants towards the costs of specialist equipment such as powered wheelchairs, adapted computers and electric beds, for children and adults.



**Lennox Children's Cancer Fund**

Suite D, 7-13 High Street

Romford

Essex RM1 1JU

Telephone: 01708 734366

Email: [info@lennoxccf.org.uk](mailto:info@lennoxccf.org.uk)

Lennox Children's Cancer Fund can offer respite breaks to families of children diagnosed with cancer or leukemia within the last 12 months to allow a break from staying in hospital, and just take time out to relax and have fun. They can also support families with financial support whilst having to take a prolonged time away from work to look after an unwell child. Children have to be under 18 years of age and grants are not means tested.



**Lifeline 4 Kids**  
215 West End Lane  
West Hampstead  
London  
NW6 1XJ  
United Kingdom  
Telephone: 020 7794 1661  
Website: [www.lifeline4kids.org](http://www.lifeline4kids.org)

Lifeline 4 kids can provide essential equipment to help improve the quality of life for children (0-18 years) with disabilities and special needs. For the individual child they provide the full spectrum of specialised equipment such as electric wheelchairs, mobility aids and varying items including specialised computers. They are also one of the only UK charities prepared to help a special needs child from a low-income family with essential smaller items such as shoes, clothing, bedding and specialist toys.



**Meru**  
Unit 2, Eclipse Estate  
30 West Hill  
Epsom  
Surrey  
KT19 8JD  
Telephone: 01372 725 203  
Email: [info@meru.org.uk](mailto:info@meru.org.uk)  
Website: [meru.org.uk](http://meru.org.uk)

Meru offer an individual service to young disabled people when no other solution exists. Not only do they provide advice, but also design and custom-make equipment specifically for each child.



**Newlife Foundation for Disabled Children**  
Newlife Centre  
Hemlock Way  
Cannock  
Staffordshire, WS11 7GF  
Telephone: 01543 462 777  
Website: [www.newlifecharity.co.uk](http://www.newlifecharity.co.uk)

Newlife Foundation for Disabled Children can provide grants for essential equipment such as pain relieving beds, wheelchairs, communication aids, and much more.



**The Nihal Armstrong Trust**  
111 Chatsworth Road

London

NW2 4BH

Email: [info@nihalarmstrongtrust.org.uk](mailto:info@nihalarmstrongtrust.org.uk)

Website: [www.nihalarmstrongtrust.org.uk](http://www.nihalarmstrongtrust.org.uk)

The Nihill Armstrong Trust is a small charity that provides children (up to and including 18 years of age) with cerebral palsy with essential pieces of equipment, communication aids or specific services that their local authority does not provide.



**React**

St Luke's House

270 Sandycombe Road

Kew

Surrey

TW9 3NP

Telephone: 020 8940 2575

Website: [www.reactcharity.org](http://www.reactcharity.org)

React is a charity working to improve the quality of life for financially disadvantaged children with life-limiting illnesses living in the UK. They supply a wide range of equipment from specialist wheelchairs, beds, baths, and mobility aids, to essential everyday items like washing machines and tumble dryers.



**Remap**

Remap Head Office,

D9 Chaucer Business Park,

Kemsing,

Sevenoaks,

Kent

TN15 6YU

Telephone: 0845 130 0456

Email: [a.rowe@remap.org.uk](mailto:a.rowe@remap.org.uk)

Website: [www.remap.org.uk](http://www.remap.org.uk)

Remap is a national charity who make or modify equipment when nothing suitable is available through mainstream sources. Items are tailor-made to be suitable for individual needs and to make a real difference to people's ability to rise to a particular challenge and achieve something not otherwise possible for them.



**Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity**

81a High Street

Great Missenden

Buckinghamshire

HP16 0AL

Telephone: 01494 890465

Website: [www.roalddahl.com](http://www.roalddahl.com)

Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity provide support for children with lifelong neurological and blood conditions like acquired brain injury, neuro-degenerative conditions, rare forms of epilepsy and long-term blood diseases (excluding cancer). They help these children by funding specialist nurses and carers, supporting parent groups and charities, and by giving direct assistance to families with grants to help pay for expensive equipment or activities such as weekends away with other children and families experiencing the same illnesses.



**Strongbones Childrens Charitable Trust**

Unit B9

Romford Seedbed Centre

Davidson Way

Romford, Essex

RM7 0AZ

Tel: 01708 750599

Website: [www.strongbones.org.uk](http://www.strongbones.org.uk)

Strongbones have funds available to donate for grants for children suffering from arthritis, scoliosis, brittle bone disease and all other conditions of the bone. To be eligible the child must be under 18 years of age, and suffer from one of these ailments.



**Variety, the Children's Charity**

Variety House

93 Bayham Street

London

NW1 0AG

Tel: 020 7428 8100

Email: [info@variety.org.uk](mailto:info@variety.org.uk)

Website: [www.variety.org.uk](http://www.variety.org.uk)

The Variety Club works to help improve the lives of sick, disabled and disadvantaged children and young people up to the age of 19 years across the UK, providing basic items that will improve the lives of individual children.

**AskSARA**

If you would like further advice regarding daily living equipment related to choosing equipment for everyday living you could try relevant sections of AskSARA. AskSARA is our free online guided advice tool. AskSARA will ask you questions about yourself and your environment and then offer relevant advice, product suggestions and supplier details.



