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This Factsheet is one of a series produced for parents and groups concerned with the care of disabled children. A full list of Contact a Family publications is available on request.

incorporating  
**The Lady Hoare Trust**

## Introduction

Caring for a disabled child can sometimes be made easier with the use of certain aids, equipment and/or adaptations. For some families having the right equipment can also enhance your child's ability to become more independent and help ease the process of transition into adulthood.

Some items such as mobility aids or special beds are expensive and the range available is vast. This factsheet has information on how to obtain equipment and where to go for further advice.

Families in Scotland should note that the Scottish Executive established The Strategy Forum: Equipment and Adaptations to look at the provision of aids and equipment in Scotland.

The Strategy Forum report, 'Equipped for Inclusion' represents advice to the Scottish Executive following the review and includes their recommendations for changes and improvements. For further information visit the Scottish Executive website,

Web: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/care/JointFuture/equipmentandadaptations>

## Who provides equipment?

Throughout the factsheet, we refer to the 'Health Authority.' In your area this might also be known as the Primary Care Trust or Health and Social Services Board/Trust if you live in Northern Ireland.

Both your local health authority and your local social services department provide aids and equipment to disabled people. Under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (England & Wales) and the equivalent legislation for Scotland and Northern Ireland a local authority has a *duty* to provide *practical assistance* and *additional facilities designed to secure his greater safety, comfort or convenience* to those people assessed as needing them. This often means the provision of equipment as well as other forms of practical assistance. In your area there may be a local agreement which clarifies who is responsible for different types of equipment.

In England you may find there is a Community Equipment Service (CES) – jointly funded by local health and social services departments. This is an initiative across health and social care to develop community equipment services. Further information about this initiative can be found on the Department of Health website,

Web: <http://www.icesdoh.org/about.asp>

Families in England should also note that certain aids and equipment provided by the local authority cannot be charged for. These include equipment for daily living such as a shower chair and minor adaptations costing £1,000 or less. Families from all over the UK should

also be aware that Direct Payments can also be used to purchase equipment.

In general, social services are responsible for providing equipment for daily living and non-medical needs, and your health authority is responsible for providing equipment to meet nursing or medical needs. In addition, equipment to help a child access the curriculum may be arranged by a school or local education authority.

This factsheet has information about these types of provision as well as sources of information on equipment for play and leisure, second hand equipment, sources of financial help, VAT relief on equipment, help adapting your home, and further sources of help and advice.

## Social services

Equipment required to enhance independence or meet any social care needs is usually the responsibility of social services (Social Work Department in Scotland or Health and Social Services board in Northern Ireland). This includes help with arranging adaptations to the home or any additional facilities to secure greater safety, comfort and convenience. This can lead to the provision of aids and equipment to help with lifting and transfer, personal care, eating, bathing and washing. Equipment is usually provided on a long term loan basis.

## Who to contact

In the first place, you should contact your social worker if you have one or contact your GP and tell them about the kind of help you're looking for. You can also approach other healthcare or personal care professionals such as the district nurse, physiotherapist or school nurse.

## Assessing you and your child's needs

An Occupational Therapist (OT) or Social Worker will usually visit you in your home to discuss the situation further and carry out the assessment. An OT is a professional who can advise on equipment for daily living and managing more easily within the home. When you're visited by the OT or Social Worker it is important that your needs as a carer and those of other family members are taken into account. This includes any health and safety concerns. If your child also needs equipment to help with medical or health needs then a joint assessment should be carried out and the social worker or OT may contact the community nursing service or your GP.

Where a need is identified, the Social Worker or OT must then consider ways of meeting that need. This may include practical advice about doing things differently in order to make things easier, providing aids and equipment, and/or arranging alterations to the house (see the section 'Adapting your home' on page 8).

## Making a complaint



If you're unhappy with the outcome of the assessment then you can make a complaint using the Local Authority's complaints procedure. When making a complaint it may be useful to get help from a local disability or carers organisation. The Contact a Family Helpline can provide further advice and tell you about any local organisations which can help further.

Contact a Family's factsheet on Assessments and Services contains further advice about making a complaint.

## Health

Aids and equipment needed to provide nursing and medical care at home are usually the responsibility of the local health authority. Equipment can be supplied through the NHS on a free loan basis, with certain items being prescribed by the GP or a consultant. This might include special beds and bed equipment, hoists, incontinence aids, feeding aids, mobility aids and aids for hearing.

## Complaints

If there is any aspect of health provision you're unhappy with then you should raise this with the person responsible. Families in England can also ask their local Patient Advocacy and Liaison Service (PALS). Community Health Councils in Wales can also offer support and guidance on how to pursue a complaint. Families in Scotland and Northern Ireland can pursue a complaint with the help of their local health council or health and social services council respectively. See your local telephone directory for contact details.

## Hearing

Your GP can make a referral to an audiologist for an examination and hearing test. If a hearing aid is necessary a further referral is made to a hearing aid department where an appliance will be supplied and fitted. NHS hearing aids are serviced, maintained and supplied with batteries free of charge. Hearing aids can also be purchased privately. For further information contact:

**The National Deaf Children's Society**,  
15 Dufferin Street, London EC1Y 8UR  
Tel: 0808 800 8880 Freephone helpline (Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm) Text: 0808 800 8880  
e-mail: [helpline@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:helpline@ndcs.org.uk)  
Web: <http://www.ndcs.org.uk>

**RNID Information Line**, 19-23 Featherstone Street,  
London EC1Y 8SL Tel: 0808 808 0123 Text: 0808 808 9000  
e-mail: [informationline@rnid.org.uk](mailto:informationline@rnid.org.uk)  
Web: <http://www.rnid.org.uk>

## Vision impairment

Low vision aids such as hand and stand magnifiers can be prescribed under the NHS through the hospital eye service along with more complex appliances. The following organisations can provide further information on aids for visually impaired children:

**Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)**, 105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE  
Tel: 0845 766 9999 Helpline  
e-mail: [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)  
Web: <http://www.rnib.org.uk>

**Vision Aid**, 106 Junction Road, Deane, Bolton BL3 4NE  
Tel: 01204 64265  
e-mail: [visionaiduk@aol.com](mailto:visionaiduk@aol.com)  
*Vision Aid can loan toys, hi-tech equipment, and visual stimulation equipment to registered blind and partially sighted children and students.*

## Communication

Any concerns regarding your child's communication needs should be discussed with a speech and language therapist. You can either contact the therapist direct or ask your GP to refer you. Therapists are usually based in hospitals or clinics within the community. Following an assessment of your child's needs the therapist may be able to loan the required equipment.

Note however, that speech and language therapy for children is often regarded as an educational provision. This means that funding for such provision can be provided or funded by the Local Education Authority (LEA) as well as by a health trust. Such provision should be identified in your child's statement of educational needs, or record of needs if you live in Scotland.

Parents can also visit their nearest communication aid centre for further information. The therapist or social worker should be able to tell you where your nearest centre is. The following organisations can also provide further information:

**Afasic**, 2nd Floor, 50-52 Great Sutton Street,  
London EC1V 0DJ Tel: 0845 355 5577 Helpline  
e-mail: [info@afasic.org.uk](mailto:info@afasic.org.uk) Web: <http://www.afasic.org.uk>

**ICAN**, 4 Dyer's Buildings, Holborn, London EC1N 2QP  
Tel: 0845 225 4071 e-mail: [info@ican.org.uk](mailto:info@ican.org.uk)  
Web: <http://www.ican.org.uk>

**Aidis Trust**, First Floor, 54 Commercial Street, London E1 6LT Tel: 020 7426 2130 e-mail: [info@aidis.org](mailto:info@aidis.org)  
Web: <http://www.aidis.org>  
*The Aidis Trust aims to provide specialised computer based communication equipment.*

**The Sequal Trust**, 3 Ploughmans Corner, Wharf Road, Ellesmere SY12 0EJ Tel: 01691 624 222  
Web: <http://www.the-sequal-trust.org.uk>

## Incontinence

Advice on incontinence matters can be sought from health visitors, district nurses or social workers. Most health authorities will also have a designated continence advisor for specialist help and advice. Once your child is over the age of infancy incontinence aids can be supplied by your local health authority provided your child's difficulties with continence are due to a disability. Note however, that these may be charged for depending on where you live. Aids such as bedding protection, disposable nappies, catheters, pants and odour controls may be provided by the health authority or can be purchased privately.

Further help may also be available with water charges. If your water supply is metered then you may be able to get your bill capped. Please contact the helpline for further advice. An additional source of help for families dealing with continence difficulties is the laundry service, although not all local authorities offer this. Where available it is usually attached to the home help service of the social services department. In other areas this is operated by the NHS.

Families with severely disabled children can apply for help with washing, such as a washing machine, from the Family Fund. See 'Financial help' (page 6).

The following organisations provide further practical information and advice on continence issues:

### **Education and Resources for improving Childhood Continence (ERIC),**

34 Old School House, Britannia Road, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 8DB Tel: 0117 960 3060

e-mail: [info@eric.org.uk](mailto:info@eric.org.uk)

Web: <http://www.eric.org.uk>

**Continence Foundation**, 307 Hatton Square, 16 Baldwins Gardens, London EC1N 7RJ  
Tel 0845 345 0165

e-mail: [continence.foundation@dial.pipex.com](mailto:continence.foundation@dial.pipex.com)

Web: <http://www.continence-foundation.org.uk>

### **Information on local health services:**

Northern Ireland - Web: <http://www.n-i.nhs.uk>

Scotland - Web: <http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk>

England - Web: <http://www.nhs.uk>

Wales - Web: <http://www.wales.nhs.uk>

## Mobility

Any concerns about your child's mobility should first of all be discussed with the GP who can then make a referral to the physiotherapist at your local hospital. There your child's mobility needs will be assessed. Basic walking aids can be provided on loan from the local hospital or community health service usually on the recommendation of the physiotherapist.

Assessment and provision of a wheelchair (powered, attendant-controlled powered or manual wheelchairs) is carried out by your local NHS wheelchair service. In Wales the Artificial Limb and Appliance Service (ALAS) is responsible for providing the wheelchair service. Children's buggies can also be supplied through the wheelchair service.

The service should help you to choose a wheelchair that meets your child's needs. This includes extras such as cushions, armrests or trays. Your GP, local health centre, physiotherapist or occupational therapist should be able to tell you where your local wheelchair service is. Families in Wales and England can ring NHS Direct on 0845 4647; and in Scotland families should ring NHS 24 on 0845 4 24 24 24.

The wheelchair is supplied to someone whose need for a chair is permanent. The service will also be responsible for its maintenance, provided any problems are not caused by misuse or neglect. You should be given the number for a local approved repairer who will be responsible for repairs.

Theoretically any wheelchair can be supplied by the NHS wheelchair service. However, this will depend on local criteria, resources available and the circumstances of the individual. In Scotland there are national criteria for provision of powered wheelchairs.

Usually you have to buy outdoor electric wheelchairs, scooters or specialist sports chairs. If you're dissatisfied with the choice available and require something other than a standard chair, then you may wish to consider the wheelchair voucher scheme (England only). This allows you to pay the difference between the costs of a basic manual wheelchair provided by the wheelchair service to a more expensive wheelchair of your choice. Additional sources of help with wheelchairs include:

**Whizz-Kidz**, Elliot House, 10-12 Allington Road, London SW1E 5EH Tel: 0207 233 6600

e-mail: [info@whizz-kidz.org.uk](mailto:info@whizz-kidz.org.uk)

Web: <http://www.whizz-kidz.org.uk>

*Whizz-Kidz can provide customised mobility equipment for children up to 18 that is not available from the NHS.*

### **Association of Wheelchair Children,**

6 Woodman Parade, North Woolwich, London E16 2LL  
Tel: 0870 121 0050

e-mail: [headoffice@wheelchairchildren.org.uk](mailto:headoffice@wheelchairchildren.org.uk)

Web: <http://www.wheelchairchildren.org.uk>

*Offers training and advice regarding wheelchair use.*



If your child receives the high rate of the Disability Living Allowance mobility component, and have at least 12 months award length remaining, then you can join the Motability Scheme. The scheme can help disabled people hire or buy a car or a powered wheelchair or a buggy. The Motability Wheelchair Scheme is now called 'route2mobility'. For further information contact:

**Motability**, City Gate, 22 Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HB Tel: 0845 456 4566  
Web: <http://www.motability.co.uk>

## Other mobility services

**Mobility Information Service**, 20 Burton Close, Dawley, Telford TF4 2BX Tel: 01743 340 269  
e-mail: [mis@nmcuk.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:mis@nmcuk.freereserve.co.uk)  
Web: <http://www.mis.org.uk>

**MAVIS – (Mobility Advice and Vehicle Information Service)**, Crowthorne Business Estate, Old Wokingham Road, Crowthorne, RG45 6XD  
Tel: 01344 661000  
e-mail: [mavis@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mavis@dft.gsi.gov.uk)  
Web: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/access/mavis>

**Just Mobility**, Unit 3, Ballybot House, Cornmarket, Newry BT35 8BG Tel: 028 3026 8181  
Web: <http://www.just-mobility.co.uk>

**Northern Ireland Mobility Centre**, Portside Business Park, 189 Airport Road West, Belfast BT3 9ED Tel: 028 9029 7880  
e-mail: [hq@disabilityaction.org](mailto:hq@disabilityaction.org)  
Web: <http://www.disabilityaction.org>

**Scottish Driving Assessment Service**, Mobility Centre, Astley Ainslie Centre, 133 Grange Loan, Edinburgh EH9 2HL Tel: 0131 537 9192

Claimants of the highest rate of the DLA mobility component will also be exempt from Vehicle Excise Duty and also qualify for the Blue Badge which entitles the holder to park in certain areas. Further information can be found in Contact Family's factsheet '*Benefits, Tax Credits and other financial assistance*'.

## Education

Aids connected to education may be supplied by local education authorities or the school themselves for use in schools and colleges. The school may arrange for an occupational therapist to assess your child and may provide aids for use in school and at home. Contact the head teacher for further information.

If your child has a statement of special educational needs then details of specific equipment required to help your child at school should be included. If you have concerns about your child's needs then these should be raised with the school.

In Scotland a child's Record of Needs should detail any equipment necessary to meet a child's educational needs. If you're unhappy about the terms of the Record then you can appeal to the local Appeals Committee.

The educational system in Scotland is currently undergoing major change. The old Record of Needs system set up in 1981 will be replaced now that the Scottish Parliament has passed the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act. In Northern Ireland recent legislation, The Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order, will increase rights of children with special educational needs.

Contact a Family's factsheets on Special Educational Needs for Wales, England and Scotland include further advice about your rights and lists other relevant organisations for further help. Families in Northern Ireland can find further advice at:  
Web: <http://www.deni.gov.uk>

As mentioned earlier, speech and language therapy for children is often regarded as an educational provision. Parents should also refer to the 'Communication' section (page 3) of this factsheet.

## Further and higher education

For young disabled people pursuing further and higher education, additional help may be available. This can be in the form of specialist aids and equipment or allowances to help pay for equipment or practical help. To determine what help is necessary this will require a special assessment.

The organisation Skill – National Bureau for Students with Disabilities, can provide further information and advice. They produce a range of information booklets including the information sheet '*Specialist equipment: sources of help and advice*'. This lists equipment available (together with guideline prices), organisations that provide assessments or advice and sources of financial help.

**Skill – National Bureau for Students with Disabilities**, Chapter House, 18 – 20 Crucifix Lane, London SE1 3JW  
Tel: 020 7450 0620 Tel: 0800 328 5050 Information Service (Tues 11.30-1.30 & Thurs 1.30-3.30)  
Web: <http://www.skill.org.uk>

## Play and leisure

All children, including disabled children, have the right to play, have fun and take part in recreational activities. This is important as play has a very important role in a child's development. Play can help develop speech, sensory skills, imagination, independence and social skills. Toys and play can be fun as well as educational and therapeutic. It is crucial that all children, whatever their abilities are given the opportunity to play and access leisure facilities.

For further advice and information on suitable toys you can speak to a paediatric occupational therapist. Through activity and play the paediatric occupational therapist works with children to help them attain the highest possible quality of life. The paediatric occupational therapist can work in a variety of settings including the NHS, social services, educational or charitable organisations.

There may also be a local play scheme or parent support group in your area where toys and ideas can be exchanged. Contact our helpline for local information.

There are a number of commercial outlets and specialist suppliers. Some of these are listed under 'Commercial Suppliers' (page 7). Because there are so many it is important for parents to get the right advice to ensure they get value for money. The following organisations can provide further specialist information:

**National Association of Toy & Leisure Libraries**,  
68 Churchway, London, NW1 1LT Tel: 020 7255 4616  
e-mail: admin@playmatters.co.uk  
Web: <http://www.natll.org.uk>  
*For details of any local toy and leisure libraries in your area.*

**Listening Books**, 12 Lant Street, London, SE1 1QH  
Tel: 020 7407 9417 e-mail: info@listening-books.org.uk  
Web: <http://www.listening-books.org.uk>  
*Provides an audio book library for anyone who has difficulty reading.*

**Bikedock**, 75 - 85 Ravenhill Road, Belfast, BT6 8DQ  
Tel: 0845 062 5500 e-mail: info@bikedock.com  
Web: <http://www.bikedock.com>  
*Can provide adapted cycles and outsized cycle helmets.*

Further information can also be found on the factsheet 'Holidays, play and leisure'. Contact our Helpline (0808 808 3555) for a copy.



## Second hand equipment

The Spinal Injuries Association and Disabled Living Foundation produce helpful factsheets on buying and selling second hand equipment. The factsheets include details of publications to advertise in and other helpful organisations. Information from the Spinal Injuries Association also lists dealers in second hand wheelchairs and adapted vehicles.

**Spinal Injuries Association**, SIA House, 2 Trueman Place, Oldbrook, Milton Keynes MK6 2HH  
Tel: 0800 980 0501 (9.30-4.30, closed 1-2)  
e-mail: [sia@spinal.co.uk](mailto:sia@spinal.co.uk)  
Web: <http://www.spinal.co.uk>

**Disabled Living Foundation** – see 'Further sources of help and advice' (page 10).

**Disability Equipment Register**, 4 Chatterton Road, Bristol BS37 4BJ Tel: 01454 318818  
email: [disabreg@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:disabreg@blueyonder.co.uk)  
Web: <http://www.disabilityequipment.org.uk>  
*The Disability Equipment Register lists wanted and second hand items for sale. The register is available on the Internet but families can also subscribe to receive their magazine on a monthly basis.*

See also 'Other Useful Websites' (page 10)

## Financial help Charities and benevolent funds








**Family Fund**, Unit 4, Alpha Court, Monks Cross Drive, Huntington, York YO32 9WN  
Tel: 0845 130 45 42  
Web: <http://www.familyfund.org.uk>  
*The Family Fund gives grants to families caring for a severely disabled child and on a low income. The Fund will not help in areas considered to be the responsibility of the local authority or health services.*

**Association of Charity Officers**, Five Ways, 57/59 Hatfield Road, Potters Bar EN6 1HS Tel: 01707 651 777  
Web: <http://www.aco.uk.net>  
*The Association of Charity Officers (ACO) can identify other relevant charities which may be able to help.*

The Contact a Family Helpline can also provide information about grant giving trusts.

## Benefits and tax credits

The following is a summary of some of the main benefits and tax credits which may be available to families with disabled children:

-  **Disability Living Allowance (DLA):** This is a tax free benefit for disabled people. It includes an amount for children with extra care needs and an amount for children with mobility problems.
-  **Carers Allowance:** Paid to claimants providing at least 35 hours care each week to someone receiving the middle or high rate of DLA care component. In addition, the carer must not be earning more than £77 each week (after expenses) and must not be a full time student.
-  **Child Tax Credit:** A means-tested tax credit for people with dependant children.
-  **Working Tax Credit:** Available to top up the earnings of working people.
-  **Income Support:** An income related benefit available to people who cannot work, or work reduced hours due to sickness or caring responsibilities.
-  **Social Fund payments:** Administered by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), available mainly to claimants on Income Support. Help is available in the form of an interest free loan or grant. Some grants and loans are discretionary and the fund is limited – an award will depend on local demand and priorities. Not all applications will therefore succeed. Others grants must be paid if you meet the qualifying conditions, for example Sure Start Maternity Grants.
-  **Council Tax:** Help is available in the form of Council Tax Benefit for families on a low income. Also, a reduction on the council tax band for your property may apply where certain adaptations have taken place or where there is a wheelchair user in the home. A discount may also be available where certain member's of the household are treated as 'invisible'.

To ensure that entitlements are maximised and you're not losing out contact your nearest advice service for a full benefits check. Your nearest advice service may also be able to supply information on local trusts. For information on benefits and local advice agencies call the Contact a Family helpline. Our free factsheets '*Benefits, Tax Credits and other financial assistance*' and '*The Tax Credits Guide*' give further detailed advice. Contact our helpline for copies.

## Value Added Tax (VAT)

Certain aids and equipment for disabled people are zero-rated. This means they are not subject to VAT. Aids qualify for zero-rating if they are designed solely for use by a disabled person. The supplier may require a form of declaration confirming that the equipment in question is for use by a disabled person as prescribed under the Value Added Tax Act 1994. There is no official form for declaration but samples are printed in the VAT Notice 701/7 - VAT Reliefs for People with Disabilities. This can be downloaded from Customs and Excise  
Web: <http://www.hmce.gov.uk/forms/notices/701-07.htm>  
Alternatively, contact our helpline for further advice.

Note: The relief will not apply to general purpose goods which are of benefit to disabled people. For example an electrically operated garage door might benefit a disabled person or family with a disabled child but because this has not been designed for sole use by a disabled person that item will not be zero-rated. The rules are contained within the above mentioned VAT Notice.

You can also contact the Custom and Excise National Advice Service on 0845 010 9000, open Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 8.00pm. If you would like to speak to someone in Welsh telephone 0845 010 0300 open Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 6.00pm. Textphone service is available on 0845 000 0200, open Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 8.00pm.

## Commercial suppliers

There are many commercial suppliers of aids and equipment which also operate mail order services. Because of the vast range it is important to seek independent advice. The following is a list of some of those suppliers. Please note that their appearance on this list should not be seen as an endorsement by Contact a Family of their products:

**Chailey Heritage Clinical Services**, Beggars Wood Road, North Chailey, Lewes BN8 4JN Tel: 01825 722112

**DCS Joncare Ltd**, 4 Radley Road Industrial Estate, Abingdon OX14 3RY Tel: 01235 523353  
e-mail: [management@dcsjoncare.freeserve.com](mailto:management@dcsjoncare.freeserve.com)  
Web: <http://www.dcsjoncare.com>

**Lisclare Ltd**, Unit 4 - 5, Montgomery Business Park, Montgomery Road, Belfast BT6 6AD  
Tel: 028 9079 4000 Web: <http://www.lisclare.com>  
email: [services@lisclare.com](mailto:services@lisclare.com)

**Nottingham Rehab Supplies**, Novara House, Excelsior Road, Ashby Park, Ashby de la Zouch LE65 1NG  
Tel: 0845 120 4522 Web: <http://www.nrs-uk.co.uk>

## Play equipment

**tfh Special Needs Ltd**, 5-7 Severnside Business Park,  
Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 9HB Tel: 01299 827820  
e-mail: tfh@tfhuk.com Web: <http://www.tfhuk.com/caf.asp>  
*TFH donate 10% of sales via this link to Contact a Family*

**Spacekraft Ltd**, Titus House, 29 Saltaire Road, Shipley  
BD18 3HH Tel: 01274 581007  
e-mail: enquiries@spacekraft.co.uk  
Web: <http://www.spacekraft.co.uk>

**Rompa International**, Goyt Side Road, Chesterfield S40 2PH  
Tel: 0800 056 2323 e-mail: sales@rompa.com  
Web: <http://www.rompa.com>

**Mike Ayres & Co Ltd**, The Paddock, Dore, Sheffield  
S17 3LD Tel: 0114 235 6880  
e-mail: enquiry@mike-ayres.co.uk  
Web: <http://www.mike-ayres.co.uk>

**Hope Educational**, Hyde Buildings, Ashton Road, Hyde  
SK14 4SH Tel: 0161 367 2000  
e-mail: orders@hope-education.co.uk  
Web: <http://www.hope-education.co.uk>

**Galt Educational**, Johnsonbrook Road, Hyde SK14 4QT  
Tel: 0845 120 3005 e-mail: orders@galt-educational.co.uk

## Consumer rights

When purchasing goods you have a right to expect certain standards. This applies when buying in person or by mail order. Should something go wrong and/or you're dissatisfied with the service or the goods then you can first of all try contacting the supplier. Should this fail then seek further specialist advice. It is important to do so as soon as possible as your rights may depend on when the transaction took place - you could find that you're out of time.

Your local advice service or Trading Standards service can provide further advice. Information on your rights, produced by the Trading Standards Central, which is a government department, can be downloaded from  
Web: <http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/index.cfm>

Consumers in Northern Ireland have separate site where further information can be obtained,  
Web: <http://tinyurl.co.uk/8jrm>

Consumer Direct  
Tel: 0845 404 05 06  
Web: <http://www.consumerdirect.gov.uk>

## Adapting your home

If you need to adapt your home to make it easier for you or your child to manage then you may be entitled to a Disabled Facilities Grant (or Home Improvement Grant if you live in Scotland). For anyone considering an application for a grant it is advisable to seek further help and advice as the system can prove quite complex.

## Disabled Facilities Grants (England and Wales)

To be eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) you must be an owner occupier, tenant (private, local authority or housing association) or landlord with a disabled tenant. The grant can help with the cost of works such as building safe play areas, installing a stair-lift, adapting a lighting or heating system, or building a new bathroom facility. Whatever the proposed works it must be agreed that these are '*necessary and appropriate*' in meeting the disabled person's needs. Also the works must be '*reasonable and practicable*' and this will take into account the age and condition of the property.

The means test on parents of disabled children for DFGs was abolished for families in Wales from 30th September 2005. The government has just announced its intention to abolish the means test on parents of disabled children and young disabled people in England from December 2005. At the moment, and until the means test is abolished, families' resources are taken into account when assessing how much grant is payable. For more information please ring the Contact a Family Helpline.

If the works are to help a disabled adult in the house - including a young person who is no longer a dependant for benefit purposes (over 16, or over 19 if still in full-time, non-advanced education) - it is the income and savings of the disabled adult or young person which are assessed.

The announcement quickly followed the publication of an independent report on DFGs, commissioned by the Government. A review of the overall scheme is still under way. Further information about the recent announcement and the review can be found on the website of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Web: <http://www.odpm.gov.uk>

Mandatory grants are awarded where the works are considered essential to enable better access and movement around the home and to essential facilities within it. The grant can also cover the costs of building essential facilities where necessary. The maximum grant payable is £25,000 in England and £30,000 in Wales. Note: If the costs exceed the limit then the council has the discretion to give a further grant covering the full costs of the mandatory works.

Local Authorities now have new increased discretionary powers to provide financial and other assistance for improvements or repairs to the home. This can be in the form of a grant, loan, labour, materials or advice. Contact

your local housing authority to find out how these new powers apply in your area. Application forms are available from the local housing or environmental health department.

Once a formal application has been made the council must make a decision within 6 months. In reaching a final decision the housing department is required to consult with the social services department to be satisfied that the works are 'necessary and appropriate'. **It is important to note that applications for works already carried out will not be considered.**

## Disabled Facilities Grants (Northern Ireland)

The system for receiving help with adaptations in Northern Ireland is similar to that for Wales and England. However since 16 February 2004 **parents or people with parental responsibilities are no longer means tested for a Disabled Facilities Grant.** This means that the financial circumstances of families will not be taken into account. You should not be asked about any income or outgoings.

The maximum grant payable is £25,000 and it will be necessary for an Occupational Therapist to recommend that the adaptations are 'necessary and appropriate' for the disabled child.

Note if you were awarded a grant previously and had to contribute towards the costs of the works under the old system you will not get your contribution back. Families who applied previously but require further help due to a change in need can now apply and not be means-tested.

These changes only apply to home owners or those who rent in the private sector. Different arrangements exist for families who live in Public Sector Housing. These are Housing Executive or Housing Association tenants.

Applicants in Northern Ireland should contact their local housing executive office for a Preliminary Enquiry Form.

## Home Improvement Grants (Scotland)

Grants are currently available from the housing authority to help with adaptations, but only if you're a homeowner or private tenant. Council tenants and Scottish Homes tenants should approach their landlords for help to adapt their homes. Housing associations should arrange to have the work carried out for those tenants assessed as needing the adaptation.

Before any assistance can be considered the social work department will carry out an assessment of the disabled person's needs to determine if the works are necessary. It is also worth noting that grants can be awarded for works to property the disabled occupant intends to move in to.

In most cases the council can decide whether to give a grant or not. However mandatory grants are available in certain circumstances e.g. for the installation of additional



standard amenities (such as a bath, shower, sink, wash hand basin or toilet) required by a disabled occupant.

Councils can usually only give grants for work costing up to £20,000 although they can apply to the Scottish Executive to go above that limit if there are good reasons. The actual amount of any grant you receive will depend on a means test of your income. For certain types of work (including adaptations required to make a property suitable for a disabled occupant) a minimum grant of 50% of costs is available regardless of income. If you are entitled to more than 50% under the means test then you will get the higher figure. Most state benefits are not counted as income. Anyone in receipt of income support, income based job seekers allowance or the guarantee element of Pension Credit should be passported to a 100% grant.

You must not start work on any adaptations before your application has been approved in writing - otherwise you will not be eligible for a grant.

The local council will give you an application form and tell you what information they will need to process the application. This may include information about income and savings.

## Challenging decisions

If you're unhappy about the outcome of an application for a grant, or the length of time it has taken to reach a decision then seek further advice. Ways of challenging decisions include talking to your local councillor, complaining using the local authority complaints procedure or asking the local government ombudsman to investigate. A local citizen's advice bureau or home improvement agency (see 'Getting further help and advice' below) may be able to give additional advice.

## Getting further help and advice

Home improvement agencies, sometimes called 'care and repair agencies', exist to help home owners or private tenants improve their living conditions. This involves giving technical and financial advice as well as help and guidance through the application process for grants. They may also be able to identify other sources of financial help if the grant isn't enough.

For information about local agencies in **England** contact Foundations on 01457 891 909. For **Scotland** contact Care and Repair Scotland on 0141 221 9879. For **Wales** contact Care and Repair Cymru on 029 2057 6286.

If you live in **Northern Ireland** a local disability advice project should be able to help further. Families in Northern Ireland can also visit the website of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive where a number of helpful publications can be downloaded, Web: <http://www.nihe.gov.uk/publications>  
This includes the booklet 'Adapting your own home, A Step by Step Guide for People with Disabilities'. You can also contact our Northern Ireland office, Tel: 028 9262 7552  
e-mail: [nireland@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:nireland@cafamily.org.uk)

For families in **Scotland**, more detailed information can be found within the guide 'Housing Grants – An applicant's guide to improvement and repair grants for private housing' available from the Scottish Executive, Housing Division 2, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ. This can also be downloaded from Web: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/housing/hogr.pdf>  
You can also contact our Scotland office, Tel: 0131 475 2608 e-mail: [scotland@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:scotland@cafamily.org.uk)

Families in England and Wales can find further information about Disabled Facilities Grants on the website of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Web: <http://www.tinyurl.com/a37xz>

## Further sources of help and advice

**Disabled Living Foundation**, 380-384 Harrow Road, London W9 2HU Tel: 0845 130 9177 Helpline (Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm) Textphone: 020 7432 8009 Tel: 020 7289 6111 e-mail: [info@dlf.org.uk](mailto:info@dlf.org.uk)  
Web: <http://www.dlf.org.uk>

*The Disabled Living Foundation (DLF) produces a comprehensive range of factsheets on choosing children's daily living equipment. This includes advice on equipment for children who need help to dress, personal care (toileting, bathing, washing) and beds and bed accessories. The factsheets can be downloaded from their website or you can ring the equipment helpline where up-to-date product and supplier information can also be given.*

**The Disabled Living Centres Council (DLCC)**, Redbank House, 4 St Chads Street, Manchester M8 8QA

Tel: 0870 770 2866 e-mail: [dlcc@dlcc.org.uk](mailto:dlcc@dlcc.org.uk)

Web: <http://www.dlcc.org.uk>

*Disabled Living Centres (DLCs) have on display a wide range of products enabling people to see and try products which may suit their needs. They also offer free and independent advice about what is available, costs and suppliers, and information on your nearest centre.*

### Independent Living

Web: <http://www.independentliving.co.uk>

*Organise a number of exhibitions where you can view aids and equipment for disabled people such as the Naidex, Independent Living London, and Independent Living Scotland exhibitions.*

### REMAP – Technical Aid for Disabled People

Hazeldene, Ightham, Sevenoaks TN15 9AD

Tel: 0845 1300 456 e-mail: [info@remap.org.uk](mailto:info@remap.org.uk)

Web: <http://www.remap.org.uk>

*REMAP designs and manufactures aids and equipment for disabled people where nothing suitable is available commercially or through health and social services.*

**Ricability**, 30 Angel Gate, City Road, London EC1V 2PT

Tel: 020 7427 2460 Textphone: 020 7427 2469

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

Web: <http://www.ricability.org.uk>

*Ricability provides consumer guides for disabled people, and tests and evaluates specific products for disabled people. Guides are available on request or through their website.*

**Abilitynet**, PO Box 94, Warwick CV34 5WS

Tel: 0800 269545 Helpline Tel: 01926 312847

e-mail: [enquiries@abilitynet.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@abilitynet.co.uk)

Web: <http://www.abilitynet.co.uk>

*Abilitynet offers advice and information, training and suppliers of computers and software for disabled children and adults. This includes advice on sources of financial assistance from charitable trusts.*

**British Red Cross**, 9 Grosvenor Crescent, London

SW1X 7EJ Tel. 020 7235 5454

Tel: 020 7201 5142 (Community Department)

Web: <http://www.redcross.org.uk>

*The British Red Cross has a network of medical loan depots which can lend aids and equipment, including wheelchairs. Details of the nearest depot are available from your local branch of the British Red Cross Society (see your local telephone directory).*

## Other Useful Websites

### Disabilitynet

Web: <http://www.disabilitynet.co.uk>

### Youreable

Web: <http://www.youreable.com>

### Ebay

Web: <http://www.ebay.co.uk>



## Frequently asked questions

**I bought a trike for my disabled son and was told by the supplier that I had to claim back the VAT. How can I do this ?**

First of all, you need to establish whether or not the trike should be zero rated (see Value Added Tax (VAT) on page 7). To reiterate the advice given above, the relief will not apply to general purpose goods which are of benefit to disabled people. Therefore, unless the trike has been designed solely for use by a disabled person then this will not be zero rated. You should also be aware that refunds for VAT are not made to the customer.

The supplier should indicate whether or not the item in question is subject to VAT. The Customs and Excise National Advice Service can supply further advice about your rights.

**With help from the Disabled Facilities Grants Scheme (Disabled Persons' Allowance in Northern Ireland) I have just turned one of my reception rooms into a special playroom for my disabled child. I've been advised that I can receive some help with the Council Tax because of this. Is this true?**

This is possible under the Disability Reduction Scheme. Where a property has been altered in a certain way to accommodate the needs of a disabled person then the 'band' for your property can be lowered. The lower the band, the smaller the bill. In your case you qualify because you have a room which is needed by and predominantly used by a disabled person. Note that if the dwelling is in band 'A', then you can get a reduction of one-sixth of your bill. Note also that the reduction can be fully backdated. Properties in the lowest band already, (A), only have the right to backdate to 1 April 2000.

**I've just enquired about applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant and I've been told by the Occupational Therapist (OT) that there's a waiting list for the assessment. It could be months before I'm seen by the OT and two years before I get a grant. What are my rights?**

The assessment by the OT is a crucial part of the grants process. Following on from the OT's recommendations a formal application is often then submitted to the housing authority. However, you can still make a formal application to the housing authority for the grant before the OT's assessment. This may help speed up the process as the authority are then required to make a decision within 6 months of receiving the application. Within that time the OT will hopefully visit your home to carry out the assessment.

If you don't receive a decision within the time limit then you should write to them asking why you haven't heard anything and request that a decision is made. If there is still no decision then you should seek advice on other possible remedies such as making a complaint using the local authority's complaints procedure or the local government ombudsman. See 'Adapting your home' (page 8) for more info.

**I've purchased a second hand wheelchair from a trader, but I've been told that I don't have the same right's as if bought brand new and I can't return this if there's a fault. Is this true?**

No, you have the same right's as if bought new, and the trader is also obliged to point out any faults before you pay for this. If any faults have been pointed out then this may affect your rights. Contact your nearest advice service or trading standards office for further advice. See 'Consumer Rights' (page 8).

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