

Equipment

A small piece of equipment can make all the difference to the independence and comfort of the person you care for and in turn for yourself as the Carer. However, there is a vast range of equipment available and it may be difficult to decide what would be the most suitable.

The role of the Occupational Therapist (OT)

Occupational Therapists provide expert advice about equipment, its suitability and how it should be used. Firstly, they will make an assessment of the person you care for (the service user). They will assess their abilities and disabilities, and discuss specific problems, the needs of the family and the facilities they have in their home. If the level of assessed need meets the criteria required by your local Community Services then the OT will provide information and advice about entitlement to and availability of equipment.

A prescription for the required equipment will be issued. This can then be exchanged at an approved equipment retailer—your occupational therapist will advise you where you can use the prescription. There is the option to pay extra if the service user wishes to upgrade the prescribed piece of equipment.

Small pieces of equipment can be tried out at your local Independent Living Centre (see Factsheet 14). The approved retailers may also demonstrate deliver and install equipment if required.

Your local Occupational Therapist can be contacted your local Access Team (see Factsheet 14).

Buying and borrowing equipment

You can choose to purchase your own equipment. It is worth trying out equipment before buying it. Disabled Living Foundation Centres are also able to offer expert advice. As part of their service, they develop, test and identify suppliers of a vast range of equipment. Visits can be made to the centres, the nearest of which are in Manchester and Liverpool.

There are lots of catalogues of small daily living aids. Voluntary organisations such as the British Red Cross have a Mail Order Service. Local Pharmacists may also be able to provide catalogues and small pieces of equipment. The Princess Royal Trust for Carers website has links to several websites of equipment suppliers. Detailed information on essential equipment and items for leisure and education specifically for children with special needs can be obtained from an organisation called Contact a Family. Please refer

to Factsheet 14, Contacts for Carers for contact details.

Second Hand Equipment

As with the purchase of any second hand equipment, care must be taken with regard to safety, servicing and quality. Reconditioned equipment may be available from equipment retail outlets. Second hand equipment may also be available on the Internet.

Value Added Tax (VAT)

Items of equipment, which are specifically intended for disabled people, rather than being generally helpful for a person with particular needs, can be free from VAT.

Funding

Some larger pieces of equipment can be expensive and funding for such items should be discussed with the Occupational Therapist before any purchase is made. If the equipment is part of a major adaptation to the house, it is possible that it may be funded through the Disabled Facilities Grant. However, this is dependant on individual circumstances and eligibility to entitlement to the grant. For adults caring for children with disabilities, household income is excluded from the assessment for eligibility. It may also be possible to get help from local charities or national organisations, which have welfare grants to support people with specific disabilities or illnesses.

Please contact Cheshire Carers Centre for more information on all of the above. Call the freephone Helpline on 0800 085 0307.