

Darlington Association on Disability

Information guide

Equipment

The correct equipment for independent living is vital to disabled people and carers. But, the range of products available can seem endless. This section aims to help you find the right equipment through sources of practical advice and support.

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Where to Start

Your local health and social services should support you to assess your needs and may also provide suitable equipment for you.

Social Services supplies aids and adaptations to assist with daily living tasks and health services provide equipment to assist with medical needs. Your first point of contact with **Social Services** should be through the Access and Contact team who can put you in touch with the occupational therapy service. Occupational Therapists (OTs) should assess the type of equipment needed to make everyday tasks, like cooking and personal care, easier and safer for you. They should also show you how to use it.

Equipment for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, such as textphones, flashing or vibrating alarm clocks and door bells and loop systems can sometimes be provided. Simple alterations or adaptations can also be arranged, such as handrails and hoists. For larger alterations you may be asked to contribute to the costs, depending upon your circumstances.

The National Health Service provides equipment of a medical nature. Your first point of contact with any of these services should be your GP or nurse practitioner, who may be able to help you directly or refer you to more specialist services. GPs can prescribe items from an approved list such as elastic stockings and wound dressings. Contact the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service** (PALS) if you are not registered with a local GP. For other equipment and adaptations your GP or health professional can refer you to specialist services. For example:

The Wheelchair Clinic assesses your mobility needs at home or in hospital. Equipment is usually provided for long term loan only. Usually you have to buy outdoor electric wheelchairs, electric scooters or specialist sports wheelchairs for yourself. However the service may be able to provide you with a powered indoor or outdoor wheelchair, subject to your assessed needs.

Physiotherapists can recommend walking aids, like walking sticks, frames and crutches. These are free on loan from most hospitals, but a deposit is sometimes required.

Disablement Services Centres supply, maintain and repair artificial limbs at no charge. Specialists should prescribe the limb best suited to your needs and also provide walking or arm training.

People with a physical impairment and high level support needs may be provided with an environmental control system. The system links a wide range of home equipment, such as alarms, door locks, telephones, lights, curtains, beds, communication aids and computers, to a central control. It is provided on loan and maintained and serviced free of charge.

The Hospital Eye Service can provide you with low vision aids, such as magnifiers, if you have a visual impairment.

Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) Departments and Hearing Aid Centres are able to provide hearing aids, including testing, fitting and servicing. The service is free, including batteries.

Speech and Language Therapists are able to assess needs and advice on the most suitable communication aids. These range from charts with picture symbols, letters or words to electronic voice output devices and adapted computers.

You may need to contribute towards the cost of certain items, depending upon your income.

Information and Advice

Ability Magazine aims to promote an inclusive society by listing, describing and exploring various types of information technology. Each issue covers products, techniques and skills needed to deliver systems for disabled people who find it difficult to use standard software and hardware. It is aimed at both individual users and those responsible for the design of systems in the workplace.

Disabled Living Centres offer you the opportunity to see and try out a wide range of products to find out what suits your particular needs. Advice is free and independent with details of product availability, cost and companies to purchase from. The two nearest centres in the region are based at the **Pioneering Care Partnership** in Newton Aycliffe and at **Disability North** in Newcastle.

The **Disabled Living Foundation** (DLF) promotes independence through practical information and advice regarding equipment. It can provide details of cost, suppliers, dimensions etc. on thousands of daily living aids from alarms to zip pullers. DLF offers a telephone helpline; letter enquiry service; subscription service to a directory of equipment and several detailed publications ranging from fact sheets/product guides to specialist resource packs.

Action for Blind People has a mobile information and advice service which has a range of equipment for people with a visual impairment, including daily living aids and both high and low-tech items. Suppliers catalogues are also available.

RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind) sells a variety of equipment for blind and partially sighted people. They have a resource centre where equipment can be tried out.

RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf People) provides information and advice regarding equipment for people with hearing impairments. It produces a catalogue of daily living aids for the home and the office. It is able to conduct site surveys outlining the most appropriate equipment for businesses/public buildings.

Naidex is an annual exhibition of equipment and services for disabled people. The national event takes place in Birmingham. **Disability North** organises a regional Naidex. National and regional manufacturers attend, giving you an opportunity to try out pieces of equipment.

Ricability is the trading name of the Research Institute for Consumer Affairs (RICA). It is dedicated to providing independent information of value to disabled and older consumers. It publishes consumer reports based on rigorous research and provides practical information needed by disabled and older consumers.

Buying and Borrowing Equipment

Nationally there are many suppliers of equipment and this guide cannot hope to list them all. Some examples are given below, but for a greater selection search the internet.

Boots "Easier Living" range has a wide variety of items which can be posted or delivered to your nearest branch. Home delivery is available from selected stores.

UK Shopability is an on-line shopping service for disabled people. It provides contact with suppliers who offer a wide range of products, designed to support independent living for disabled people, older people and people with a medical condition or injury. You can buy online, or make an appointment to see a disability services specialist who can help you choose the best products for your own particular requirements.

Betterlifehealthcare.com is an on-line UK national mobility, disability and healthcare product supplier.

REMAP (Rehabilitation Engineering Advisory Panel) is able to design and provide information on items of equipment, which may be outside the range of standard aids and equipment currently available on the market.

The **Red Cross Medical Loan Service** available through local branches can lend equipment including wheelchairs, walking frames and commodes, to meet urgent short-term needs. There may be a handling fee.

Shopmobility schemes throughout the country loan manual/electric wheelchairs and scooters. This can either be on a daily or longer basis. Some schemes charge for this service. Contact Darlington Shopmobility for information about local and national services.

RADAR produces a fact sheet listing organisations that hire a selection of equipment. This includes the hire of wheelchairs, hoists, cars and bathing equipment.

Various publications and internet sites advertise secondhand equipment, which may offer a cheaper alternative to buying new equipment. Contact **Darlington Association on Disability** for a list of journals that advertise secondhand equipment and information regarding local, regional and national companies/organisations which sell, hire or provide items of equipment.

Darlington Association on Disability also has a list of local equipment and mobility suppliers in the Darlington area.

Value Added Tax (VAT)

When VAT was introduced into the UK it was agreed that disabled people should not have to incur the tax when buying items designed solely for their use or when having equipment adapted so they would be able to use it. The following goods may qualify for relief, some medical and surgical appliances, certain adjustable beds, chair lifts, hoists, lifts, emergency alarm call systems and specifically designed or adapted vehicles. Other equipment and appliances designed solely for disabled people may also be exempt. The local HM Revenue and Customs office (Formally the Inland Revenue office) or equipment supplier should be able to advise.

Other Sources of Information

Other sections of the Darlington Association on Disability Information Guide may contain further information relevant to finding and using equipment.

The **Employment** section deals with assistance or equipment available through the Employment Service.

The **Education** section gives information about equipment available to assist with education or training.

The **Housing** section covers housing adaptations.

The section on **Living Independently** gives information on the Lifeline telephone system.

The **Health** section describes health services in more detail.

There are a number of local and national organisations providing broad information and advice resources. Please refer to this guide's Introduction for contact details.

Contact **Darlington Association on Disability's** Information Service for assistance with searching for information about any subject in this guide or for support in dealing with your information requests.

Contacts

Ability Magazine

John Lamb Media Ltd

Dairy Cottages

Wolverton

Norfolk

NR11 7LX

Telephone : 01263 768572

Fax :

Minicom :

E-mail : John.Lamb@abilitymagazine.org.uk

Website : www.abilitymagazine.org

Action for Blind People

14-16 Verney Road

London

SE16 3DZ

Telephone : 020 7635 4800

Information & Advice Service National Helpline : 0800 915 4666

Mobile Information Service 020 7635 4800 or 07850 209490

Fax : 020 7635 4900

Minicom :

Email : info@afbp.org

Website : www.afbp.org

Betterlifehealthcare.com

56 Liverpool Road

Penwortham

Preston

PR1 0DQ

Telephone : 0800 328 9338

Fax : 01772 747297

Minicom :

Email: info@betterlifehealthcare.com

Website : www.betterlifehealthcare.com

Boots the Chemist

47-53 Northgate

Darlington

DL1 1TT

Telephone : 01325 462697

Fax :

Minicom :

E-mail : contact through website

Website : www.boots.com

23 High Row

Darlington

DL3 7QW

Telephone : 01325 462683

Fax :

Minicom :

E-mail : contact through website

Website : www.boots.com

British Red Cross

Medical Loans Service

Gladstone Street Resource Centre

Gladstone Street

Darlington

DL3 6JX

Telephone : 01325 749643 Tuesdays, Wednesdays and
Thursdays 10am - 1pm

Telephone : 01388 812812 at other times

Fax :

Minicom :

E-mail :

Website :

Darlington Association on Disability

20-22 Horsemarket

Darlington

DL1 5PT

Telephone 01325 489 999

Fax : 01325 488 188

Minicom : 01325 245 061

Email : mail@darlingtondisability.org

Website : www.darlingtondisability.org

Darlington Social Services

Access and Contact team

Central House

Gladstone Street

Darlington

DL3 6JX

Telephone : 01325 346200

Fax: 01325 346474

Minicom : 01325 360862

E-mail :

Website : www.darlington.gov.uk

Disability North

The Dene Centre

Castle Farm Road

Gosforth

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE3 1PH

Telephone : 0191 284 0480

Fax : 0191 213 0910

Text Direct : 18001 0191 284 0480

E-mail : reception@disabilitynorth.org.uk

Website : www.disabilitynorth.org.uk

Disabled Living Foundation

380 - 384 Harrow Road

London

W9 2HU

Telephone : 020 7289 6111

Helpline : 0845 130 9177

Fax :

Minicom : 020 7432 8009

E-mail : contact through website

Website : www.dlf.org.uk

HM Revenue and Customs

Inland Revenue

Tees Valley Area

George Stephenson House

St Mark's Court

Thornaby

Stockton on tees
TS17 6QP
Telephone : 0845 366 7865
Fax :
E-mail :
Website :

Patient Advisory and Liaison Service

Darlington Primary Care Trust

Dr Piper House

King Street

Darlington

DL3 6JL

Telephone : 0800 7835774

Fax :

Minicom :

Email : sandra.guy@darlingtonpct.nhs.uk

Website : www.darlingtonpct.nhs.uk/pals.asp

Pioneering Care Partnership

Cobblers Hall

Off Burn Lane

Newton Aycliffe

DL5 4SF

Telephone : 01325 321234

Fax :

Minicom :

E-mail : enquiries@pcp.uk.net

Website : www.pcp.uk.net

RADAR

12 City Forum

250 City Road

London

EC1V 8AF

Telephone : 020 7250 3222

Fax : 020 7250 0212

Minicom : 020 7250 4119

E-mail : radar@radar.org.uk

Website : www.radar.org.uk

REMAP

National Organiser

D9 Chaucer Business Park

Kemsing

Sevenoaks

Kent

TN15 6YU

Telephone : 0845 130 0456

Fax : 0845 130 0789

Minicom :

E-mail :

Website : www.remap.org.uk

REMAP North

Terry Long

2 Priest Cottage

Marton cum Grafton

YORK

YO51 9QY

Telephone : 01423 323054 or 0845 1300456

Fax : 0845 1300789

E-mail : info@remap.org.uk

northern-region@remap.org.uk

Website : www.remap.org.uk

Ricability

30 Angel Gate

City Road

London

EC1V 2PT

Telephone : 020 7427 2460

Fax : 020 7427 2468

Minicom : 020 7427 2469

E-mail: mail@ricability.org.uk

Website : www.ricability.org.uk

Royal National Institute of the Blind

105 Judd Street

London

WC1H 9NE

Telephone : 020 7388 1266

Helpline : 0845 766 9999

Fax : 020 7388 2034

Minicom :

E-mail : contact through website

Website : www.rnib.org.uk

Royal National Institute for the Deaf

19-23 Featherstone Street

London

EC1Y 8SL

Telephone : 020 7296 8000

Fax : 020 7296 8199

Minicom : 020 7296 8001

E-mail: informationline@rnid.org.uk

Website : www.rnid.org.uk

RNID Manchester Office

Aeroworks

5 Adair Street

Manchester

M1 2NQ

Telephone : 0161 276 2301

Fax : 0161 274 3606

Minicom : 0161 276 2302

E-mail : information.north@rnid.org.uk

Website : www.rnid.org.uk

ShopAbility

Ability Media Ltd

BIC

Sunderland Enterprise Park

Sunderland

SR5 2TA

Telephone : 0191 516 6848

Fax : 0191 516 6849

Minicom :

E-mail :

Website : www.ukshopability.co.uk

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