

Creating a More Accessible Home

**A Parent Carer's Guide to
Equipment, Adaptations and
Independence**



Welcome

Welcome to your Creating a More Accessible Home Guide

Home should be a place where your child feels safe, comfortable and able to be themselves.

For families of children and young people with additional needs, creating that environment isn't always straightforward. Everyday tasks that many people take for granted—getting dressed, having a bath, moving around the house, communicating, sleeping or simply feeling safe—can sometimes require a little extra support.

The good news is that support comes in many forms.

When people hear the words equipment or adaptations, they often picture hospital beds, hoists or major building work. While these can be life-changing for some families, accessibility is about so much more than that.

This guide has been created to help you understand the different types of equipment, technology, adaptations and services that may be available to support your child and your family.

Our aim isn't to tell you what your family needs—because every child is different. Instead, we want to introduce you to the possibilities that exist, so you can make informed choices and feel confident asking the right questions.

Above all, remember this:

Accessibility isn't about changing your child. It's about changing the environment around them so they can thrive.

Team Choice



Where Do I Start?

Your step-by-step guide to getting the right support



You notice a difficulty

You may notice your child is finding everyday tasks difficult or that something isn't working.



Speak to a practitioner

Speak to someone involved in your child's care, such as your GP, school, Health Visitor, or a therapist.



Referral for an assessment

If appropriate, a referral will be made to a specialist service that can assess your child's needs.



Assessment

A practitioner will assess your child's needs, daily routines and environment. This may include a visit to your home.



Recommendations

You will receive recommendations for equipment, adaptations or technology to help support your child.



Equipment or adaptations are arranged

Equipment may be loaned, provided or funded through various services. Adaptations may be arranged through your Local Authority or other funding routes.



Review as your child grows

Children's needs change. Regular reviews will help make sure the support continues to meet your child's needs.



Remember: There isn't a "perfect" time to ask for help. Early support can make everyday life safer, easier and more enjoyable for the whole family.



What Do We Mean By Equipment?

When people hear the words equipment or adaptations, they often imagine wheelchairs, hoists, hospital beds, or major building work. While these can be important supports for some families, equipment is much broader than many people realise.

Equipment is anything that helps your child be safer, more comfortable, more independent, or better able to take part in everyday life. Sometimes the right piece of equipment can make a significant difference to a child's wellbeing and reduce stress for the whole family.

Importantly, equipment is not just for children with physical disabilities. Children with autism, ADHD, learning disabilities, sensory differences, medical conditions, mental health needs, or complex additional needs may also benefit from equipment and adaptations.

Safety Supports

Some equipment can help keep children safe at home and in the community.

Examples include:

- Door and window alarms
- GPS trackers
- Bed guards
- Safety gates
- Video doorbells
- Sensor systems



Smart Lighting

Daily Living Supports

These can help children become more independent with everyday tasks.

Examples include:

- Adapted cutlery
- Specialist seating
- Bath seats
- Shower chairs
- Dressing aids
- Toilet supports



Assistive Technology

Technology can often provide simple, low-cost solutions to everyday challenges.

Examples include:

- Smart speakers such as Alexa or Google Home
- Medication reminders
- Visual timer apps
- Smart plugs
- Routine and scheduling apps
- Smart watches



Equipment does not have to be expensive, complicated, or highly specialist to make a difference. Sometimes a small change can have a big impact on your child's confidence, independence, safety, or quality of life.

The most important thing is not the diagnosis your child has, but the barriers they face. The right equipment can help remove those barriers and make everyday life a little easier for everyone.

For families of children with additional needs, "home" takes on an even deeper significance. It's not just a physical space, but a sanctuary where their child's unique needs can be met with comfort and understanding. It's where routines are established, tailored to sensory sensitivities or medical requirements, and where a sense of safety and belonging is fostered.

The Community Therapy Service helps people live a more enjoyable and independent life.

There are a number of teams who work with adults and children who have disabilities and help them to find ways of living independently by learning new skills, adapting their home, or finding specialist equipment to keep people safe, well and fulfilled.

The Occupational Therapist will make an appointment to visit you and undertake an assessment by:

- Asking you some questions about your child's illness or disability and how this affects them
- Asking you about the activities, routines, environments, or situations that your child finds difficult and exploring ways to make these easier, safer, or more accessible.
- Talking to others involved in your care where they can help inform the assessment.

Once the assessment process is complete, the Occupational Therapist will make some suggestions on how best to support your child with the tasks that are important to you and them, and then work with you to agree a way forward together.



They will put you in touch with other people who might be able to help you and may suggest:

- Specialist equipment to help you do things you cannot do independently
- Applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant in order to adapt the environment within your home and working with the Home Improvement Agency to have the funding and works carried out

Myth:

Equipment and adaptations are only for children with physical disabilities.

Truth:

Support may be available for children with a wide range of needs, including physical disabilities, autism, ADHD, sensory differences, learning disabilities, medical conditions, and complex needs.

Disabled facilities Grant (DFG) for Children

The DFG is a grant helps pay for home changes that make life easier for your disabled child. This could be changes to spaces or hoists, lifts etc.

You **do not** have to own the property.

Parents in rented accommodation often think they cannot get adaptations, but this isn't always true.

Actually:

- Council tenants
- Housing Association tenants
- Private tenants (with landlord consent)
- Homeowners

may all be eligible, with landlord permissions.

You can find more information here:



Home Adaptations

Making your home work for your family

For many families, small changes around the home can make a big difference to a child's safety, independence and wellbeing.

Home adaptations are changes made to a property to help a child or young person carry out everyday activities more safely and comfortably. Some adaptations are simple and inexpensive, while others may involve more significant building work.

The right adaptation will always depend on your child's individual needs, your home environment and the goals you are trying to achieve.

Home adaptations may help with:

- Moving safely around the home
- Bathing and personal care
- Sleeping safely and comfortably
- Accessing different areas of the house
- Mealtimes and everyday activities
- Improving independence
- Reducing the risk of injury
- Supporting parent carers with moving and handling

Funding

Some home adaptations may be funded through your local authority or other funding routes following an assessment.

Larger adaptations may be considered through a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) or other local schemes, depending on your circumstances and eligibility.

Funding arrangements vary between local authorities, so your Occupational Therapist or local council will be able to explain what support may be available in your area.

Room-by-Room Home Adaptations

Depending on your child's needs, adaptations may include:

The adaptations a child may benefit from will depend on their individual needs, diagnosis (if they have one), age, abilities and the layout of the property. Some families only need small changes, while others may require larger adaptations to help their child access their home safely and independently.

The examples below are intended to provide ideas of what may be available following an assessment, or items you can self fund to support your child.

Meal Times



- Adapted cutlery
- Non-slip mats
- Plate guards
- Two-handled cups
- Easy-grip utensils

Bedroom



- Ceiling track hoists
- Specialist beds
- Bed safety systems
- Bed rails
- Bed guards
- Adjustable beds
- Sleep systems
- Blackout blinds
- White noise machines
- Visual bedtime routines
- Night lights
- Monitoring systems

Bathroom



- Level-access or walk-in showers
- Grab rails
- Specialist baths
- Shower seating
- Height-adjustable wash basins

Living Room



- Specialist seating
- Supportive cushions
- Beanbags or sensory seating
- Footrests
- Smart lighting
- Voice-controlled devices
- Environmental controls
- Corner protectors
- Visual schedules
- Communication boards
- Sensory equipment

Around the home



- Environmental controls
- Stairlifts (where appropriate)
- Through floor lift
- Improved lighting
- Adapted furniture
- Grab rails
- Motion sensor lighting
- Door alarms
- Door chimes
- Video doorbells
- Slip-resistant flooring
- Permanent ramps
- Automatic doors
- Covered entrance ways
- External pathways
- Accessible parking spaces
- Step-free access
- Porch extensions for wheelchair access
- Low-profile threshold ramps
- Visual door signs
- Door finger guards

Garden & Outdoor Spaces



- Raised planters
- Outdoor sensory equipment
- Accessible seating
- Shade areas
- Secure fencing
- Sensory planting
- Outdoor lighting
- Pathway edging
- Accessible pathways
- Ramped access
- Wheelchair-friendly patios
- Accessible play areas
- Garden rooms
- Outdoor therapy spaces
- Adapted garden buildings

Not every child will need adaptations, and many children only require one or two simple changes to make a significant difference.

The aim is never to make your home look clinical—it's to create a space that is safe, comfortable and supports your child to be as independent as possible.

An Occupational Therapist or other appropriate practitioner can help identify which adaptations are most suitable for your child's individual needs.

Assistive Technology

Sometimes some of the requirements you may need are around safety and independence, maybe not as big as large adaptations, sometimes there maybe just something less extreme needed, such as technology.

The assistive technology team are there to assess your family circumstances and see where tech maybe able to support you as a family.

For example, the support of the assistive technology team could help your children become more independent, using Alexa's, plus gadgets, to turn lights on/off, turn on tvs, open/close blinds, add sensors to know when windows maybe opened, or add Ring doorbells to ensure safety.

We know that not every local authority has an Assistive Technology team, but that does not mean you cannot access the support of smart technology.

Communication

- Communication apps
- Speech-generating devices
- Visual schedules

Sensory Needs

- Smart lighting
- White noise systems
- Environmental controls

Independence

- Smart speakers
- Reminders
- Timers

Learning

- Reading software
- Speech-to-text tools
- Visual organisation apps

Safety

- Door alarms
- Sensors
- Tracking devices



Everyday Technology That Can Make Life Easier

Many pieces of assistive technology are things you may already own or can buy from high street retailers. While they may not be suitable for every family, simple technology can often increase independence, improve safety and reduce stress.

Around the Home

Smart speakers

- Set reminders
- Play calming music
- Answer questions
- Control lights
- Create routines

Mobile phones and tablets

- Visual schedules
- AAC communication
- Medication reminders

Video doorbells

- See who is outside before opening the door
- Support children who become anxious when the doorbell rings
- Improve home security

Smart plugs

- Turn appliances on or off remotely
- Schedule electrical items
- Improve independence

Timers and visual timers

- Toothbrushing
- Homework
- Screen time
- Morning routines

Smart lighting

- Different colours for sensory regulation
- Automatic night lights
- Timers
- Voice-controlled lighting

Mobility, Positioning and Independence Support

Many people associate mobility support with wheelchairs, but support is available for a wide range of needs. Children and young people may benefit from specialist assessments, equipment, or adaptations that help them move around safely, participate in everyday activities, improve comfort, and increase independence.

Support may be available for children or young people who experience:

- Difficulties walking long distances
- Fatigue or reduced stamina
- Balance or coordination difficulties
- Joint or muscle conditions
- Physical disabilities
- Neurological conditions
- Complex medical needs
- Postural challenges
- Progressive conditions
- Pain that impacts mobility
- Additional needs that affect safe movement around home, school, or the community



Assessments

An assessment helps practitioners understand how your child's needs impact their daily life. They may look at:

- Comfort and posture
- Mobility and movement
- Safety
- Independence
- Participation in school, home, and community activities
- Fatigue and energy levels
- Future needs as your child grows

The aim is not simply to provide equipment, but to help your child access the activities and experiences that matter most to them.

Personal wheelchair budgets

A personal wheelchair budget is a resource available to support people's choice of wheelchair, either within NHS commissioned services or outside NHS commissioned services. Personal wheelchair budgets enable postural and mobility needs to be included in wider care planning and can support people to access a wider choice of wheelchair.

The legal right covers people who are referred or already registered and meet the eligibility criteria of their local wheelchair service, when they require a new wheelchair either through a change in clinical needs or in the condition of the current chair.

**for more
information:**



Priority Services Register

Joining your energy providers Priority Services Register means you'll be able to get a range of extra help when you need it. This could be all the time, or for a short period due to something that's happened in your life.

Families may be eligible because of disability, long-term health conditions, medical equipment requirements, communication needs, or vulnerability during power outages and emergencies.

Some of the help you can get includes:

- priority support in an emergency
- wherever possible, advanced notice of scheduled power cuts
- an identification and password scheme if someone needs to visit or contact you, helping you feel confident they are genuine
- the ability to nominate someone to receive communications and bills from your supplier, for example a family member, carer or someone you trust
- the chance to move your prepayment meter if you can't safely get to it to top up
- regular meter reading services
- account info and bills in large print or braille
- assistance reconnecting your gas supply

Find more information here:



Fire Assessment



A fire risk assessment may be particularly helpful if your child has additional needs that could affect their ability to recognise danger, communicate during an emergency, follow instructions, or evacuate safely.

The assessment should also identify any special needs that may require additional support.

Find more information here:



Clinical Waste Disposal

Most local councils can provide an additional bin for the use of non-infectious medical waste such as incontinence pads and bandages. This bin should not be used for general household waste and will be collected on the same day as your green household waste bin.



Charitable Grants

Some charities may also help fund equipment that is not available through statutory services.

Charity	What they may help with	Typical criteria
Family Fund	Grants for equipment, technology, furniture, sensory items, clothing and family wellbeing.	Families on a low income raising a disabled or seriously ill child. Eligibility criteria apply.
Newlife - The Charity for Disabled Children	Emergency equipment loans, grants and specialist equipment.	Equipment must support a disabled or terminally ill child. Assessment or supporting evidence may be required.
Caudwell Children	Mobility equipment, communication aids, therapies and specialist equipment.	Child must meet the charity's eligibility criteria and demonstrate financial need where applicable.
Children Today	Specialist equipment such as wheelchairs, communication devices and adapted trikes.	Funding is considered where statutory funding is unavailable or insufficient.
Variety - The Children's Charity	Specialist equipment, wheelchairs and adapted trikes.	Applications usually require practitioner supporting evidence and evidence of need.
Boparan Charitable Trust	Mobility equipment, sensory equipment and practical support.	Supports children with disabilities or life-limiting conditions. Applications considered on individual circumstances.

Charity	What they may help with	Typical criteria
ACT Foundation	Communication aids, specialist wheelchairs and disability equipment.	Applications require practitioner evidence demonstrating need.
Chronical Sunshine Fund	Grants for specialist equipment, sensory items and mobility aids.	Supports children with disabilities where statutory funding is not available. Applications usually require supporting evidence.
Whizz Kidz	Wheelchairs, mobility equipment, training and support to improve independence.	Young people must meet eligibility criteria and demonstrate need for mobility support.
The Mobility Trust	Funding towards powered wheelchairs and mobility equipment.	Supports individuals who cannot obtain funding through statutory services. Professional assessment required.
The Child Brain Injury Trust	Support and grants for equipment and rehabilitation needs.	Supports children with acquired brain injuries and their families.
Designability (Wizzybug)	Loan of Wizzybug powered wheelchairs for young children to support early mobility and independence.	Typically for children aged around 14 months to 5 years with mobility impairments. Referral or application required.

Don't assume you have to buy equipment yourself.

Many families purchase equipment privately without realising an assessment could identify statutory funding or charitable grants that may help. Even if one organisation cannot provide what you need, there may be other funding options available.

Before You Buy Equipment...

Ask yourself:

- ☐ Has my child been assessed?
- ☐ Can this be borrowed first?
- ☐ Is funding available?
- ☐ Will my child outgrow it?
- ☐ Will it fit through doors?
- ☐ Can it be adjusted?
- ☐ Can school use it too?
- ☐ Can it be recycled or returned?



Choice Tip

The best equipment isn't always the most expensive. The best equipment is the one that removes the barrier your child is experiencing.

Your Child, Your Choice

Because one size doesn't fit all

Find our
website here:

