

## Comparison of Manual Wheelchair Provision for Rehabilitation Patients Discharged in 2012 & 2013 from the National Spinal Injuries Centre.

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### Background

There has been a large amount of research highlighting the need for appropriate wheelchair provision to meet the users functional and postural needs, to help to maintain skills and to prevent secondary complications including joint degeneration and pain. (1,2,3,4). All of the evidence highlights the need for appropriate, lightweight wheelchairs to be provided for active wheelchair users to maximise function and independence. But are we meeting the needs of our patients? Is there a variation in provision for discharge between different wheelchair services? Is this initial provision meeting the patient's needs posturally and functionally to enable them to continue to build on the life skills they have gained during their initial phase of rehabilitation? Have there been any changes in the provision of interim and permanent wheelchairs being provided for discharge when comparing 2012 to 2013?



**“Wheelchair provision affects quality of life, health and well-being and is important in facilitating social inclusion and improving life chances”**  
(Out and About - Wheelchairs as part of a whole systems approach to independence, 2006).

### Make of NHS Rigid Wheelchairs Permanent Provision

| Wheelchair service. | 2012            | 2013                         |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Beds & Luton        | Argon           | 1x GPV, 1x XLT               |
| Mid Essex           | K4 x2           | NA *                         |
| Bucks               | XLT             | K4                           |
| Lincolnshire        | XLT             | No contact                   |
| NE Essex            | GPV x2          | Interim folding              |
| Waltham forest      | Quickie Ti      | No contact                   |
| E Berks             | XLT             | NA *                         |
| Harrow              | K4              | No contact                   |
| Portsmouth          | GPV             | Interim folding              |
| Hillingdon          | K4              | Interim folding & rigid      |
| Birmingham          | XLT             | No contact                   |
| Thurrock            | Panthera S2     | Interim rigid                |
| Kettering           | GPV             | On loan NSIC & interim rigid |
| Havering            | K4              | K4                           |
| Bognor Regis        | Argon           | No contact                   |
| Holly               | TiLite Aero     | K4                           |
| West Berkshire      | Interim folding | Argon                        |
| Gillingham          | NA *            | Argon                        |
| Southend            | No contact      | Panthera                     |

(\* = powered wheelchair only)

### Method.

Retrospective audit using discharge reports to look at the types of wheelchairs provided on discharge from the National Spinal Injuries Centre (NSIC), what types of wheelchairs are being supplied for active users, if interim or permanent, what the long term provision is and which wheelchair service (WCS) provided the equipment. A comparison has then been made to see if provision has changed from 2012-2013.

### Results

#### Results 2012

- 112 patients discharged: 54 permanent wheelchairs, 36 interim, 7 loan on D/C, 15 other (private purchase, not needed)
- 58 different wheelchair services, 8 different regions, 17 different types of wheelchairs.

#### Results 2013

- 130 patients discharged: 29 permanent wheelchairs, 45 interim, 11 on loan, 19 other, 4 unknown
- 51 different wheelchair services, 6 regions, 11 different types of wheelchairs.

| 2012 |     | Wheelchair On Discharge | 2013 |     |
|------|-----|-------------------------|------|-----|
| 53   | 55% | Permanent               | 29   | 34% |
| 36   | 37% | Interim                 | 45   | 53% |
| 7    | 7%  | Loans                   | 11   | 13% |

| 2012 |     | Permanent Provision For Discharge | 2013 |     |
|------|-----|-----------------------------------|------|-----|
| 19   | 36% | Rigid                             | 27   | 37% |
| 31   | 58% | Folding                           | 47   | 63% |
| 3    | 6%  | Tilt in space                     | 0    | 0%  |

| 2012 |     | Interim Provision for Discharge | 2013 |     |
|------|-----|---------------------------------|------|-----|
| 9    | 25% | Rigid                           | 10   | 22% |
| 27   | 75% | Folding                         | 35   | 78% |

### Discussion

There has been an increase in interim provision from 2012 to 2013. The number of interim wheelchairs issued has increased from 37% to 53%. The NSIC/ wheelchair suppliers had to loan equipment to 13% of patients as their wheelchair service was unable to meet their needs on discharge.

We want to minimise the number of interim wheelchairs provided, particularly for active users, as there is a large risk of deskilling, reduction in independence and a potential psychological impact.(1,2). As a result of interim provision, we don't know what our patients long term provision will be as they are often waiting for an appointment from their WCS after discharge home. We ideally want to avoid this and have appropriate equipment ready for discharge or organise assessments earlier, prior to discharge, in order to prevent the issues raised. Finally, there is still a large discrepancy about what types of wheelchairs, rigid versus folding and wheelchair models that are being provided by different wheelchair services, leading to a "post-code" lottery.

