



WHEELCHAIR
ALLIANCE

Our report about how wheelchairs are provided in England

Written by Motability and
The Wheelchair Alliance



Easy read booklet
May 2022

Who we are and what this booklet is about



We are **Motability**. We support disabled people to live **independent** lives by giving them **access** to things like cars, scooters and wheelchairs.



Independent means you have control over your own life.

Access means you can get what you need in life.



We want to do more to help people have access to wheelchairs that are good **quality** and a good price.



Quality means how good or bad something is.



WHEELCHAIR ALLIANCE

We worked with **The Wheelchair Alliance** to find out more about how wheelchairs are **provided** in England.



The Wheelchair Alliance are an organisation who do work to make the lives of wheelchair users in England better.



Provided means how wheelchairs are made, sold, bought and given to people and organisations.



We made an **economic** report about what we found out. **Economic** means everything to do with how a product or a service is provided.



This booklet is an Easy Read **summary** of our report. A **summary** means a short version.

About wheelchair services



Wheelchairs have a big effect on the lives of thousands of disabled adults and children and their families and carers.



Wheelchairs let disabled people

- live independent lives.
- have good social lives.
- have good education and work chances.

NHS



We know NHS wheelchair services are not always as good as they should be.



They are good in some areas in England and bad in other areas.



This means some people

- wait a long time to get a wheelchair.
- get a wheelchair that is bad quality.
- find a different way to get a wheelchair, like buying one with their own money.



These things can have a bad effect on

- the health, social lives and **finances** of wheelchair users and their families and carers.
- **society** if people can't go to training or work.



Finances are anything to do with your money.

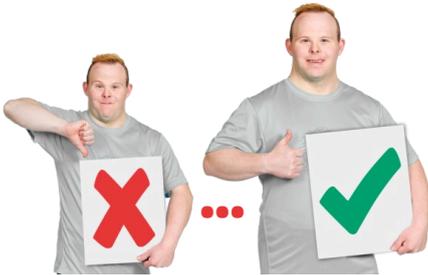
Society means the places and people around us.



About our report



We want to check if the way wheelchairs are provided is as good as it should be.



We want to find out if more can be done to give wheelchair users and their families and carers better services.



Since 2014 the NHS has started some projects to make wheelchair services better.



We want to check if the NHS projects are working.

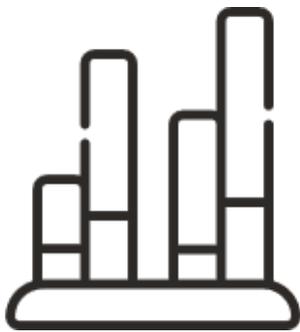
How we made our report



We

- read information to help us learn about wheelchair services.
- looked at **data** about wheelchair services to help us understand any problems.

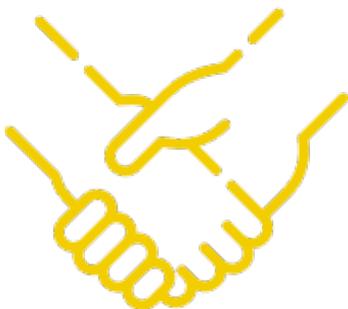
Data is information, numbers and facts about a subject.



- made a **stakeholder map**.

Stakeholders are people who are interested in or affected by something like a service or a project.

A **stakeholder map** is a diagram that shows all your stakeholders.

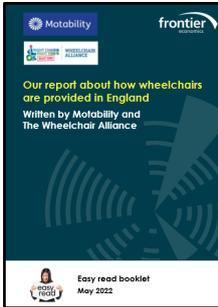


- interviewed some people.
- looked at everything we found out and worked out what it meant.



- worked out ways to fix problems in wheelchair services.

Economic ideas we used to make our report



This section tells you about the economic ideas we used to make our report. Each economic idea has a symbol. Look out for the symbols in the rest of this booklet.



Information asymmetry

Information asymmetry is when 1 person, business or organisation has more information than another.



Incentives

Incentives are things that make you want to do something or work harder.

Incentives in wheelchairs services might be

- extra money for wheelchair **suppliers** if they give their best products to the NHS.
- rewards for wheelchair **retailers** if they charge fair prices.

Suppliers make products or services.

Retailers sell products or services.

Market Power

Market Power is when you can change what happens in the **market** in a way that **benefits** you.



The **market** is all the people and businesses who buy and sell products or services.

Benefits are things that have a good effect on your life.

Economies of scale

Economies of scale are when the price of each part of a product goes down when more products are provided.



Market fragmentation

Market fragmentation is when people and businesses in the market don't work together and don't do the same thing.



Innovation

Innovation means new ideas that make things like wheelchair services or wheelchair quality better.



What we found out about wheelchair users



1

There are **4** ways to get a wheelchair.

NHS provision

This means you use NHS wheelchair services.

2

NHS personal wheelchair budget

This means you get money from the NHS so you can choose how you want to get a wheelchair.

3

Charity funding

This means you get help from a charity.

4

Private purchase

This means you buy a wheelchair with your own money.



Your wheelchair journey

This is what happens when you get a wheelchair.



- Your doctor **refers** you to your local wheelchair service. **Refer** means they arrange for you.
- Your local wheelchair service does an **assessment** and decides what equipment and support you need. An **assessment** is when you are asked questions to find out your health needs.
- You choose if you want to use your local wheelchair service or your personal wheelchair budget.
- You get information about the wheelchair including the booklet about how it works.
- You get training about how to use the wheelchair.
- Your wheelchair is repaired if it breaks.
- If you change your wheelchair service, like if you move to a new area, you will keep the same wheelchair.



There were between 690,000 and 860,000 wheelchair users in England in the year from 2018 to 2019.



There isn't enough information about wheelchair users to know the exact number.

NHS



About 586,000 people used NHS wheelchair services between July and September 2021. Most of these people were adults.



More people are getting help from a charity to get a wheelchair or buying one with their own money.

NHS



This is likely to be because of problems with NHS wheelchair services.

What we found out about how wheelchairs are provided in England



There isn't a fixed way to provide wheelchairs in England at the moment.



Incentives

CCGs use different economic ideas from each other.

CCG is short for **clinical commissioning group**.

CCGs are local NHS services in each area in England.



This means it's hard to offer good incentives because everyone is doing something different.



Market power

It's hard for wheelchair users to get in touch with wheelchair services like CCGs, wheelchair suppliers or wheelchair retailers.



This means wheelchair users can't explain what they need or what is wrong with how wheelchairs are provided at the moment.



It's hard for wheelchair users to make **complaints** about NHS wheelchair services.

Complaints are when you say you are unhappy about something.

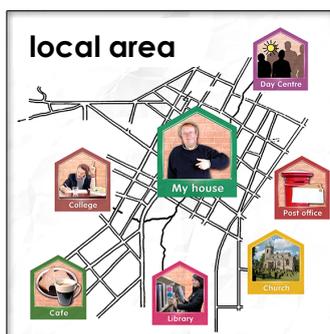


Economies of scale

Economies of scale don't happen much in NHS wheelchair services because there isn't a fixed way of doing things.



Regional networks help CCGs work together better and share what they know which can help economies of scale to happen.



Regional networks are groups of organisations who work together in local areas.



Market fragmentation

There is market fragmentation in local areas.



An example is children's wheelchair services.



If children's wheelchair services don't work with local education services children might not get what they need to live good lives.



Innovation

There are new ideas about how wheelchair services are provided.



An example is when wheelchair services join up with other services like education or social care and share their money to help them work together better.

What we found out about how the market for providing wheelchairs works



Information asymmetry

It's hard for CCGs to know what a good price is for equipment and other parts of wheelchair services because they don't share information.

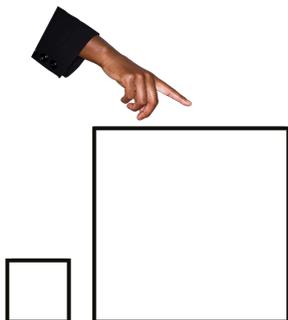


Wheelchair users don't know if the service they get is good because there aren't fixed rules to follow. This can mean they are treated unfairly.



Incentives

Some wheelchair users find other ways to get a wheelchair if the NHS doesn't have what they need.



This means the market for other ways to get a wheelchair has got bigger.



Market power

There are

- a few big businesses who make most wheelchairs.
- a few small businesses who make special bits of wheelchair equipment.



We don't think businesses who make wheelchairs use their position in the market in a bad way.



We do think wheelchair users pay more when they buy a wheelchair with their own money than the NHS does when it buys wheelchairs.



Innovation

There are new ideas about the market for providing wheelchairs but the NHS doesn't have enough money to pay for them.



This means wheelchair users don't benefit from the ideas and less innovation happens.

What we found out about how the quality of wheelchair services affects wheelchair users



Wheelchair services are an important part of many people's lives, but we found they are not always equal and fair.



This can have a bad effect on wheelchair users and their families and carers, and can mean they live less independent lives.



Some wheelchair users don't know about wheelchair services or don't know how to access them.



Information asymmetry

There are problems with assessments of wheelchair users. Different parts of wheelchair services don't share information.

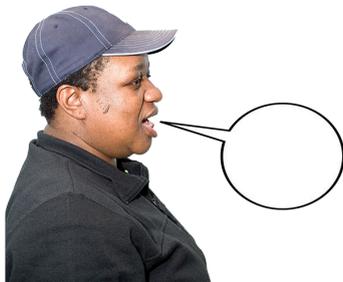


This means wheelchair users might get equipment that isn't right for their needs and their lives.

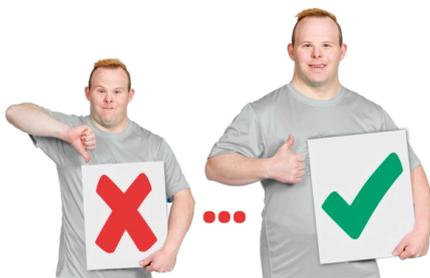


Incentives

Problems in NHS wheelchair services are an incentive for people to buy a wheelchair with their own money. This can have a bad effect on their finances.



It isn't always explained to wheelchair users why they might get or might not get a piece of equipment.



It's hard for wheelchair users to say what they think about wheelchair services. This means they don't have the chance to make wheelchair services better.



Market power

Some wheelchair users get a better service than others. The NHS spends more on some wheelchair users than others.

What we found out about the NHS projects



Since 2014 the NHS has started some projects to make wheelchair services better.

The projects are

- **National Wheelchair Tariff.**
This is a fixed price for each part of a wheelchair service, like an assessment or a piece of equipment.
- **National Wheelchair Dataset.**
This is data about costs and access to wheelchairs that everyone can use.
- **Model Wheelchair Specification.**
This is a set of rules wheelchair services can follow so they all give the same good service.
- **Personal Wheelchair Budgets.**
This is money from the NHS to help people have more choice and control about their wheelchair journey.





Information asymmetry

Some wheelchair services use the **National Wheelchair Tariff** to check if they are getting a good price when they buy products or services.



Some people say the tariff doesn't work because it doesn't include all the different services a wheelchair user might need.



The **National Wheelchair Dataset** has given CCGs useful information about wheelchair services.



It has helped wheelchair services find out what other wheelchair services do. This makes it easier to know when a service is good or bad.



The dataset does not always give information that matches what happens in wheelchair services.



Incentives

The **Model Service Specification** doesn't have to be followed which means not all wheelchair services use it in the same way.



This means services are still different from each other.



Market power

Personal Wheelchair Budgets

help wheelchair users have more choice and control, but not all CCGs have them.



Wheelchair users told us the amount of money they get in their **Personal Wheelchair Budget** isn't always enough.



It doesn't pay for extra things like delivery, repair and the cost to look after a wheelchair.



Market fragmentation

All new ideas and information should be managed in one place and then shared with all wheelchair services.



Innovation

There are some good new ideas happening in NHS wheelchair services like **outcome-based measures**.



Outcome-based measures are ways for wheelchair services to find out if wheelchair users are getting the service they want and need.



Lots of services don't use outcome-based measures because they don't have enough staff or money to do them.

How to make the way wheelchairs are provided in England better



This section tells you what we want to happen to make the way wheelchairs are provided in England better.

More support for wheelchair users



- Make sure the NHS gives CCGs enough money for wheelchair services so they are good in all areas of England.
- Make the **Model Service Specification** something that must be followed.
- Have more training and more people who can do wheelchair assessments, supported by experts in wheelchair services to make assessments better for all wheelchair users.
- Make sure wheelchair services share innovative ideas.
- Make **communication** better so there is less information asymmetry. **Communication** means how information is passed from one place, person or group to another.



- Make sure information shared between stakeholders is clear and accessible.
- Make sure wheelchair services use outcome-based measures.
- Look at how other health services are provided, like hearing or eye services, to see if they do things in a better way.
- Work with other services like education, social care and housing so there are less differences in the quality of services provided. This can help economies of scale and innovation happen.



Data

- Look at the **National Wheelchair Dataset** and check if it can be made better.

Find out more data about

- wheelchair services and how many people need them.
- wheelchair retailers.
- how many people buy wheelchairs with their own money because the NHS can't give them what they need.
- the wheelchair services market in different areas in England.





Charities

Charities are an important part of wheelchair services.

- Help charities work better together and share **resources**. **Resources** are things like money, and knowledge.
- Find ways for charities to give information to wheelchair users about how to access wheelchair services.

Regulated services

Regulated means an official organisation sets up rules about something and checks the rules are being followed.



- All wheelchair services should be regulated. This includes wheelchair services not given by the NHS.
- Retailers for wheelchair services should be regulated so wheelchair users are treated in a fair way.
- An **independent complaints body** should be set up. This means an organisation who aren't part of wheelchair services that people can complain to.

Thank you to A2i for the words
www.a2i.co.uk (reference 35508)