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**Welcome to our Summer 2025 newsletter!**



## A message from our CEO

This week is [Volunteers' Week](#) (2<sup>nd</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> June), an annual UK-wide campaign that aims to celebrate and recognise the amazing contributions that volunteers make. Here at the Wheelchair Alliance we have a number of volunteers who give up their time to support us in strengthening the voices of wheelchair users. That's why it's important that we take this time to reflect and recognise their valuable contribution - so a massive thank you for all that you do.

Much has happened since our last newsletter and as you will read below, after 5 years as Chair, I am delighted to move into a new role leading the organisation's work and handing over the Chair role to Karen Pearce, who I know will be amazing. I look forward to expanding our membership, our reach and our impact as we look to ensure all wheelchair users get the right chair at the right time.

As we mentioned in the last newsletter, we have been working really hard behind the scenes on a campaign which saw us calling on the Government to get rid of ridiculous guidance relating to the use of power wheelchairs over the weight of 150kg. Our hard work has really started to pay off too, with the story being featured on eight ITV regional news programmes across England in one evening. This has been fantastic in getting the voices of wheelchair users heard and we hope to keep these conversations going.

This newsletter features several innovation stories. Innovation plays a big role in all that we do here at the Alliance and forms one of the three pillars that are the foundation of everything we do. The law and technology all have a key role to play in ensuring that wheelchair services continue to innovate. By doing so, we can help ensure that every wheelchair user has the freedom to live the life they want and deserve. And we won't stop until they do. In this newsletter, we highlight some of the individuals and organisations bringing innovative thinking and solutions to enhance the lives of wheelchair users.

Reading through this newsletter fills me with immense pride in everything we have collectively achieved already this year. Driving positive change was never going to be an easy task, but with the help and support of our valuable members, supporters, partners and sponsors, means that we are able to continue pushing forward. So, thank you to each and every one of you for the valuable contribution you are making.



I hope that you will be filled with the same sense of pride when reading through this newsletter. Together we can continue to drive forward change and further strengthen the voices of wheelchair users.

**Nick Goldup, chief executive officer at the Wheelchair Alliance**



## **New appointments at Wheelchair Alliance**

Following our recent strategy day, we are pleased to announce a few changes to the structure of the Wheelchair Alliance which forms part of new governance which will help drive exciting growth of the organisation.

Nick Goldup, co-founder of the Alliance, takes on the new role as chief executive officer, having previously undertaken the roles of chief operating officer and chair.

With a wealth of experience as a director within the charity sector he will continue to utilise his skills to help drive forward positive change in wheelchair provision.

Karen Pearce, a fellow founding member and former project manager of the Wheelchair Alliance, takes over the role of chair from Nick.

The two appointments come at a pivotal time for the organisation, which was set up in 2015 to strengthen the voice of wheelchair users who face significant challenges when it comes to accessing wheelchair services.

Read the story in full



## 150kg 'not in a class' campaign update

In our last newsletter we shared the work that we have been doing regarding the update to current Government guidance that would require disabled children to have driving licences and insurance for their powered wheelchairs.

Since raising awareness of the impact of this guidance, along with the publication of the results of our survey which saw more than 400 responses from powered wheelchair users and their carers, the Alliance's CEO Nick Goldup and chair Karen Pearce met with the Department for Transport to discuss. At the meeting it transpired that the rules outlined in the guidance were actually already law!

While this is a worse situation than anticipated, with many powered wheelchair users unwittingly breaking the law when using their wheelchair outside of their homes, the Department for Transport are open to working with the Alliance on this. But, unless it is made a priority, it could take years to change the law and guidance. Therefore we have urged the Government to make it a priority to make much-needed changes to the current guidance and law. This includes the removal of the requirement for a driving licence, the eradication of the use of 'invalid carriages', along with simplification of the classification system.

This meeting was followed in May by Karen Pearce and Stephen Duckworth OBE being interviewed by ITV News about our 150kg campaign. These interviews were then shown on eight different ITV News programmes across England in one

evening! Each report also featured comments from wheelchair users local to those areas about how the legislation would impact them.

Click the video above to watch one of the ITV reports in full. This one features users of Gym Possible, a gym for wheelchair users in Gateshead.

This took weeks of planning and we want to say a massive thank you to everyone who took part and helped us and ITV to pull this together.

We hope it has raised further awareness around this issue facing users of powered wheelchairs.

To find out more about the campaign, [click here](#)



## Wheelchair Quality Framework

Another milestone moment for the Wheelchair Alliance came by surprise at the end of April when we were contacted by [NHS England](#).

We had previously been working with NHS England to finalise the Quality Framework that relates to wheelchair provision in England, with the aim of creating a centralised document used by Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) across the country to standardise wheelchair provision and demonstrate best practice. With the



changes in Government and NHS England over the last year or so, we felt like the project was 'stuck'.

So, we were delighted when things started to move quickly with the new Quality Framework now being published!

Wheelchairs provide a significant gateway to independence, wellbeing and quality of life for thousands of adults and children. They play a substantial role in facilitating social inclusion and improving life chances through work, education and activities that many people who do not need wheelchairs take for granted.

However, variation in wheelchair service provision can affect the timely access to necessary equipment and services which can then impact clinical outcomes and the quality of life of people who rely on these services.

We are hopeful that this new Quality Framework will support ICBs and NHS wheelchair service providers in delivering high-quality provision that offers improved access, outcomes and experience.

This framework has been co-produced by the Wheelchair Alliance and the NHS England National Wheelchair Advisory Group which represents people with lived experience, clinicians, commissioners, plus key organisations including the British Health Trade Association, Posture and Mobility Group, ResMag, National Wheelchair Managers Forum, Whizz Kidz and New Life.

This is a massive achievement and we want to thank everyone who fed into this and helped make it happen.

Now that it is published, we will continue to work with NHS England to help ensure that this framework is implemented and hope to work in a specific area of the country to test and implement it.

**[View the published Quality Framework](#)**



## A landmark day for the Alliance with launch of APPG

After months of hard work, we finally launched our All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Wheelchair Users.

It was a landmark day for us all at the Alliance which was a real collaborative effort between the Alliance, its board and President, MPs and partners.

Our first official APPG meeting was held at Portcullis House in Westminster and was chaired by Daniel Francis MP and our president, Tanni Grey-Thompson, with Whizz Kidz acting as Secretariat.

This inaugural meeting concentrated on the formation of the group, followed by presentations on the Alliance, our reports and the 150kg issue we have been campaigning on. We also heard from wheelchair users about their lived experiences.

This group is a significant step forward for the Wheelchair Alliance and will enable us to further strengthen the voices of wheelchair users and get them heard at the highest levels of Government.

A big thank you goes to everyone who has supported us with this.



## The Wheelchair Alliance at Naidex

[Naidex](#) is one of the UK's leading events in empowering and supporting the disabled community.

Held at the NEC Birmingham in March, the Alliance's Nick Goldup and Karen Pearce attended the show, helping to raise awareness about our mission.

They also presented in the Business Without Barriers Theatre, with a talk on 'Wheelchair Provision: How You Drive Effective Change'. Here, the findings of our latest piece of independent research which identified the key recommendations that will facilitate improved wheelchair provision, were presented.

The feedback we received during the event about the work that we are doing was very positive. Special thanks goes out to the [British Healthcare Trades Association \(BHTA\)](#), who were kind enough to let us share their stand at the show.

## Membership continues to grow

As a community interest company, we rely on the support of our wonderful partners and sponsors.

Together we are working to further strengthen the voice of wheelchair users while providing information to help empower those who use a wheelchair, their families and carers.



Support for the work that we do continues to grow and we're incredibly grateful to every organisation who have come onboard to support us.

A big thank you and welcome goes to [Cauda Equina Spinal Cord Injury \(CESCI\)](#), [Open Road Access \(ORA\)](#) and [Huntingdon's Disease Association](#) who have recently signed up as partners. You can find out more about their innovative work in this newsletter.

Find out more about our partners

### Our Partners



# New accessible transport company launches

A start-up transport company is on a mission to help support 15 million accessible trips a year by 2030.

[Open Road Access \(ORA\)](#), which believes accessibility is the cornerstone of a better tomorrow in which everyone can move freely and independently, is already building towards that goal, starting with accessible car rentals.

Over the last 12 months, the company has worked on developing a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) rental service, serving over 1,000 customers and listening to and learning from the insights of wheelchair users. Now, ORA is establishing collaborations with key partners like the Spinal Injuries Alliance (SIA) and Accessible Holiday Escapes, to help ensure that as many people as possible are aware of ORA services and have an opportunity to get involved.

The ORA service model is designed with innovation, flexibility and inclusivity at its core. A range of cars are available with a variety of adaptations including steering controls, ramps or lifts, and customisable seating configurations, to help ensure comfort and safety for all passengers.

The service is available nationwide with delivery and collection included, meaning users can get an accessible car straight to their driveways, or pickup at a UK airport. Cars can be hired for periods ranging from a single day to several months with insurance and breakdown cover included in every booking, giving customers peace of mind.

It's great to see innovation in this space, giving more choice to the end user and with a 4.8/5 TrustPilot rating, ORA has been thrilled by the response from the community. As a company doing its bit to close the transport accessibility gap, they are excited to hear from, and work with, Wheelchair Alliance members and supporters.

**Find out more about this service**

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## Self-service wheelchair stations help improve accessibility

[Wheelshare](#), which provides self-service wheelchair stations, similar to different bike schemes, is helping to drive innovation through its service which is designed to improve accessibility in hospitals, transport hubs and public spaces.

Established in 2017, its state-of-the-art, modular system helps to ensure that wheelchair users and those with reduced mobility have immediate, hassle-free access to wheelchairs when and where they need them.

The 'share' in Wheelshare reflects the company's vision of a more inclusive, community-driven mobility solution, where wheelchairs are always available, easily returned, and shared efficiently to serve as many people as possible. By streamlining wheelchair availability, it also helps healthcare providers optimise resources while enhancing independence and dignity for users.

"At Wheelshare, we are dedicated to making wheelchair access easier, smarter, and more efficient for people with reduced mobility," said Ido Perry, managing director, Wheelshare UK & Ireland.

"Partnering with the Wheelchair Alliance is an important step in supporting this vision, ensuring that wheelchairs are available when needed and shared responsibly. We look forward to working together to create a more inclusive and accessible future."

While this is an opportunity for those who need assistance to gain more accessibility in certain locations, it is important to remember that it isn't a replacement for a prescribed piece of equipment.



Find out more about Wheelshare here



## Our vision, mission and strategy for 2026 and beyond

Last month, members of the Strategic Advisory Board met to discuss our vision, mission and strategy for 2026 and beyond.

As a group we have already achieved so much in terms of building awareness and helping to strengthen the voices of wheelchair users. So, it was great to have everyone in the room – in person and online – to work together to help ensure that we continue to move forward and build on momentum.

It proved to be a productive and insightful day and more on our new vision, mission and strategy will be shared in the next issue of the newsletter.



## Meeting with MP Allison Gardner

The Alliance's Nick Goldup and Karen Pearce recently met with Dr Allison Gardner MP in Westminster after one of her constituents reached out to her because of difficulties in getting a wheelchair.

The meeting went really well and Allison is very keen to show her support for the Wheelchair Alliance and the work it is doing, via her parliamentary levers.

We look forward to working with Allison and seeking her support in Westminster.



## A special screening from our patron

At the end of last year, Nick Wilson, speaker, disabled adventurer and content creator from Towcester, Northamptonshire, was unveiled as our new patron.

Wheelchair adventurer Nick, who became the first person with disabilities to reach the highest accessible point of Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) on a newly developed all-terrain powerchair, [RockClimber](#), without any physical support or assistance aides, is looking to mark the first anniversary of the ascent with a very special screening.

Saturday 12th July marks 12 months since Nick's successful ascent and he is planning a public screening of a documentary he has had commissioned, which will be held at a venue in Northampton. More on this will follow in our next newsletter.

Find out more about Nick

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## Travel with confidence

[Back Up](#), whose vision is a world where everyone affected by a spinal cord injury can reach their full potential, has recently produced a series of inspirational accessible travel videos.

Supported and funded by the [Motability Foundation](#), there are three in the series. The first video, which you can watch by clicking the image above, focuses on travelling with a spinal cord injury – a journey which often starts before leaving the front door.



[Find out more about this service here](#)



## The Special Innovation Group

On Monday 23rd June, members of the Special Innovation Group (SIG) will meet.

Created to help improve access to innovation in all its guises that will benefit wheelchair provision for wheelchair users across England, the meeting will bring together manufacturers, the NHS Supply Chain and representatives from other organisations to discuss what innovation means and how it can be achieved.

More on the outcome of this meeting will be shared in the next newsletter.

## Did you know?

The [Disability and Development Report 2024](#) from the United Nations reveals that worldwide, only 70 per cent of transit stations, transit platforms, and bus stations are accessible to wheelchair users which makes travelling difficult for people with disabilities.

Hiring a car is a practical solution – but even this process is not straightforward for wheelchair users. To help with this process, Skyscanner gives useful facts, tips and advice for renting a wheelchair-accessible vehicle.

Although they are an independent organisation of the Alliance, we felt that this might be useful information to share through our newsletter.

It covers everything you need to know about renting the right vehicle for wheelchair users, from considerations before you travel, to selecting features and preparing requirements, to planning out your routes and logistics.

### Read Skyscanner's Top Tips

## Making the headlines!

We have been getting some great traction on the work that we have been doing to help strengthen the voice of wheelchair users.

Since our last newsletter in March, we have reached more than **2.5 million people in the UK!** Our reach on LinkedIn has also grown phenomenally with engagement up 962.4%, post link clicks up 864.7% and the engagement rate (per impression) rising from 10.5% to 41.4%. **This is incredible and demonstrates the hard work and commitment that goes into ensuring the voices of wheelchair users are heard.**

Coverage includes ITV News, This Magazine, Daily Record and Living with Disability magazine.

Click on the logos below to read and listen to some of our favourites.





## Can you support the Wheelchair Alliance?

We have been incredibly busy over the last couple of months, as our work is gaining momentum and grabbing attention – which is great.

Our volunteers work tirelessly to pursue the vision and the mission of the Wheelchair Alliance, with the aim of improving the lives of wheelchair users everywhere.

However, we can't do this work alone.

We are lucky to have the support of our wonderful partners and sponsors but any contributions made will help us to do more to get the voices of wheelchair users heard.

If you are able to donate, please do so.

We thank you in advance for any support you may be able to provide.

**Make a donation**



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