

Celebrating 10 years of the Wheelchair Alliance



WHEELCHAIR ALLIANCE



2014

The Wheelchair Summit takes place in February. Multiple stakeholders discuss what good wheelchair services look like and what is needed to get there. Six themes emerged and an action plan is drafted. Karen Pearce and Jean Waters lead on two of the themes.

NHS Change Day 2014, held in March, was a large-scale, collective effort to improve the NHS through pledges of action. Over 800,000 pledges were made to improve health and social care and Sir David Nicholson pledged to bring wheelchair users together with clinicians, managers and the third sector to improve wheelchair services across England.

NHS England makes 'improving wheelchair services' an objective in its business plan. Ros Roughton is identified as the national director leading this.

A second Wheelchair Summit takes place in November, at which the eDigest, titled *My Voice, My Wheelchair, My Life*, was launched with forewords provided by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson and Prof. Moira Livingstone. At the summit, it was also decided that there was a need to launch a campaign, which was titled *Right Chair, Right Time, Right Now*.

2015

An alliance was formed of all key stakeholder groups, together under one umbrella, to improve wheelchair service provision. This was chaired by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson. Other founder members included Ray Hodgkinson, Nick Goldup, Jean Waters and Karen Pearce - all of whom are still on the Wheelchair Alliance Board. The new alliance was called the National Wheelchair Leadership Alliance (NWLA).

The NWLA gets to work and develops *The Wheelchair Charter*. Over the next four years, the Alliance meets twice a year and works hard to engage Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to sign the charter and commit to taking action at a local level. These CCGs became Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) in 2022.

2015 - 19

2020

Changes were made to the structure of the NWLA including Nick Goldup being appointed Chair and Karen Pearce taking on a coordinator role.

The NWLA also received grant funding by NHS England, worked on its Mission and Vision, and agreed a new strategy.

2022

2021

The NWLA is renamed The Wheelchair Alliance and registered with Companies House as a Community Interest Company (CIC). The WA also registers with the CIC Regulator.

The Wheelchair Charter is refreshed and the strapline 'strengthening your voice' is adopted.

A new three-year strategy and operations plan is agreed.

2022 sees the Wheelchair Alliance launch a new website in March to coincide with International Wheelchair Day, and a three-year sponsorship deal is agreed with the British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA), which brings vital funding to Wheelchair Alliance.

In September, the Wheelchair Alliance published its first research report, *An Economic Assessment of Wheelchair Provision in England*. This report was funded by the Motability Foundation and provided evidence and data on the scale of the issues in wheelchair provision, potential beneficial interventions and highlighted best practices.

In December, Lord Hunt asks questions on behalf of the Alliance during Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) in Parliament.

2023

In January 2023, there is an inaugural meeting of the Wheelchair User Engagement Group, which represents around 145,000 wheelchair users.

The first Wheelchair Alliance newsletter is published and funding is again secured from the Motability Foundation to carry out a second report - *The Value of a Wheelchair* - which is published later in the year.

In the summer of 2023, the Wheelchair Alliance manned stands at the Disability Expo and PMG Conference.

The Alliance garners media attention with appearances in Disability Review Magazine (DRM), Thumbprint magazine and the BBC Access All podcast.

The Wheelchair Alliance is asked by NHS England to coproduce a Quality Framework for wheelchair provision in England.

2024

Nick Goldup is announced as Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Chair and Andy Conway joined as coordinator. Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson is announced as President and we welcome our first patron, Nick Wilson.

Ballyhoo PR came on board as a PR and communications partner and helped to secure more press coverage, including pieces on ITV News, The Guardian and BBC Radio Five Live. A new enewsletter was launched and the Alliance invested in a new CRM system and website.

In May, the first meeting of the Special Innovation Group (SIG) took place at Westminster and was hosted by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, bringing together wheelchair manufacturers, the NHS Supply Chain and representatives from other organisations to discuss what innovation means with regards to wheelchair provision and how it can be achieved.

The Alliance launches its Election Manifesto ahead of the general election, calling on the incoming government to address the lack of funding and postcode lottery surrounding wheelchair provision.

Our Wheelchair Alliance membership model launched and has since seen several national charities sign up.

The third report - *Wheelchair Provision: How to Drive Effective Change* - was published, again funded by Motability Foundation.

2025

After being made aware of a law that means users of powered wheelchairs weighing more than 150kg should only use their chairs on the road and require a driving licence and motor insurance, the Alliance has been campaigning to change the law. Nick and Karen met with the Department for Transport and Ministers and published a fourth report to raise awareness of the issue. This was featured on ITV News.

Nick Goldup was announced as CEO and Karen Pearce became Chair.

The Quality Framework the Alliance worked on with NHS England was finally published and its All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) was launched at Portcullis House - both huge goals the Wheelchair Alliance set out to achieve some years ago.