

A personal request for your help from Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE and Dr Jean Waters on behalf of the National Wheelchair Leadership Alliance



I'm passionate about everyone living an independent, positive life. I want you to help me champion this.

From the age of seven I first used a wheelchair, and as a determined and independent young girl the wheelchair was something that I knew could help me achieve my goals and aspirations. It wasn't long before I was already starting to enjoy and excel at sports.

Through determination and hours of hard work and effort I achieved my goals with 11 gold, four silver and one bronze Paralympic medals to my name.

Today I have just as much drive and passion, and I currently have a very specific goal, but it's one that I can't do by myself. It's something I need your help with.

I want to make sure that wheelchair services are not simply forgotten services. These pieces of equipment are life-givers to everyone who needs them.

I want to make sure that everyone in England who needs a wheelchair gets the best possible care and support in making their choice. I want equality of access and more than anything, I want the individual to be put at the heart of all and any decisions about their wheelchair needs.

But, as I say, I need your help to make sure what we do in the National Wheelchair Leadership Alliance is representative of users, services and commissioners. So please take the time to read through our Charter and please, as a commissioner of these services, sign up to it.

This is not just important to me, it is important to thousands of wheelchair users across England who need our help and support. Thank you.

Tanni

Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE
Chair, Wheelchair Leadership Alliance



Wheelchairs aren't a lifestyle choice – they are the difference between no life and having one.

As a hospital doctor working in anaesthesia, I was always able to provide my patients with a service that met their needs. I assumed the same would be true when I became disabled due to Motor Neurone Disease but was sadly disappointed when I needed a wheelchair. It was unbelievable that if you didn't meet local rationing criteria, not only were you left without a means to get around, but neither were you assessed and given a prescription. No one buys spectacles without first getting an eye test and getting the right chair at the right time is even more important to someone's health and wellbeing.

I was fortunate to get assessed and provided with a power chair from the Motor Neurone Disease Association which gave me independence and quality of life back, but others are not so lucky. There is little recognition of the importance of having the right chair at the right time. Not only does it bring independence and quality of life to the user, but prevents hugely expensive health complications such as pressure sores, worsening scoliosis and worn out carers. Spending to save has never had more meaning and I joined the Alliance to help work towards achieving a wheelchair service that really works for everyone.

We can't change things alone, so please take the time to read through the Alliance's Charter, pledge your support for its principles at www.rightwheelchair.org.uk and join me in taking action to help improve wheelchair services.

Your support is truly vital and will help me personally, as well as thousands of wheelchair users, in improving and supporting this often forgotten service. Thank you.

Jean

Dr Jean Waters
Member, Wheelchair Leadership Alliance

