

A personal request for your help from Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE and Karen Pearce 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.

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**Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE
Chair, Wheelchair Leadership Alliance**



**When I worked as a physiotherapist, I worked with patients to help them regain or maintain what was most important to them...
... the ability to live as full and independent a life as possible.**

I now work with a group of people who have a rapidly progressing neurological disease which has no treatment and no cure. 30% of these people will die within 12 months of their diagnosis. Some of these people are dying waiting for the right wheelchair, or are told they cannot have a powered wheelchair because they can walk a few steps and weeks later those crucial steps cannot be taken and independence is lost.

Motor neurone disease robs people of everything, the ability to walk, talk, eat speak and eventually breathe. The difference providing the right wheelchair at the right time is obvious, and anticipating what might be needed in the coming weeks and months is essential. However what happens across the country is so variable, how can that be right? I want this to change, which was why I joined the Alliance.

If you heard some of the experiences of wheelchair users and their carers, you would want the situation to improve and I need your help and support to drive that change, to ensure there is no postcode lottery and all those needing a wheelchair get the right assessment, advice and swift provision of this essential piece of equipment.

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 thoughts will help make lasting change for thousands of wheelchair users and help those with rapidly changing conditions maintain that most valued thing: independence. Thank you

Karen

**Karen Pearce MBA, MCSP, GradDipPhys
Director of Care, Motor Neurone Disease
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