

A personal request for your help from Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE and Fiona Carey 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**



Getting the right chair can mean the difference between living a full life, and sitting at home, festering and isolated.

I'm a relative rookie at the wheelchair business. It's only since 2011 (and my third/fourth cancer surgery) that my mobility has been radically reduced, and I've joined the wheeling world. So, when I got involved in the first Wheelchair Summit, and casually asked my wheelchair basketball team what their experiences of Wheelchair Services were like, I was, to say the least, blown away by the response. I was pinned to the gym wall for twenty minutes, and regaled with tales of woe.

It was pretty shocking: awful delays; badly fitting chairs; chairs so heavy they were harming users and parents, even leading to surgery; simple repairs that took weeks to process and sort. Most of them were quick to say that the service providers were really trying.

After years of previous attempts to address this, we have formed the National Wheelchair Leadership Alliance, to bring together users, providers, commissioners and manufacturers, to chuck everything we can at this, and sort the service once and for all.

Our aim is that everyone who needs a chair gets the right chair at the right time. With the right kit, a user can go where they need to go, do the things they need to do. It's the difference between school and no school, work and no work, getting out and having fun, or being socially isolated. It makes social and financial sense, to ensure that all of us can be as independent as possible.

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 will help to raise the profile, and get this often-forgotten service fixed, for me and for tens of thousands of other wheelchair users. Thank you.

Fiona

**Fiona Carey, Patient Leader, and Member,
Wheelchair Leadership Alliance**

