

A personal request for your help from Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE and Nick Goldup 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**



As NHS Partnerships Director at Whizz-Kidz, I hear first-hand how difficult it is for young people with a mobility need to get the right wheelchair.

Because the way Whizz-Kidz works means providing equipment that meets the clinical, social and lifestyle needs of a young person, it's frustrating to speak to youngsters and their mums and dads every day whose experience is very different.

Take for example, the young woman who waited a year to gain access to the appropriate wheelchair – which wasn't designed for a younger person; and meant sacrificing her dignity, comfort and independence for a short-changed version of mobility (being pushed around by a parent or friend in a clunky oversized chair). Or the boy who didn't meet his local CCG's criteria for a powered wheelchair, but whose heavy manual chair meant he couldn't play with his siblings and friends, had to have assistance getting around school, and felt isolated as a result.

The right wheelchair, provided at the right time in a young person's life, is so transformative. It's the difference between wearing iron-heavy sandpaper on your feet, or having the lightweight pair of shoes that allow you to stride through life – and carry yourself confidently.

The right wheelchair also means less reliance on follow-up NHS appointments to correct spinal injuries and pressure sores, and could mean a parent carer could return to employment – saving money for the family purse. Schools too might not require desks to be altered, and a classroom assistant may be less necessary.

With an estimated 70,000 young disabled people in the UK requiring mobility equipment to fit their young lives, we simply can't afford to ignore the issue anymore. So please do sign up to the Wheelchair Leadership Alliance Charter – and find out what you can do, in your life and workplace, to improve the lives of disabled people in the UK.

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.

There is something each of us can do, but we need to work together to achieve it. Thank you

Nick

**Nick Goldup, NHS Partnerships Director Whizz-Kidz
Member, Wheelchair Leadership Alliance**

