

A personal request for your help from Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE and Krystyn Jarvis 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**



Wheelchair users should expect a service which will maximise their potential.

For 20 years I have been equally proud and frustrated to be a part of a skilled, committed and enthusiastic group of professionals around the country working hard to provide NHS Wheelchair Services. The provision of timely, appropriate equipment is key to the process of rehabilitation, independence, self-esteem and ultimately less dependency on the state in all its forms – this is true 'invest to save' potential which needs to be acknowledged and acted upon by the wider health and social care arena. Too often, the provision of suitable wheelchairs and postural management is not included in Care Pathway work, or is given lip service at the finalisation of any project. There is little recognition of the work and skills involved to manage posture in a wheelchair to maximise the user's potential, and reduce further, unwelcome, medical or social intervention.

I would like to see a greater understanding by clinical commissioners and NHS senior managers of these services and the impact that good, informed commissioning of wheelchair services can have on the whole, health economy.

The 2012 London Paralympics raised a positive profile of disability with the general public and we need to continue to demonstrate the positive outcomes of good, timely wheelchair provision. All previous attempts to bring about far-reaching transformation have had little effect; however the Wheelchair Leadership Alliance has high profile support from NHS England which along with enthusiastic key stakeholders will move these services forward.

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.

Krys

**Krystyn Jarvis Dip COT, MBAOT
Chair National Wheelchair Managers Forum
Member, Wheelchair Leadership Alliance**

