



Get mobile

**Your guide to buying a scooter
or powered wheelchair**



Get Mobile

Welcome to "Get Mobile", RADAR's independent guide to help you purchase a mobility scooter or powered wheelchair. There are thousands of people who will tell you that their quality of life has significantly improved since buying a powered wheelchair or scooter. Being able to get out independently, where and when you want is a positive life enhancing experience.

"Get Mobile" will help you assess your own needs, be aware of the risks and decide what kind of mobility aid is right for you. This guide advises on the methods of purchase and financial support, takes you through considerations such as operating costs and outlines your rights as a consumer. We have also provided you with best practice case studies and a list of useful contacts and information.

RADAR is only too aware of the value that disabled people place on our levels of independence. A powered wheelchair or scooter can often be the very aid that goes some way to helping people achieve this.

RADAR's vision is of a society where human difference is routinely anticipated, expertly accommodated and positively celebrated. Our mission is to enable disabled people and disability organisations to initiate, develop and encourage change and campaign for a fully inclusive society.

Kate Nash Chief Executive



Photo: © George Olney

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Contents

❖	Products Available	04
❖	Assessing Needs	06
❖	Methods of Purchase	09
❖	Funding	13
❖	Operating Costs	15
❖	Best Practice	16
❖	Your Rights	19
❖	Information and Contacts	22
❖	Summary	24
❖	Case Studies	26

Products Available

So, just what is a powered wheelchair or a scooter? We probably recognise them when we see them, but what are the features, the differences and the legal aspects?

Scooters

Scooters are by far the more common of the powered mobility aids we see on our streets. They have three or four wheels and are steered using a handlebar, rather like a cycle. They have a battery pack and power from this drives motors on all or some of the wheels. Controls on the handlebar regulate speed and may include switches for a horn and lights. There is a single seat and there may be some provision to carry shopping or a bag in a basket or panniers.



Powered Wheelchairs

Powered wheelchairs look, at least to some extent, like a traditional wheelchair. They have between four and six wheels. Control of steering and speed is nearly always from a small joystick. A battery pack usually drives only two of the wheels. There may be auxiliary switches next to the joystick. Powered wheelchairs range from very basic models little different to a small manual wheelchair with motors added, to sophisticated models with extras, such as kerb climbers, height adjustable seats and even reclining seats.

The Law

Legislation separates scooters and powered wheelchairs into categories: Class 2 vehicles and Class 3 vehicles. Technically they are still called “invalid carriages”!

Class 2

Class 2 vehicles, which are sometimes referred to as “pavement vehicles”, are designed for use on the footway, which is defined as: “a portion of a carriageway that is set aside for use only by pedestrians”. They are not allowed on roads other than to cross them and are limited to a maximum speed of 4mph.

Class 3

A Class 3 vehicle is constructed or adapted so that it is capable of exceeding 4mph but cannot exceed 8mph. Class 3 vehicles are not permitted to exceed 4 mph on footways. Class 3 vehicles tend to be larger than Class 2 vehicles.

There is a switch to change between the 4mph and 8mph speed settings. They are not allowed on motorways, cycle lanes or bus lanes, but are required by law to have lights, indicators, a horn, a rear-view mirror and rear reflectors.

Drivers of either class of vehicle must be disabled and aged 14 or over, but do not have to hold a driving licence.

Range

There is an enormous range of equipment available. Scooters can range from very tiny and very portable models designed for use only in places such as shopping centres, through many stages up to large four wheeled vehicles fully enclosed with a weather proof cover. Many of the smallest scooters are foldable and many others can be dismantled into several large components for storage, or to load in a car. Seats can range from tiny and basic to substantial and well upholstered.

Many seats can be swivelled round and have arm rests that can be swung out of the way. While scooters originally had three wheels, many now have four, which can sometimes aid stability.

‘ The variety shows that before choosing a powered wheelchair or scooter you must know just what you want it to do ’

Powered wheelchairs can be as simple as a battery and motor pack attached to a standard manual wheelchair. Many are based on a manual wheelchair modified during manufacture to accommodate a powered system. As powered wheelchairs become larger they often offer many other features,

including rising and lowering seats, reclining seats, upholstered or specialist seating, elevating leg rests and lights. Some can be fitted with a kerb climbing device allowing the user to drive the wheelchair up or down a kerb. Many can be folded or dismantled, but some are less flexible.



There are also some specialised powered wheelchairs and scooters. For example there are power assisted wheelchairs that are controlled using the hand rims normally used for manual propulsion. There are powered wheelchairs and scooters that are designed for use where there are no hard surfaces, such as parkland or even rural tracks.

The variety shows that before choosing a powered wheelchair or scooter you must know just what you want it to do. A micro scooter that folds into the boot of a car may be ideal shopping at a supermarket, but is possibly useless on the canal towpath.

A rugged outdoor scooter may be excellent on rural footpaths, but too big for easy use between the dress rails in a clothes shop. There is, however, enormous flexibility if you choose the right equipment.

Assessing Needs

So where do you start? Possibly by asking yourself why you want a powered wheelchair or scooter

Write down your answers to these needs and add others of your own

- Is it a replacement for a manual wheelchair?
- Is it to enable you to get around at home or in the garden?
- Is it to get you to the local shops?
- Is it to be taken out in your car to help you get around at your destination?
- Is it to enable you to travel by bus, train or taxi to more distant locations?

This is the start of your checklist.

Next comes where you will keep the equipment:

- Where will you keep the equipment when it is not in use?
- Is there a power point to plug in the charger?
- Is it secure from theft or vandalism? If not, it will be difficult to get adequate insurance.
- If it is in a shared area, such as the hallway of flats, will the landlord consent?
- If there are steps, will you be able to get the equipment up and down these?
- What is the narrowest door or gate you need to get through? You do not want to find you cannot get it in after you have bought it.

Do you require a powered wheelchair or a scooter?

You really do need to be clear on this before going any further. If you have any doubt here you may need to seek specialist advice.

You need to consider:

- If you are unable to stand, you may find a scooter unsuitable. It's usually quite difficult to transfer from a wheelchair to a scooter.
- If you are unstable when sitting, a powered wheelchair is likely to give you more support and some models can accommodate specialist seating.
- Powered wheelchairs can also offer extras, such as kerb climbers, rising seats, elevating leg rests, reclining backs and even a supported standing mode.
- If you have long stiff legs, you may find the steering column of a scooter makes it difficult to get comfortable.
- If you can walk a little, a scooter is a marvellous solution to cover long distances.
- Occupied powered wheelchairs are generally able to travel on accessible public transport, such as buses, trains, trams and taxis provided they meet the maximum dimensions:
 - Length 1200mm
 - Width 700mm
 - Sitting height 1350mm (from ground to top of head)
 - Height of footrest above floor 150mm
- Occupied scooters are unlikely to be accepted in taxis and often refused on other public transport. They can normally be transported if the user can transfer to a seat, but may have to be folded or dismantled.

❖ Do you need to be able to carry your powered wheelchair or scooter in a car?

If so, you need to be sure it can be folded or dismantled in such a way that it can be fitted into the space available and that no parts are too heavy to lift.

Who will do this? If you are planning to do this yourself, can you then safely get into your seat? Loading equipment into a car can be made easier by using a small hoist fitted in the boot. Alternatively you may be able to use a ramp that utilises the motor of the unoccupied equipment to load.



❖ You also need to consider how far you want to travel and how fast. Different equipment will vary enormously in these respects

Most have a maximum speed of either 4mph or 8mph, but some will be slower than 4mph. The distance that can be covered with a fully charged battery will depend on many factors, including the weight of the user, gradients on the route used, the age of the battery and the temperature. Getting stranded with a flat battery is not fun!

❖ Size and manoeuvrability should be considered

The bigger the powered wheelchair or scooter, the less easy it will be to manoeuvre, especially indoors. Do make sure it can go where you need it to go. Being stuck unable to enter a toilet because your outdoor wheelchair is too big is embarrassing at the very least.

❖ Another factor to be considered is the weight and size of the user

You need to be safe and comfortable when sitting in a powered wheelchair or on a scooter. You also need to be in a position that will not cause extra aches and pains due to your position.

❖ Controls on scooters are usually on the handlebar or tiller

You need to be able to reach these comfortably even when turning tight corners. If you do not have two good hands, make sure the controls can be put on the side you require.

Controls on powered wheelchairs are generally combined in a single box which can be positioned in a wide range of positions to suit the user and also for use by a carer.

Do check that your needs can be met and that the position will not obstruct you getting in and out of the seat or up to a table. Suppliers of powered wheelchairs and scooters offer varying levels of advice with choosing equipment. See page 9 for more about this.

There are Mobility Centres in many parts of the country that can offer advice on choosing a powered wheelchair or scooter. Currently centres that offer this service are in North Wales, Surrey, Derby, Norfolk, Leeds, Oxford and Cornwall.

For details of your nearest centre that offers this service, telephone **0800 559 3636**.

Advice may also be available from local independent living centres, local charities and the local NHS wheelchair service.

Here is how some users took our advice to choose a solution...

••• Brian lives in a sheltered housing complex. Able to walk indoors, on a good day he can manage about 100 metres outside. He wants to be able to get to the local shop, the betting office and to friends on the next estate.

He chose a scooter with a 4mph top speed as his routes are all local footpaths and pavements. He tried it out to make sure it could cope with the hill back up to his flat. He also made sure there was a key operated switch in case he left it outside the betting office. The sheltered housing manager said he could store it under the stairs in the shared secure lobby and arranged a power point linked to his flat.

••• Ingrid has arthritis but still manages the steps at her front door. She wants to get around the village distributing the parish newsletter, attending events at the village hall and fetching shopping from the farm shop up the lane.

She has selected a more powerful scooter that can do 8mph, not least because she has to use it on the road in much of the village. She could not get the scooter up her steps so she has also chosen a special secure storage container to sit behind her hedge and she is having it wired up so that she can charge the battery overnight.

••• David uses a manual wheelchair all the time. He needs help these days as he finds it difficult to get it outdoors. He travels a lot to London for work and travels by public transport. He has chosen a powered wheelchair that is within the size limits for use in taxis, trains and buses. He is now planning to take it to the Emirates Stadium, the new home of Arsenal FC.

Methods of Purchase

In recent years there has been an explosion of advertising from suppliers of powered wheelchairs and scooters

You will find adverts in disability magazines, women's magazines, the weekend colour supplements and magazines for older readers. There are websites where you can make a purchase and numerous adverts on other websites directing you to suppliers. Suppliers also exhibit at shows ranging from local and national disability events to lifestyle shows. In addition, many towns now have a local mobility or disability aids shop.

The NHS

The NHS Wheelchair Service may be able to provide a powered indoor/outdoor wheelchair but only if their professional assessment recommends it. Usually you will have to buy outdoor electric wheelchairs, electric scooters or specialist sports wheelchairs yourself. The NHS Wheelchair Service should be able to tell you about local distributors. If you are in contact with your NHS Wheelchair Service, do try to get their advice on what sort of powered wheelchair or scooter might suit you, as some will give advice if they know you are going to save them money. Even if you buy your own wheelchair or scooter you are still entitled to be assessed for a NHS manual wheelchair, which is often useful around the house or when travelling.

Choosing a supplier

Your choice of supplier will depend to a large extent on how much you already know about your needs. If you know exactly what you

require, you are probably in a position where you can shop around for the lowest delivered price. The internet is a good place to compare prices, but do make sure that you are ordering exactly the item you require and that you receive what you have ordered. Local dealers can provide advice and demonstrate a range of products to you, as well as providing service and maintenance for whatever you buy from them. Direct sellers have no shops but sell in your home instead, which can be convenient but may be more expensive, especially if you don't shop around.

An Office of Fair Trading survey in 2004 showed that, on average, scooters bought at home cost 31% more than scooters bought in a shop and 63% more than if bought on the internet. Even among local dealers, prices for the same product can vary by as much as £1,000 so shopping around is a must, even if all you do is make a few phone calls to other dealers or companies before you buy.

Never buy from a shop which does not clearly show the price of each product on display; you should not have to ask the price.

Mobility centres

For most people some advice will be needed in choosing and using a powered wheelchair or scooter.

If there is a mobility centre (see page 23), or other independent advice service available to you, this should make the choice and purchase much easier.

Local dealers

Local mobility or disability aids shops will often be able to offer a lot of good advice and a chance to try out various equipment. The expertise of the staff will vary, so make sure you are happy that they are giving you sound advice. They should ask you about your criteria, such as where you want to use the equipment, where you will store and charge it and whether you need to get it in to a car. If they do not cover this sort of thing, they may be more interested in making a sale than meeting your needs.

It may be worth travelling further afield to find a larger more specialised wheelchair and scooter dealer. They may employ trained mobility advisers, or even an occupational therapist, with experience of meeting the needs of a much wider range of people.

Most local dealers will offer to visit you at home to discuss your requirements, deliver and demonstrate the correct use of the equipment and offer a repair and maintenance service, but do check. Other local retailers for example Argos may also sell a limited range of scooters. Argos have a free telephone number for advice before you buy but obviously they do not have a range of products in each store that you can see and try for yourself.

Their prices include delivery with installation and set up and a 12 month warranty with on-site repairs.

Direct sellers

In addition to local dealers, there are also a number of national direct-selling companies who advertise in newspapers and magazines and will come to your home to demonstrate and sell products to you. While shopping from home can be convenient, you need to consider all of the same questions about the type of product you need and how you intend to use it before you commit to buying.

Although it is very helpful if you can try a scooter or powered wheelchair in your home before you buy (and some local shops will offer this additional service), buying in the home can be a different experience from buying in a shop. Some consumers find that they have chosen the wrong product for their needs, or paid too much because they felt under pressure to buy from the salesperson. Common ploys to create this pressure include offering a high initial price followed by the offer of a "discount", or a "discount" on condition that the sale was agreed that day or telephoning a manager to secure a "special" deal. If you allow a salesperson into your home, do not buy anything if you feel under pressure or if you have not been able to compare prices of similar products elsewhere.

Always have a friend or relative with you when visiting or being visited by a supplier unless you are really confident you can do this on your own.

If you feel under pressure, ask the salesperson to leave and, if they do not leave immediately, phone the police. Be aware of your cancellation rights if you purchase a product in your home and are unsure later whether you have made the right choice.

Internet



Purchasing from the internet can offer both excellent and appalling service. Some of these suppliers offer a very limited range of equipment with little real advice and are only interested in a quick sale.

It is quite likely that the equipment will simply be delivered by a parcel company, with no assembly and demonstration service. This is fine if you know exactly what you want, but otherwise is best avoided. Other internet-based companies offer a range of services.

The internet based 'youreablesop' offers a home assessment service for powered wheelchairs, trained staff for delivery of scooters, complete with installation and training and

a national network of engineers for repairs. Just like any other major shopping purchase, do check exactly what level of service you will receive before placing an order. Do also ask about what repair and maintenance service they provide, what they charge for this and how long they take to get to you.

Some suppliers have no repair service on offer and will simply tell you to contact your local repairer. While there are many independent local repairers, they may be difficult to locate and may not keep spare parts for your equipment in stock.

Many scooters are made in the Far East and imported direct by the suppliers.

The suppliers may hold no spare parts in stock and there may be no other stockist in the country.

Do ask about this as a powered wheelchair or scooter that is out of use for many weeks while a part is ordered from the other side of the world is of no use to you and can leave you stuck indoors.

Motability Scheme

Although most people know of Motability through its car schemes, Motability also offers a hire plan and a purchase plan for powered wheelchairs and scooters.

Details are at page 14 in the section on finance.

Buying Used Equipment

Many adverts appear, particularly in the classifieds section of disability magazines, for used equipment. Not all such sales are bargains, with unrealistically high prices often quoted. Just like buying new, make sure the equipment is what you want. Check also the exact condition of the equipment and never agree to buy until you have tested it. If you have to make a long journey to see the equipment, seriously consider whether it is worth the time and expense of travelling, especially as it may not be what you want and may have been sold by the time you get there. You have very little legal protection when you buy used goods privately.

Shopping around - the key to good value

Example

Shoprider Cadiz 4 Wheel Scooter (Class 3) Manufacturers' Recommended Retail Price £2,625

■ Local dealers

Your local dealer is likely to sell this for between £1,800 and the full RRP of £ 2,625. Shop around and haggle for the best deal!

■ National direct sellers

Many direct sellers do not sell the same brands you find at your local dealers so comparisons are difficult. In general, don't buy from a direct seller unless you have compared their prices of similar products locally.

■ Internet

Some websites will sell the Shoprider Cadiz for as little as £1,300 (generally less than the local dealer) but you need to understand the limitations of advice, service and support from these websites.

■ Motability Scheme

The maximum price of a Shoprider Cadiz through the Motability Scheme is £2,100

Summary

- Whichever route you choose to buy a powered wheelchair or scooter, never, ever be pressurised into placing an order. You may not be able to cancel it and may lose all the money you have paid or agreed to pay.
- Ignore offers of a discount if you sign today unless you are really sure the item ordered is right for you – that discount is nearly always available again next week. Ignore free gifts unless the free item is something you really need and can use.
- Most importantly, ignore offers of huge discounts unless you know what price others are selling this item or similar items for – big discounts are normal in this business and the quoted original price is one that is rarely, if ever paid. Think about what you need and how you are going to use it; then shop around so that you pay a fair price to somebody you are happy to do business with.

Funding

Unless you are lucky, you will not be able to get the NHS to fund your requirements. This does not necessarily mean you have to find the whole cost yourself

Many charities happily pay towards the cost of a powered wheelchair or scooter.

The problem is finding a charity that will meet your own needs. It would take another book to explain all the options for finding such funds.

Some suggestions of possible sources of income include:

- If you served in the armed forces, a range of services charities may help. These include Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Families Association and the Royal British Legion as well as many others.
- There may be a benevolent fund linked to your former or current employment or industry or to your trade union.
- The Association of Charity Officers helpline can give advice on charitable funding and support from other charities and is a free service available on 01707 651777 or via their website www.aco.uk.net.
- If you are or were a member of an organisation such as the Freemasons, Buffaloes or Lions, there will probably be funds to help you.
- If your disability was caused by a sporting accident there may be funds within that sport.
- Some charities working with specific types of disability have funds available to assist those with that type of disability.

- Some charities will also help the children, widows, former partners and other dependants of people that are within their usual group of beneficiaries.

Many people have received help from workmates, former workmates, the crowd at the local pub and local charitable and philanthropic groups.

If you need a powered wheelchair or scooter in connection with paid work you should be able to obtain financial help through the Access to Work scheme. Contact your local Jobcentre Plus for details.

A bank or other personal loan is often the best way to raise finance at comparatively low interest rates.

You will find leaflets at the major supermarkets and at the Post Office for their own brand loans and these can be compared with what is on offer from banks and building societies. Most loans of this size are unsecured, but if you choose a secured loan remember that your home can be taken from you if you fail to make the payments.

 Using a credit card offers a particular additional benefit due to consumer credit law. If you pay at least £100 using a credit card, you will receive extra protection if the supplier goes out of business, or fails to deliver the goods, or fails to honour the warranty or a maintenance contract.

This protection does not apply to debit cards or charge cards, or to cards issued to a limited company.

Watch out for the interest and charges on some types of consumer finance. Loans from companies that call at your door to collect payments are often extremely expensive.

Some suppliers will offer finance schemes. Again do check the interest rate. Credit unions are an excellent way to obtain a loan, but may require you to save with them for a period before obtaining a loan.



The Motability Powered Wheelchair and Scooter Scheme, offers an all-inclusive hire plan. For a fixed payment taken out of the mobility component of your Disability Living Allowance (DLA) you get your choice of powered wheelchair or scooter complete with comprehensive insurance, a 'get you home' and recovery service if you have a breakdown, maintenance and all parts, including tyres and batteries.

This provides the real assurance of no unexpected bills for repairs and no saving up for new batteries.

Each contract runs for three years and at the end you return the equipment and start a new contract with new equipment.

❖ **Motability also offers a purchase plan that does not offer the same extras, but does include insurance.**

Under this scheme you make payments from your DLA for one, two or three years and at the end of the contract the equipment is yours to keep. You also have to find extra money for repairs, maintenance and things like replacement batteries.

To ensure good customer service Motability requires all their dealers to ask questions to ensure that the right equipment is supplied first time. They follow this up with demonstrations before you purchase and provide safety training when they make delivery.

❖ **Disabled people purchasing, hiring or maintaining a powered wheelchair or scooter should never have to pay VAT.**

The supplier should provide a declaration for completion by the customer. If in doubt, check that you are not being charged VAT. You cannot claim a refund of VAT from HM Revenue and Customs, but may sometimes be able to persuade the supplier to adjust the price previously paid.

Operating Costs

Batteries

Recharging the batteries will use electricity, but this is unlikely to be a significant cost. You may save money by having a meter that charges less off peak or by charging the batteries during the cheap period. A simple timer can be used to switch on the charger at the right time.

Always observe the safety advice given by the manufacturers as charging batteries may be dangerous if not done properly. Following instructions can also prolong the life of batteries.

It's difficult to estimate how long equipment will last as it does depend on how you look after it

Maintenance and Repairs

Unless you are using the Motability hire plan or have a maintenance contract, you will need to budget for maintenance and repairs.

Talk to your supplier before buying and find out what batteries, tyres and maintenance cost and how often you will have to spend this. Also find out if you will have to pay a call out charge and how much this is.

You can sometimes save money by shopping around for batteries and tyres, but do check that they are of at least equivalent quality. Tyres will last longer if kept correctly inflated, but may not last very long if used on stony paths or where sharp edges are found.



Replacement equipment

Remember too that you will eventually have to pay to replace your equipment unless you have chosen the Motability hire plan.

It's difficult to estimate how long equipment will last as it does depend on how you look after it, how much you use it and how you use it.

Remember that, if you choose a supplier who cannot be sure about spare part availability, you may have to scrap the equipment long before it is worn out if parts cannot be obtained. Try to put some money aside in a savings account each month towards a replacement.

Best Practice

If you have chosen a supplier that offers a full customer service, you will receive advice and training when your equipment is delivered

If you have a carer, try to arrange for them to be there when you receive training.

Using your equipment

Make sure you know how to operate the equipment and how to recharge the batteries.

If it is a Class 3 vehicle make certain you know how to adjust it to the 4mph setting for use on footpaths and in shopping centres. It's an offence to use the 8mph setting, except on roads.

Start with gentle slopes and kerbs until you are sure you can safely cope with this sort of hazard. Tackling something that is too difficult for you can result in an accident, so make sure you learn to cope with tricky obstacles.

It may help to take a fit friend or carer with you at first so that they can help you if you get stuck.

Public transport

If your equipment is suitable for use on public transport and services are available, do give it a try. Again, taking a friend at first may help. Just think how far you can go if you can get on a bus or train!

Some mobility centres (see page 22) and local disability organisations can offer training in the use of powered wheelchairs and scooters. In some places you can also get help with using public transport until you are used to it.

Be safe

Never use the equipment when you are unfit to do so through alcohol or drugs. Make sure you can see adequately to use the equipment safely and wear your distance spectacles or contact lenses if you need these.

If you use a hearing aid, always use it when using your powered wheelchair or scooter outside of your home. Never carry more luggage or shopping than is safe as you may lose control or even tip over. Never carry a passenger.

••• Be seen

If you have to use your equipment on the road you may want to improve your visibility to other road users.

Fluorescent and reflective waistcoats, like those worn by many site workers are inexpensive and could save your life.

You may want a second one to hang over the back of the seat. You can also add extra fluorescent reflectors to improve your safety.



••• Think of others

Do think about other users of the paths, roads and shopping centres where you are driving.

Think particularly about the potential risk you pose to small children and disabled people who may have visual impairments. Treat others in the way you would like to be treated.

••• Insurance

Unless insurance has been included with your purchase this is an essential extra.

Insurance is not legally required, but you should, at the very least, insure against claims from third parties.

For example, if you knock someone over, run over their foot, knock over a display of expensive goods, scrape down the side of a parked car or cause others to have an accident while crossing the road you could face a claim.

⌈ If you have to use your equipment on the road you may want to improve your visibility to other road users ⌋

❖ **A good insurance policy will typically cover you for:**

- Comprehensive 'All Risks' cover including loss or damage as a result of accidental damage, fire, theft and vandalism.
- 'New for Old' so that your equipment will be replaced if it is stolen and not recovered or if it is damaged beyond economic repair as long as the machine is less than two years old.
- A daily allowance if your machine is out of action following an insured event.
- 'Public Liability' cover for you (or your carer) for third party injury or damage caused by using your powered wheelchair or scooter.

Costs do vary, but will probably be between £45 and £85 per year, with a discount for longer periods paid in advance.



📌 **If necessary, use a cycle lock to fix it to a cycle rack, lamp post or street sign** 📌

You may also be able to add cover for ongoing repairs, but this will increase the cost very substantially.

There is no AA or RAC 'get you home' service for powered wheelchairs and scooters.

Some insurance schemes will allow you to add cover for the cost of getting home if you are stranded by an accident or breakdown.

If you leave your equipment unattended there is a real risk that it will be stolen by selfish people who do not realise that it is your essential mobility aid.

If you have to park your powered wheelchair or scooter unattended make sure that it is equipped with a key operated switch and always remove this when leaving it parked.

If necessary, use a cycle lock to fix it to a cycle rack, lamp post or street sign.

Insurers will not pay out for theft or vandalism if the user has not taken proper precautions to prevent an incident.

Your Rights

When you buy goods from any trader you enter into a contract, which is controlled by many laws. The law gives you certain rights.

❖ The law says that goods should be as follows:

- Of satisfactory quality.
- Fit for the purpose that goods of this type are generally sold.

❖ You may have additional rights where contracts involve:

- Credit, especially if you have paid using your credit card.
- Distance selling not involving face-to-face contact. For example, internet, catalogue or telephone sales.
- Unsolicited phone call or visit to your home.

❖ What are you entitled to ask for?

If the goods are faulty at the time of sale, you are entitled to request one of the following remedies, depending on the circumstances:

- A full refund if the goods have not been 'accepted'.

If 'acceptance' has taken place, then only the following can be claimed:

- Compensation (damages)
- Repair or replacement
- Refund or reduction in price

Once you have chosen a solution and the trader has agreed, you must give a reasonable time for the trader to action before switching to another one.

Ultimately, if a solution cannot be agreed upon, then the courts have the power to choose the course of action to be taken.

❖ If you are claiming repair or replacement more than six months after purchase, the burden of proof is back to YOU, the consumer

❖ Proving the fault

If you have not accepted the goods and are rejecting and claiming a full refund or damages, it is **YOU**, the consumer, who needs to prove that there has been a breach of contract, in that the goods are not of satisfactory quality, fit for purpose or as described at the time of purchase.

If you are claiming repair or replacement within the first six months after purchase, it is **THE TRADER** who has to prove that the goods conformed to the contract at the time of sale.

If you are claiming repair or replacement more than six months after purchase, the burden of proof is back to **YOU**, the consumer.

Consumer rights – who to go to for further advice

■ Consumer Direct

A website providing help and advice for consumers in Great Britain. Visit www.consumerdirect.gov.uk or call **08454 04 05 06**

■ Office of Fair Trading

Publishes a range of consumer advice, see www.oft.gov.uk

■ Trading Standards

Local authority trading standards also issue consumer advice, many of whom will provide individual advice for people living in their area.

The website www.tradingstandards.gov.uk provides contact details for all trading standards departments around the UK

■ CAB – Citizens Advice Bureaux

Provide free confidential and independent advice from over 3,400 locations throughout the UK.

Their website provides contact details of a local office near you.

Visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk or call Monday - Friday 5.30pm-8.00pm or Saturday 10am-1pm **0844 902 0021**.

■ BHTA

Members of the British Healthcare Trades Association are required to conduct their business in accordance with a code of conduct. BHTA operates an arbitration service to settle complaints made against members.

See their website www.bhta.com or call **020 7702 2141**.



❖ Guarantees

If the manufacturer of the goods provides a free guarantee or warranty with the goods, he is obliged to honour his commitments.

If the manufacturer fails to honour the guarantee, you could sue the manufacturer.

A guarantee is extra to your rights under the Sale of Goods Act.

A trader or manufacturer is under no obligation to provide a guarantee, and if they do, they can specify any time span.

‘ When you are buying goods from a private individual, you don’t have the same rights as when buying from a trader ’

They can also specify what is to be covered by the guarantee, and exclude certain parts, or wear and tear. They cannot, however, take away any rights you would have under the Sale of Goods Act.

The law considers that the seller of the goods is always liable for breaches of contract, such as goods being faulty. So even if there is a guarantee, the seller must rectify the faults if you request this.

If you have been injured as a result of any goods, you should seek immediate advice from a solicitor.



❖ Some problem areas when buying goods:

Private sales

When you buy goods from a private individual, you don't have the same rights as when buying from a trader.

The legal principle of 'caveat emptor', or 'buyer beware', operates.

You have no rights to expect that goods are of satisfactory quality or fit for their purpose, but there is a requirement that they should be 'as described'. You should check goods thoroughly before you buy them.

Second-hand goods

The Sale of Goods Act applies to second-hand goods. When considering whether goods are of satisfactory quality you should take into account the lower expectations of second-hand goods.

Information and Contacts

Secure outdoor stores for powered wheelchairs and scooters

■ Scooter Store Ltd

Unit 11
Italstyle Buildings
Cambridge Road
Harlow
CM20 2HE
Tel: 01279 453565
www.scooterstoreltd.co.uk

■ Securit (GB) Limited

Unit 4
Fan Road
Staveley
Chesterfield
S43 3PT
Tel: 01246 470996
www.securit.gb.com

Organisations

■ Mobilise Organisation

(A national charity covering all aspects of personal mobility and offering a powered wheelchair and scooter insurance scheme)

Cottingham Way
Thrapston
Northamptonshire
NN14 4PL
Tel: 01832 734724

■ DDA National Headquarters

Ashwellthorpe
Norwich
NR16 1EX
Tel: 0870 770 3333

■ Forum of Mobility Centres

(For details of mobility centres that can advise on powered wheelchairs and scooters and on loading these into a vehicle)

Providence Chapel
Warehorne
Ashford TN26 2JX
Tel: 0800 559 3636
www.mobility-centres.org.uk

■ Whizz-Kidz

(Charity providing advice and support for children requiring mobility aids)

Elliot House
10-12 Allington Street
London SW1E 5EH
Tel: 020 7233 6600
www.whizz-kidz.org.uk

■ Ricability

(Publishes a number of useful reports, including "Getting a wheelchair into a car" and "Wheels within wheels - A guide to using a wheelchair on public transport")

30 Angel Gate
City Road
London
EC1V 2PT
Tel: 020 7427 2460
Textphone: 020 7427 2469
www.ricability.org.uk

■ BHTA (British Healthcare Trades Association)

(A trade association for suppliers and manufacturers)

New Loom House
Suite 4.06
101 Back Church Lane
London
E1 1LU
Tel: 020 7702 2141
www.bhta.com



Insurance

■ **Alexander Forbes
Mobility Services**
Tel: 020 7933 0000
www.alexanderforbes.co.uk

■ **Chartwell Insurance**
292 Hale Lane
Edgware HA8 8NP
Tel: 020 8958 0900
or
0800 652 4652
www.chartwellinsurance.co.uk

■ **Fish Insurance**
3-4 Riversway Business
Village
Navigation Way
Preston
PR2 2YP
Tel: 01772 724442
or
0500 432141
www.fishinsurance.co.uk

■ **Mark Bates Ltd**
MBL Insurance
Premier House
Harlaxton Road
Grantham
NG31 7JX
Tel: 01476 593887

Motability Powered Wheelchair and Scooter Scheme

■ **Route2mobility**
Newbury Road
Enham Alamein
Andover
SP11 6JS
Tel: 0845 607 6260
www.motability.co.uk

Charitable sources of funding

■ **SSAFA**
19 Queen Elizabeth Street
London
SE1 2LP
Tel: 0845 1300 975
www.ssafa.org.uk

■ **The Royal British Legion**
48 Pall Mall
London
SW1Y 5JY
Tel: 08457 725 725
www.britishlegion.org.uk

Exhibitions of interest:

■ **Mobility Roadshow**
Tel: 0845 241 0390
www.mobilityroadshow.co.uk

■ **Naidex**
Tel: 0870 429 4428
www.naidex.co.uk

■ **Independent Living Show**
Tel: 020 7874 0200
www.independentlivingevents.co.uk

Source of funding:

■ **The Association of Charity
Officers Helpline**
Tel: 01707 651777
www.aco.uk.net



Summary

Before you buy your powered wheelchair or scooter, the following list will help you find what you need to know

- Scooter or powered wheelchair?
- Class 2 or Class 3?
- How will I use it?
- Where will I use it?
- What distance do I need to cover?
- Does it need to go in a car?
- Do I want to be able to use it on public transport?
- Do I need features like kerb climbers, special seating or special controls?
- Where will I store and charge it?
- What sort of supplier do I want buy from?
- Is it suitable for ME?
- Do I want advice when I buy?
- Do I want the equipment set up and training provided when it is delivered?
- How will I finance it?
- Do I need to get financial help?
- Is insurance included in the price or will I need to arrange this vitally important extra?
- Will I be able to afford the repairs and maintenance if this is not included in the price?
- What is included in the price?

Thousands of people buy a powered wheelchair or scooter every year and for nearly all of them it is a positive, life-changing experience.



This may all seem very daunting, but if you approach this important purchase with care and take your time you should be able to make a big difference to your personal mobility.

Thousands of people buy a powered wheelchair or scooter every year and for nearly all of them it is a positive, life-enhancing experience.

The opportunity to go out independently, where you want and when you want.



Case Studies



Annabelle

Annabelle took our advice. She can walk short distances unaided and drives a small estate car. She wanted to be able to get around the Trafford Centre near Manchester as she loves shopping, but her disability made this too tiring.

She chose a fairly small scooter that she lifts into her car using a specially designed hoist. For the first time in several years, she is able to get round the clothes shops without being worn out and sometimes fits in lunch with friends and a visit to the cinema.



Pete

Pete lives in the outskirts of Birmingham and works for a charity near the city centre. He has some standing ability and can walk a few steps. He has a scooter and a powered wheelchair he uses at work whilst at home he uses a manual wheelchair. Pete keeps his scooter in the back of his Vauxhall Astra Estate and uses a hoist to lift it in. The hoist was fitted by the same local company that fitted the hand controls to his car. He had to pay for the scooter himself, but received a grant towards this from a charity.

Pete's powered wheelchair is kept at his workplace and was paid for under the Access to Work scheme. A colleague brings it out to him when he arrives at work and it's stored in the office and charged each night. Pete explained that without the scooter he would never be able to go out in his car independently and get out and about once he arrived at his destination. He uses it when he goes shopping, when he takes his children to the park, when he visits the hospital and when he goes to watch his son play rugby for the school team. Recently he used it to march his ten year old twins to school, despite their protests that they wanted to go in the car!



Maggie

Maggie lives in a care home in Milton Keynes. She had a manual wheelchair, but was dependent on others to go out. Using our advice she chose a powered wheelchair that was suitable for using in the local taxis. She now goes to church using her powered wheelchair to travel along the local cycle path network and finds the journey really pleasant when the weather is good.

She also uses a local taxi firm to take her in her powered wheelchair to the local theatre once a month, where she meets up with her daughter for a meal before the performance. She is able to stay in her wheelchair in the restaurant and the theatre, which makes life so much easier.



❖ Wendy

Wendy lives in Harrogate. She used to have a manual wheelchair in her flat, but as her hands are so badly affected by arthritis she could only move it around by using her feet. She admits that even then it only worked on good level surfaces. Wendy now has a powered wheelchair with a rising seat.

She says it's great to be able to use the rising seat to reach the higher shelves at the supermarket and the racks in the clothes store without struggling or having to ask for help.

It also means she can be at the right height at tables in meetings and restaurants and to talk to people who are standing up. She uses her powered wheelchair to access a specially adapted Renault Kangoo.

❖ Duncan

Reading our advice made Duncan realise that there are scooters and wheelchairs designed for rough terrain. He was a country sports enthusiast before he broke his spine and misses being able to get about on rough grass and tracks.

He has been to see a specialist dealer about 30 miles from home and has now arranged to try out some heavy duty powered wheelchairs and scooters before he makes a final decision. This has given him the freedom to go where he wants and when he wants.

❖ Carol

Carol increasingly struggled to walk longer distances and decided that a scooter might be a good solution. She ordered one after more than three hours of high pressure selling from a salesman who had made an appointment to visit her at home after she had entered a competition to win one in a national newspaper. "The salesman just wouldn't go. In the end I just gave in as I was really tired and it was the only way to get him out of the house." Under pressure, Carol bought a scooter for £3,000 that was much larger than she needed and she's never been able to use it as much as she'd hoped.

Since then she's seen lots of other scooters for under £2,000 which would have been far more suitable for her needs. "I would advise anyone not to make these decisions in a hurry and to always shop around".

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London EC1V 8AF
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Minicom: 020 7250 4119
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E-mail: radar@radar.org.uk
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