

INFORMATION SHEET

Specialist equipment and safety adaptations



making a difference
to the lives of people with
severe learning disabilities

This sheet contains information about specialist equipment for children and adults with severe learning disabilities who are described as having challenging behaviour, and lists some of the considerations which can help to improve safety and protect the living environment. Suppliers' contact details are listed at the end. Inclusion in this list does not constitute an endorsement from the CBF. Readers are encouraged to evaluate the benefits and risks of each product before purchase.

Assistive Technology

There are a variety of sensors available that can alert family carers to changes in the environment; pressure sensors are available to detect someone leaving a room or leaving their bed, alarms or alerts can sense when someone has an epileptic fit in bed or has wet the bed (an 'enuresis' sensor). These types of technology can save regular checking and allow the child or adult more independence and privacy. There are also automatic lights that sense when someone enters or leaves a room. There are a number of companies who make these types of assistive technology; a list of products with advice and ratings is available at www.telecaremadeeasy.org.uk. This website is produced by the charity Disabled Living Foundation, who do not review or test products, but give information and advice on choosing the right product. There is also guidance on the ethical issues of assistive technology on this website.

All our information sheets are available to download free of charge because we believe that money should not be a barrier to getting the information you need, when you need it. Please consider a donation to support our work. Thank you

Bathroom

If shower or towel rails are pulled down, magnetic versions (which pull apart from the brackets under pressure and can be re-attached) are available from Primera. Special fittings can prevent baths or basins overflowing; Nova-Flo is a device that turns off the taps if the bath is flooding, by sensing the water has reached a certain level (www.nova-flo.com). Magiplug is a plug with a sensor that detects the pressure from the water and opens the plug to let out water when the level is too high (www.magiplug.com).

Beds & Bedding

Virtually indestructible mattresses are available from Endura and Link Design (but are expensive!). One parent contacted the local hospital to purchase a plastic covered mattress after her daughter constantly ripped mattress covers and waterproof sheeting, and this was also easier to clean. Bedding should be made from cotton, to withstand high temperature washes. Tough Furniture and Endura produce beds which can be fixed to the floor if required.

Clothing

Clothes may need to be altered to suit someone's likes and dislikes of fabrics or behaviours and abilities of dressing/undressing. Clothing Solutions will adapt clothes or tailor from scratch to suit specific needs, such as using preferred fabrics or making nightwear 'all-in-one'; it is a charity and only covers costs with the prices. Adaptawear have a wide range of adult clothes for people who find zips and buttons difficult.

Curtains

If curtain rails are pulled down curtains with a Velcro tab top are available from Colourways. Magnetic curtain rails which pull apart under pressure and can be re-attached are available from Primera. Lockable wooden shutters are another alternative, or using a plastic stick-on covering (available from most DIY stores) to give privacy whilst still letting in the light.

Doors

Doors and doorframes may suffer damage. Internal doors can be replaced by sturdier fireproof doors, and can be fixed to the frames with heavy duty hinges. More hinges than the conventional two can help, but such strengthening may result in problems with the door frames coming away from the walls. Consult a carpenter about the best course of action to take for your individual needs. The use of window locks for the top of doors can prevent access to 'out of bounds' rooms. Plastic clips and magnetic locks can also be fitted (from Fledgings). A spyhole in the bedroom door enables you to check on your child without disturbing him/her; these are available at most DIY stores. (Check that the spyhole has 180° viewing range).

Electrical equipment

Electrical sockets should, if possible, be located outside the bedroom (or inside locked cupboards) enabling the use of tape recorders, televisions, etc (placed in a cupboard with a polycarbonate window). Light switches can be located outside the room, and lights should be dome type, not pendant. Stainless steel electrical sockets with lockable fronts (screw down flap) are available from most good electrical suppliers and plastic socket covers lockable with a key are available from Fledgings

Flooring

Vinyl flooring is easiest to keep clean and odour free. It should be securely fixed to the floor. Bolt safe flooring (2.5mm) is available from any carpet stockist. Durable washable carpet is a more expensive alternative (Gradus Carpets).

Furniture

A range of companies (Colourways, Endura and Link Design) supply waterproof chairs with removable covers. Endura also supply durable, heavy (but expensive) tables and chairs for use in challenging environments. Tough Furniture supply wardrobes, cupboards, etc, which can be fixed to walls. They have lockable drawers (to prevent them being removed to provide a climbing frame or for the destruction of their contents). Television cabinets with a polycarbonate screen and polycarbonate mirrors are available from Colourways and Tough Furniture.

Information Technology

There are a number of companies specialising in both software and hardware which can provide useful teaching tools and aids to language development. AVP provide literacy and numeracy software. Incentive Plus provide positive behaviour management and emotional literacy development products of all types. Inclusive Technology provide software learning tools with associated hardware, including a range of switches. Keytools provide adapted keyboards, mice and screens for all sorts of special needs. QED have a wide variety of learning and communication software, toys and equipment. Widgit Software provide picture and symbol software for literacy development, labelling and communication (including tailor made resources).

Radiators

Radiators can be boxed in to eliminate the danger of burns and also to limit the amount of noise which can be generated by hitting them. There are also radiators that are not hot to touch and underfloor heating for rooms where you need to avoid having any radiators.

Toys and Sensory Equipment

SensoryPlus (Endura), TFH Catalogue, SpaceKraft, QED, Rompa and Sensory Toy Warehouse provide various toys and other equipment relating to sensory environments, including calming objects and fidget toys. Rompa stock soft chairs and soft play items like wedges and tactile tunnel. Balance and movement equipment may help children who need extra input to sense where their body is and to improve their balance (available from Rompa, Sensory Plus, Sensory Toy Warehouse, SpaceKraft). Weighted clothes and blankets can create a feeling of pressure that is comforting for many children (Rompa, TFH). Learning games and books are available from Incentive Plus, such as 'Off we go! Going to buy clothes' or 'Going to the dentist' books. Sensory equipment is also available for adults, Age Appropriate Resources (part of TFH) sell games and equipment for adults.

Travel

To keep individuals safe when travelling by car, a large bucket type seat with a 5 point harness is available from In Car Safety or from Crelling Harnesses for the Disabled. Windmill Special Needs Co. Ltd are suppliers of magnetic harnesses and seat belt guards, ("Buckle Guard" and "Angel Guard") designed to fit over different seat belt mechanisms, making it difficult for the individual to undo the seat belt. A major buggy can be obtained from your local health authority. If necessary, you can ask for a 5 point harness to be fitted, and for those who drag their feet, a foot rest can be fitted. Simplantex Healthcare provides outdoor wheelchair accessories and TomCat Special Needs Products produce specially adapted trikes.

Wallcoverings

Painted walls are easy to clean, and eliminate the potential for unplanned wallpaper stripping and/or shredding and eating. Washable paints are preferable and a number of special effect paints are widely available with a protective washable finish. Posters, pictures and photos can be covered by a protective sheet of polycarbonate which will not crack or shatter. Padded wall cladding is available from Endura and protective wall features are available from Gradus and Intrad.

Windows

Ordinary glass can be replaced with strengthened safety glass or makrolon (polycarbonate). Made to measure makrolon sheets and acrylic windows are available from Eagle Boat Windows. Lockable windows are advisable for potential escapees (window locks can be easily fitted to most windows and are available at most DIY centres).

Wooden surfaces

Some children gnaw and bite wooden surfaces such as window sills and furniture. A 90° strong plastic edging strip (available from most DIY stores) can be fitted to wooden edges. Heavy duty surface protectors are available from Intrad.

Need an aid or piece of equipment which is not available commercially?

Several organisations manufacture tailor made equipment for disabled people:

- BIME design and manufacture items that are not available elsewhere, as a non-profit making charity they only charge for production costs.
- Cerebra Innovation Centre produce equipment and technology to support brain injured children, and adapt existing products.
- DEMAND make new products to meet individuals' needs and refurbish old equipment.
- MERU (Medical Engineering Resource Unit) is a charity that can provide a special "one-off" piece of equipment.
- REMAP (England, Northern Ireland and Wales) or REMAP Scotland is a charity which makes aids for individuals with a disability that are not available to buy commercially.

Still can't find what you need?

Fledglings is a charity which aims to help parents find the equipment they need for their disabled child.

Need help financing equipment?

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are given by local councils to make adaptations in the home or provide equipment that will make the disabled person more independent, safe in the home or make caring for them easier (Home Improvement Grants are available in Scotland). An Occupational Therapist should visit the person at home to assess what equipment is appropriate for them. You must apply for a DFG before buying any equipment or starting improvement works. DFGs are not means tested when they are for a disabled child up to 19 years old. For adults over 19 years a financial assessment will be carried out and any percentage of the costs can be offered. The money can be given as a direct payment to fund the equipment family would prefer, rather than the choice available from the council, direct payments can also be 'topped up' with the family's own money.

When buying equipment and safety adaptations for a disabled child or adult, the purchase is exempt from VAT. Most suppliers should have a VAT exemption form; however a template is available from the HMRC website (www.hmrc.gov.uk).

If the item needed cannot be funded by a DFG, then you may be able to get some help toward it from charity or trust funding. A number of charities that give grants, such as the Family Fund, are listed below. Wider lists are available from Contact a Family and Disabled Living Foundation. For help finding a grant Turn 2 Us have a database of trusts and funds, such as trusts related to the profession of a parent or the religion of the family.

Suppliers

Adaptawear

Moray House
39 St John's Street
Perth, PH1 5HQ
Telephone: 0845 643 9492
Website: www.adaptawear.com

BIME (Bath Institute of Mechanical
Engineering)
Tel: 01225 824103

AVP

Angel House
Sherston, Malmesbury
Wiltshire SN16 0LH
Email: info@avp.co.uk, sales@avp.co.uk
Website: www.avp.co.uk

Cerebra Innovation Centre

Tel: 0800 328 1159
Website: www.cerebra.org.uk/parent_support/cic

Website: www.bime.org.uk
Email: info@bime.org.uk

Clothing Solutions

Ms Sandra Hunt
Unit 1 Jubilee Mills
30 North Street
Bradford BD1 4EW
Tel: 01274 746739
Email:
enquiries@clothingsolutions.org.uk

Crelling Harnesses for Disabled Ltd

12 Crescent East,
Thornton Cleveleys
Lancashire, FY5 3LJ
Tel: 01253 852298
Email: info@crelling.com
Website: www.crelling.com

Endura

The Kirton Healthcare Group Ltd
23 Rookwood Way,
Haverhill, Suffolk
CB9 8PB
Tel: 0800 212709
Email: enquiries@endura-furniture.co.uk
Web: www.endura-furniture.co.uk

Gradus Ltd.

Park Green, Macclesfield, Cheshire,
SK11 7LZ
Tel: 01625 428922
Website: www.gradusworld.com
E-mail: imail@gradusworld.com

Inclusive Technology Ltd

Riverside Court, Huddersfield Road,
Delph,
Oldham, OL3 5FZ
Tel: 01457 819790
Email: inclusive@inclusive.co.uk
Website: www.inclusive.co.uk

Intrad Ltd

St Albans Road West, Hatfield,
Hertfordshire, AL10 0TF
Tel: 0800 0643 545
Email: sales@intrad.com
Website: www.intrad-direct.com

Email: info@cerebra.org.uk

Colourways

Tel: 01489 580978
Email: sales@colourwaysltd.com
Website: www.colourwaysltd.com

DEMAND

Tel: 01923 681800 (South) or 01484 666261 (North)
Website: www.demand.org.uk

Disabled Living Foundation

380-384 Harrow Road
London W9 2HU
Helpline: 0845 130 9177
Switchboard: 020 7289 6111
Website: www.dlf.org.uk

Fledglings

Wenden Court
Station Approach
Wendens Ambo
Saffron Walden, CB11 4LB.
Tel: 0845 458 1124 (part-time)
Email: enquiries@fledglings.org.uk
Website: www.fledglings.org.uk

In Car Safety (Mail Order and showrooms)

Unit 5, Erica Road
Stacey Bushes Trading Ctr
Stacey Bushes
Milton Keynes, MK12 6HS
Tel: 01908 220909
(N.I. 028 9074 2052)
Email: info@incarsafetycentre.co.uk
Website: www.incarsafetycentre.co.uk

Incentive Plus

70 Alston Drive
Bradwell Abbey, Milton Keynes,
MK13 9HG
Tel: 01908 326940
Email: info@incentiveplus.co.uk
Website: www.incentiveplus.co.uk

Jenx Ltd

Wardsend Road
Sheffield, S6 1RQ
Tel: 0144 285 3376
Email: sales@jenx.com
Website: www.jenx.com

Keytools

Abacus House
1 Spring Crescent,
Southampton, SO17 2FZ
Tel: 023 8029 4500
Website: www.keytools.co.uk

Link design

Bridge Cottage
Middleton, Ludlow
Shropshire, SY8 2DY
Tel: 01584 877167
Email: info@linkdesign.co.uk
Website: www.linkdesign.co.uk

Magiplug

Sales & Marketing:
Mike Green
Tel: 07831 163 558
Email: mike@magiplug.com
Vinay Patel
Tel: 07812 743 232
Email: vinay@magiplug.com

MERU

Unit 2, Eclipse Estate
30 West Hill, Epsom
Surrey, KT19 8DJ
Tel: 01372 725 203
Email: info@meru.org.uk
Website: www.meru.org.uk

Nova-Flo®

About Time Design Ltd
Southbank Technopark
90 London Road
London SE1 6LN
Tel: 020 7793 2260
Website: www.nova-flo.com

Primera Ltd

Unit 8, Bankfield House,
Bristol Avenue, Blackpool,
Lancashire, FY2 0JF
Tel: 01253 508 643
Email: sales@pimeralife.co.uk
Website: www.pimeralife.co.uk

QED – Quality Enabling Devices

Unit D16, Heritage Business Park
Heritage Way
Gosport
Hampshire PO12 4BG,
Tel: 023 9258 0600
Email: sales@qedonline.co.uk
Website: www.qedonline.co.uk

Remap (Head Office)

D9, Chaucer Business Park
Kemsing, Sevenoaks
Kent, TN15 6YU
Contact for local panels of engineers around the UK
Tel: 0845 130 0456
Website: www.remap.org.uk

ROMPA®

Goyt Side Road
Chesterfield
Derbyshire S40 2PH
Tel: 08452 301 177
/01246 211 777
Email: sales@rompa.com
Website: www.rompa.com

Sensory Toy Warehouse

2c Zig Zag Road,
Wallasey,
Merseyside
CH45 7NZ
Tel: 0151 200 9841
Email: info@sensorytoywarehouse.com
Website: www.sensorytoywarehouse.com

Simplantex Healthcare

FREEPOST NAT3328,
Eastbourne,
BN21 3ZW
Tel: 0800 9800 150
Email: orders@simplantex.co.uk
Website: www.simplantex.co.uk

SpaceKraft Ltd

Titus House, 29 Solitaire Road,
ShIPLEY, West Yorkshire
BD18 3HH
Tel: 01274 581007
Email: enquiries@spacekraft.co.uk
Website: www.spacekraft.co.uk

TFH Catalogue

5 – 7 Severnside Business Park
Severn Road, Stourport on Severn
Worcestershire DY13 9HT

TomCat Special Needs Products

13/9 The Gloucester Business Park, Hucclecote,
Gloucestershire,
GL3 4AA

Tel: 01299 827820
Website: www.specialneedstoys.com
For adults: www.ageappropriateresources.com

Tough Furniture Ltd

Stokewood Road,
Craven Arms Business Park,
Craven Arms,
Shropshire, SY7 8NR
Tel: 01588 674340
Email: sales@toughfurniture.com
Website: www.toughfurniture.com

Windmill Special Needs Co. Ltd

21 Lune Street,
Oldham, OL8 1BP
Tel: 0161 345 5361/07932 746324
Email: mick@windmillspecialneeds.co.uk
Website: www.windmillspecialneeds.co.uk

Tel: 01452 616900
Email: info@tomcatuk.org
Website: www.tomcatspecialneeds.co.uk

Widgit Software Ltd

26 Queen Street, Cubbington,
Leamington Spa,
Warwickshire, CV32 7NA
Tel: 01926 333680
Email: info@widgit.com
Website: www.widgit.com

Grant giving charities

ACT

Grants for building work, equipment and respite breaks
The Grants Manager
61 Thames Street
Windsor
Berkshire SL4 1QW
Tel: 01753 753900
Email: info@theactfoundation.co.uk
Website: www.theactfoundation.co.uk

Caudwell Children

Grants for equipment, communication aids, or therapy
Minton Hollins,
Shelton Old Road,
Stoke-on-Trent,
Staffordshire, ST4 7RY
Tel: 0845 300 1348
Email: charity@caudwellchildren.com
Website: www.caudwellchildren.com

Cerebra

Grants for equipment and therapies
2nd Floor Offices, Lyric Buildings
King Street
Carmarthen
SA31 1BD
Tel: 01267 244200
Email: info@cerebra.org.uk
Website: www.cerebra.org.uk

Children Today Charitable Trust

Grants for mobility aids, communication aids and sensory equipment
The Moorings
Rowton Bridge, Christleton
Chester, CH3 7AE
Tel: 01244 335622
Email: info@childrentoday.org.uk
Website: www.childrentoday.org.uk

Family Fund

Grants for severely disabled children under 17
4 Alpha Court
Monks Cross Drive
York
YO32 9WN
Tel: 0845 130 4542
Email: info@familyfund.org.uk
Website: www.familyfund.org.uk

Independence at Home

For disabled children and adults where statutory funding is not available
4th Floor, Congress House
14 Lyon Road
Harrow HA1 2EN
Tel: 020 8427 7929
Email: iah@independenceathome.org.uk
Website: www.independenceathome.org.uk

Lifeline 4 Kids

For disabled children under 18, families and schools/respite

Appeals Team
215 West End Lane
West Hampstead
London NW6 1XJ
Tel: 020 7794 1661
Email: appeals@lifeline4kids.org

Newlife (BDF) Child and Family Fund

For children under 18 with birth defects or
congenital conditions
Newlife Centre
Hemlock Way, Cannock,
Staffordshire, WS11 7GF
Tel: 01543 462 777
Email: info@newlifecharity.co.uk
Website: www.newlifecharity.co.uk

Help finding funding:

Contact a Family

Tel: 0808 808 3555
Email: helpline@cafamily.org.uk
Website: www.cafamily.org.uk

Turn 2 Us

Tel: 0808 802 2000
Website: www.turn2us.org.uk

Further Reading:

Housing Options Factsheet 3: Adapting your home: www.housingoptions.co.uk

Disabled Living Foundation website on equipment: www.Livingmadeeasy.org.uk/children

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