



Parkinson's
Disease Society

Equipment and Disability Aids

The PDS receives many enquiries from people asking what equipment the Society recommends for people with Parkinson's, how it can be obtained, and whether funding is available to help meet the costs.

All kinds of equipment are available to help people who have difficulties with activities of daily living. However, the PDS cannot provide recommendations on specific pieces of equipment that may be particularly suitable for people with Parkinson's. This is because Parkinson's is a very individual condition and what suits one person may not suit another. Equipment can be expensive and is not always the answer to a particular person's needs.

For all these reasons, if you are considering buying services or equipment to help you manage day-to-day, you should first have an assessment from a relevant therapist. They will assess your needs and make recommendations accordingly. These may involve equipment, exercises, making changes to the way you do something to make it easier to do or other kinds of treatment. If the therapist suggests equipment, he or she should be able to advise you on suppliers and funding.

We know of many people who have bought equipment without a proper assessment and then found the item they bought was unsuitable and has therefore been unused.

What type of therapist can advise on equipment?

The type of therapist you need depends on what kind of activity is causing you problems.

If you need help with activities of daily living (like washing, bathing, dressing, eating, reading and writing), the relevant therapist is likely to be the occupational therapist. They can also advise on equipment to help with leisure activities such as gardening or

sport. See PDS leaflet **Occupational Therapy and Parkinson's**.

If you have mobility problems and think you need equipment to help you get around both inside and outside then you need to see a physiotherapist, although occupational therapists can often advise on equipment such as wheelchairs. See PDS information sheet **Physiotherapy**.

If you need help with communication, such as speech, facial expression or swallowing, a speech and language therapist will be able to advise. See PDS information sheet **Speech and Language Therapy**.

There can be an overlap of roles between these professions. You may find in some areas an occupational therapist may order equipment that would be ordered by a physiotherapist in another area. Your GP, consultant/hospital specialist or Parkinson's Disease Nurse Specialist should be able to advise further on local arrangements.

You can also seek advice from your local social services office or Citizen's Advice Bureau. The number should be in the local telephone book.

Depending on the local arrangements, some of these therapists can be contacted directly and all can be reached through your GP, consultant/hospital doctor or Parkinson's Disease Nurse Specialist. Occupational therapists can also be contacted via your local social services department.

Where can I find further information and advice?

You can find further information on equipment and disability aids by contacting the Disabled Living Foundation (see the useful addresses section below) or by visiting your local Disabled Living Centre.



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For details of your local Disabled Living Centre contact **Assist UK** (formally the Disabled Living Centres Council):

Assist UK

Redbank House
4 St Chad's Street
Manchester M8 8QA
<http://www.assist-uk.org>

What about funding?

Who pays for the equipment will depend on the type of equipment in question and the funding is available in your local area or from other sources of funding.

Some local Red Cross groups may run loan services for some types of equipment such as wheelchairs. For further details call Red Cross Customer Services on 0870 7397391 or visit their website www.redcross.org.uk.

Some voluntary organisations or trusts have funds for equipment, but each will have their own eligibility criteria. They are often associated with churches, professional and trade organisations, armed services or particular localities so the applicants would need to establish a connection with a relevant fund. These may be local or national organisations.

The Disabled Living Foundation publishes a fact sheet, Sources of Funding and Obtaining Equipment for Disabled and Older People which can be downloaded from their website or ordered by post. **The Directory of Social Change** produces A Guide to Grants for Individuals in Need which contains a list of organisations that will give grants and funding. Your local library or bookshop may stock it, or you can order it for £34.95 plus £5.50 postage from:

The Directory of Social Change,
24 Stephenson Way
London NW1 2DP
Telephone: 08450 777707

email: books@dsc.org.uk
Website: www.dsc.org.uk

An organisation called **Charity Search** provides information on sources of funding for older people. Contact them at:

Charity Search, 25 Portview Road,
Avonmouth, Bristol BS11 9LD
Telephone: 0117 982 4060

The PDS also operates the Mali Jenkins help fund to assist people with Parkinson's who are experiencing financial difficulty with special needs for equipment. One-off grants to a maximum of £250 can be made to applicants provided that they meet the eligibility criteria (ie savings of less than £3,000 for an individual and £6,000 for a couple). For more information contact: Advisory Services on 020 7932 1336.

The PDS advises that no item of equipment should be purchased by anyone unless the person who requires the equipment has been assessed by an appropriate therapist to ensure that the equipment suits the particular person's needs. A therapist may also be able to obtain the item at a lower price. Be particularly cautious if you are thinking of buying equipment from a door-to-door salesperson.

If you are disabled you may be entitled to Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance. These are benefits to help disabled people meet the extra cost of living expenses relating to their disability including equipment.

If you are on certain kinds of benefits you may be eligible for a grant from the Social Fund, a government fund that makes financial payments to people in need. It is divided into two parts. A regulated social fund and a discretionary social fund. The latter provides a one-off lump sum payment either on a grant or interest free loan basis for needs that are difficult to meet from weekly benefits.



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There are three types of payments –community care grants, crisis loans and budgeting loans.

Community care grants are intended to promote community care by assisting people who are on Income Support, income based Job Seekers Allowance or Pension Credit to live independently in the community. This grant may be particularly relevant for 'families who are living under exceptional pressure' – for example where problems are being experienced as a result of a particular disability.

You can apply for a community care grant using form SF300.

Crisis loans are interest-free, repayable loans for people (whether on benefit or not) unable to meet their short-term needs in a crisis. You can apply for a crisis loan by using form SF401.

Budgeting loans are interest-free, repayable loans intended to help people who have been on Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance or Pension Credit for at least 26 weeks to meet intermittent expenses for specified items for which it may be difficult to budget, enabling the cost to be spread over a period of time. You can apply for a budgeting loan using form SF500.

All forms are available from your local Jobcentre Plus office and the Department of Work and Pensions website: www.dwp.gov.uk.

More information on the Social Fund is available in the PDS welfare benefits information sheet WB15 The Social Fund, available on the PDS website – www.parkinsons.org.uk or by phoning 020 7932 1340.

Can I get exemption from VAT on equipment I buy?

Some goods may qualify for relief, including some medical and surgical appliances, some adaptations to your home, certain pieces

of equipment and emergency alarm call systems.

Further information about VAT relief on equipment for people with disabilities is contained in the Customs & Excise booklet 701/7. This can be obtained either from their website (www.hmrc.gov.uk) which also has a useful Frequently Asked Questions sheet on People with Disabilities and VAT, or by contacting your local Customs & Excise VAT office. You can find the phone number in your local phone directory under Customs & Excise.

NB: VAT relief is not payable on goods already purchased and you are strongly advised to make any necessary arrangements regarding this before you buy any equipment.

Where can I get advice about adapting my home to make it easier for me to manage?

Adaptations can sometimes make life easier and can range from small adaptations, such as grab rails, to major building work, for example to make a home suitable for someone who uses a wheelchair or to put in a downstairs shower and toilet if a person cannot get up stairs.

The PDS does not have the expertise to advise on building and adaptations to homes. However, before making any adaptations it is important to get expert advice. The first person to contact is an occupational therapist who can assess the problems you are having and suggest solutions which may include adaptations.

Care and Repair, an organisation which aims to improve the housing and living conditions of older and disabled people has a useful guide, In Good Repair, which gives information on repairs, adaptations, funding and finding a reliable builder or tradesman. This guide will answer most of the questions that enquirers contacting the PDS have. You can order a copy by post from Care and Repair England, Bridgford House, Pavillion Road, West Bridgeford, Nottingham RG2 5GJ or by



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telephone 0115 982 1527. Alternatively visit their website www.careandrepair-england.org.uk for a regional Care and Repair organisation.

The Disabled Living Foundation and the Centre for Accessible Environments could also advise on the sort of adaptations that might be possible and design issues. Contact details are given at the end of this sheet.

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215 Vauxhall Bridge Road London, SW1V 1EJ UK

Tel: 020 7931 8080 **Fax:** 020 7233 9908

Helpline: 0808 800 0303 **Textphone** (minicom): 020 7963 9380

Email: enquiries@parkinsons.org.uk **Website:** www.parkinsons.org.uk

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To obtain any PDS resource, please go online to www.parkinsons.org.uk or contact Sharward Services Ltd, the appointed PDS Distribution House, at Westerfield Business Centre, Main Road, Westerfield, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP6 9AB, tel: 01473 212115, fax: 01473 212114, email: services@sharward.co.uk