

What?

- There are currently around 1.2 million wheelchair users in the UK; two thirds of them are regular users.
- Wheelchair users may have different disabilities and their needs will be different.
- The wheelchair user is putting their trust in you, so it is important to assist them in a safe manner and ensure that they are comfortable, so that they can get the best out of their day.



Why?

- It is important to familiarise yourself with the parts of a wheelchair such as the brakes and tipping lever etc. Only people that have had the correct training should push a wheelchair to prevent it from tipping over and potentially causing injury to the user and those assisting them.
- You should aim to push the wheelchair as smoothly as possible and not make any sudden or jerky movements. Take your time over any rough ground and if you come across areas of gravel or woodchip, it is often easier to pull the chair backwards over it.
- When communicating with and assisting wheelchair users do not just see the chair, see the person first and talk directly to them. If possible, put yourself at eye level; this will avoid the wheelchair user from straining their neck to speak to you.

Do ✓

- ✓ Adopt a good posture with a straight back
- ✓ Make sure your passenger's feet are safely on the footplates and they have their lap strap on
- ✓ Check that elbows, all clothing, rugs or bags are tucked in safely
- ✓ Always go down a kerb backwards, it is safer and requires less effort
- ✓ Avoid steep, soft or uneven surfaces as these will make it harder to push or tip the chair over
- ✓ Guide a wheelchair down a steep slope backwards; it is safer
- ✓ Always let the person in the chair know what you are going to do, such as tilting them or turning quickly

Don't ✗

- ✗ Don't use the back of the wheelchair to hang things off
- ✗ Don't leave the wheelchair unattended without applying the parking brake
- ✗ Don't push the wheelchair over very rough or rutted ground; it will be uncomfortable for the user
- ✗ Don't over exert yourself; have a break and swap with another volunteer or staff member if possible
- ✗ Don't attempt to use stairs, or to lift a chair with the passenger in it
- ✗ Don't exclude people from conversations; ensure their wheelchair is facing the group
- ✗ Don't forget that the footplates stick out in front and can catch on doors or ankles!

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