Choosing Equipment to get Up and Down Stairs

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**Introduction**

If it has become difficult or impossible for you to get up and down the stairs, you face a choice of options: living downstairs, moving to a bungalow or ground floor flat, or installing adaptations, such as rails or a stairlift. The first option may not be practical because, although it may be possible to move a bed downstairs, providing bathroom facilities can prove difficult and costly and the downstairs living space will be reduced. The option of moving is not only costly but may result in the loss of good friends and neighbours when you relocate. Installing adaptations is often the most practical and economical option.

The aim of this factsheet is to provide information on equipment to assist someone getting up and down stairs, and details about the useful features of different types of stairlifts.

For up-to-date product and supplier information, please contact our equipment helpline, open Monday to Friday from 10am to 4 pm. tel: 0300 999 0004 (calls charged at your standard landline rate even if you are phoning from a mobile).

Alternatively you can write to our letter enquiry service or contact us via email at advice@dlf.org.uk. To help us give you a concise and informative reply, please provide us with as much detail as possible. Include information on the difficulties you are having and any solutions you have considered, including equipment ideas.

**Supply, provision and sources of funding**

**Provision of equipment**

Before making any decisions about buying equipment, or making alterations, it is advisable to contact a community Occupational Therapist (OT), based at your local social services/social work department. You may be eligible for a free assessment with social services which may include the provision of certain aids or minor adaptations. However, there are eligibility criteria based on an assessment of needs and you may have to pay towards the cost of equipment. The criteria and charging policies vary between authorities. The OT can advise on your requirements and suggest possible solutions. He/she may also give you information about DFGs or may arrange for a company representative to come and talk over possibilities.

It may be important that you have an individual assessment as there are many factors that can affect what is appropriate for you. For example, stair rails may not be appropriate for installing on the walls in your home or your staircase may be too narrow for you to use a seated stairlift. Thus you may wish to discuss your difficulties with a health care professional before considering purchase of this kind of equipment. You can contact your local social services and ask about an occupational therapy (or trusted assessor) assessment. Find your local social services on the GOV.UK website

Alternatively you can hire a private occupational therapist, a directory is available on the ‘College of Occupational Therapists Specialist Section Independent Practice’ (COTSS-IP) website. www.cotss-ip.org.uk or phone their enquiry line: 020 7989 0681. If you would like a private appointment with a physiotherapist, perhaps to practice stair mobility then you can obtain a list of local chartered physiotherapists who offer private services from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists at www.csp.org.uk or tel: 020 7306 6666. All occupational and physiotherapists on these directories are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). The HCPC is responsible for the conduct, performance and ethical behaviour of its registrants. Therapist who do not meet the standards of practice, conduct and behaviour required by the HCPC are removed (‘struck off’) from the register. You can visit the HCPC website to check the registration status of an occupational therapist.

Information and advice on design issues is available from the Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) which keeps a database of architects, surveyors and similar professionals with experience of designing for disabled
people, and has a number of useful publications and design sheets. (Please see Useful Organisations for more details).

**National catalogue prescription scheme**

In some areas of the country a prescription scheme for equipment is in operation. There is a 'national catalogue' of equipment that may be provided by prescription although local areas can choose which of these items they will include in their schemes. This is part of the Department of Health’s Transforming Community Equipment Services (TCES) programme. There is a small range of grab rails, including newel rails, in the national catalogue that can be provided via prescription. If you receive a prescription for one of these items, you take your prescription to a local accredited retailer who will provide you with the item. Alternatively you can ‘top-up’ by paying extra for an item that does what the prescribed item would do but offers extra features or perhaps you prefer its appearance. Thus the scheme is designed to encourage choice and control. The national catalogue website grab rails listing can be viewed at [https://www.londonconsortium.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=398:grabrails&layout=article](https://www.londonconsortium.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=398:grabrails&layout=article). This factsheet will go through a range of equipment and mention when there is a relevant national catalogue specification for that kind of equipment, as it may be provided by prescription.

**Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)**

A disabled facilities grant may be available for some home adaptations including major adaptations such as extensions and structural work to accommodate fixed hoists, stairlifts, downstairs bathrooms, shower units etc. If this type of adaptation is needed, a local occupational therapist (OT) will come to assess your needs and then contact the relevant council departments. Applications for grants should be made via the OT to the local councils.

A means test (including household income and household savings over £6,000) is used to decide how much financial assistance can be provided. Depending on the outcome of the test, the amount of assistance offered can vary from 0-100% of the cost. Disabled children under 18 can get a grant without their parents’ income being taken into account. You must own the property or be a tenant (or be a landlord with a disabled tenant) and you must intend to live in the property during the grant period (currently 5 years). A ceiling of £30,000 in England (£36,000 in Wales) will normally be put on each DFG, irrespective of your assessed contribution. Please note that you may not receive any grant if you start work on your property before the council approves your application.

For more information please visit the [Disabled Facilities Grants section on the GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk/diffable-facilities-grants).

Housing associations may provide small fixed equipment and minor adaptations for residents.

**Second hand stairlifts**

It is possible to save some money by buying a second hand stairlift. It is advisable to purchase from a stairlift manufacturer, or an authorised company dealing in re-conditioned stairlifts who will have checked that the stairlift meets current safety standards, and will provide a guarantee.

The tracking for straight stairlifts can usually be re-sited. The track of a second hand curved stairlift cannot be re-sited in another house. However, with some makes, a new track can be made to fit your house and the second hand seat unit and motor can be used in conjunction with it.

If you are considering buying a second hand stairlift privately, e.g. via the local paper or adverts board, it is advisable to get the original stairlift manufacturer, or company dealing in re-conditioned stairlifts, to assess the stairlift for its suitability for your use in the new location, service it, and, if all is satisfactory, actually carry out the installation. You should not attempt to wire up and install it yourself. Always check that the manufacturer is still in business and/or parts are still available should anything go wrong.

Once the stairlift has been installed, it is advisable to set up a service/maintenance contract with a company who you will be able to call on 24 hours a day if mechanical difficulties arise. Annual maintenance is
Stairlifts cost a significant amount of money. The Consumers Association Which? calculated in 2014 that a simple straight stairlift cost on average around £2,000, curved stairlifts can cost £6,000 and secondhand stairlifts around £1500 (Which?, 2014).

Charitable trusts may sometimes provide funding for equipment. A useful resource is Turn2Us a website that allows you to search for organisations that give grants, including for equipment and other services. You can refine / filter your search by specific health issues such as 'physical disability', 'ageing' or 'rheumatism'.

If you're over 60 years of age Charity Search is a free service to help you find a grant-giving charity. Charities may only give awards in accordance with a predetermined criteria, so it is important that you carefully select the trust(s) you apply to.

Most libraries hold directories of suitable funders in their reference section, such as the The Directory of Grant Making Trusts.

Grants for Individuals is run by the Directory of Social Change and lets subscribers search for grants but is intended for organisations searching for funding for individuals.

You don't have to pay VAT on products designed for disabled people if you have a long term illness or disability, or are terminally ill. Mobility shops may automatically sell you equipment without charging you VAT, but you may have to ask. Individuals with a temporary injury such as a broken arm or hip do not qualify for VAT relief. For more information on VAT relief please visit GOV.UK's page on VAT relief for disabled people or you can contact the HM Revenue & Customs directly to raise any VAT queries. Their Charities Helpline covers VAT relief for disabled people and can be reached at tel: 0300 123 1073.

Try equipment before you buy

If you decide to buy equipment privately it is advisable to try and compare the different ranges first. You may have an equipment demonstration centre near you that you can visit to view and try out ranges of equipment. You will receive impartial advice to help you choose appropriately. However, centres may not display examples of all the equipment in this factsheet. You will need to contact your nearest centre to find out what they have and to book an appointment. Contact details for your nearest equipment demonstration centre can be found on the Disabled Living Foundation's web page Equipment Demonstration Centres in the UK.

BHTA

Be cautious of sales people who try to persuade you to buy equipment that may not meet your needs fully or is over-priced. Buying from a company that belongs to a trade association, such as the British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) may give you some reassurance. BHTA members have signed up to a code of practice governing standards of customer service. (Please see Useful Organisations for more details).

LEIA

LEIA is the trade association and advisory body for the lift and escalator industry. Its members have signed up to a code of practice which includes measures intended to ease consumer concerns and remove undesirable trade practices. (please see Useful Organisations for more details).

Stair rails
Rails for stairs and corridors

Most staircases have a handrail on one side although this may not extend to the full length of the staircase. Most DIY stores sell handrails which can be used to extend the existing handrail all the way up the staircase if it is required. Adding a handrail to the other side of the staircase will provide more support where needed. Long lengths of rail are available and may also be installed along corridors.

A wide range of finished hand rails are available from DIY chains for you to choose from. A rail can be made of softwood with a 5cm circular cross section. It is recommended that it is run continuously from the bottom to the top of your flight of stairs (including the perimeter of any landings). The handrail should be allowed to continue past the top and bottom steps by 30cm (COT, 2006, DLF, 2014). The height will depend on your needs, often at the same height as an existing banister rail. This is usually between 90-100cm above the pitch line of the stairs (COT, 2006), 90-110cm (NBS, 2013a).

The handrail should have a fixing at least every 100cm and no more than 15 cm from each end. It may require mounting on a pattress or backboard which is then secured to the wall (COT, 2006) (see ‘Fixing rails’ in our Choosing and Fitting Grab Rails factsheet).

If a stair rail cannot be securely installed to a wall then vertical stair rail supports can be used to attach the stair rail to the stairs themselves. The vertical bars are available with two fixings which attach to your stair’s tread and wall string or three fixings which attach to your stair’s tread, riser and wall string.

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View our impartial list of stair rails and fixings


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Newel rails

Newel rails are designed to turn through 90 degrees around the newel post (the thick upright post of the banister on staircase landings). They provide a continuous grip as the user reaches the bottom or top of the stairs and turns the corner. They are available in a choice of colour and range of sizes.
Please note that left turning and right turning newel rail models are available. Which one you require depends on which way your staircase turns after the newel post.

There are specifications for newel rails in the national catalogue which operates equipment prescriptions in certain parts of the country (see above) with the codes GR07 Left Handed and GR08 Right Handed.

View our impartial list of newel rails


Stair rails which move with you

These are manual rails designed to assist you to maintain your balance whilst walking up and down stairs. You still have to walk up/down the stairs but hold a bar and move it progressively up / down while ascending or descending. If a sudden movement is made, for example you loose your balance, the rail / bar locks in position giving a secure handhold.

Provide a bar in front of you for support while you are walking up/down your stairs.

Relies on you having a good grip on the bar

View our impartial list of stair rails that move


If you need help installing stair rails you could search for local competent traders, such as carpenters and handymen, who meet relevant standards at trustatrader.com

In many areas AgeUK run a handyman scheme. For a small charge, and if you are over 60, this scheme may be able to assist with small jobs such as fitting rails. You can use their website to find your local AgeUK service.

Stairlifts

Stairlifts are powered lifts mounted on wall or stair fixed tracks which follow the line of the stairs. Straight tracks are available for straight staircases and curved tracks for staircases with a bend/s or curve. Straight tracked stairlifts are significantly cheaper than curved ones. The Consumers Association Which? states that as a general rule, every corner in your staircase will double the initial price of a stairlift (Which?, 2014).

Stairlifts are usually cheaper to install than through floor lifts as building alterations are not normally required. Stairlifts can usually be installed in a day and can be removed if no longer required leaving little trace.
Rechargeable batteries
Most stairlifts have rechargeable batteries that are continually topped up from charging points at the top and the bottom of the stairs. Thus they will operate if there is a power failure. The chair requires re-sitting at the charging point and will give a warning bleep if it is in the wrong place. Batteries will eventually need replacing, but should last 3-4 years. It is essential that the power supply is always connected to enable regular recharging, consequently stairlifts are usually wired directly to the electrical circuit of the house rather than plugged in at a socket.

Remote controls or ‘Call Stations’
A call station is a unit, which usually has two buttons (up and down) located away from the chair of the stairlift. Call stations are usually found at the top and bottom of the staircase so a user can ‘call’ or control the stairlift. This allows users to bring the stairlift to them at the top or bottom of the stairs so they can get on it, or a carer may use the call station to operate the stairlift for the user.

‘Flip-Up’ rail
On stairlifts with a ‘flip up’ rail the lower section of the rail folds upwards and out of the way to prevent the rail causing an obstruction or tripping hazard. This may be essential if there is a doorway in the wall beside the bottom of your stairs.

Key switch
A key switch is a small key-operated switch which is usually located in the stairlifts armrest. When the key is removed the stairlift is completely immobilised. This is a useful safety feature if, for example, there are small children in the household who may try and operate the stairlift.

Walking aids
Walking sticks may usually be carried on a stairlift with care, if you use a larger walking aid, it should not be carried on the stairlift and therefore two aids will be required - one at the bottom and one at the top of the stairs.

The following types of stairlift are available:

**Seated stairlifts**

These tend to be the most common type of stairlift used in a domestic setting. You must be able to sit safely on the seat while traveling up/down the stairs and transfer on and off at the top and bottom of the stairs.

**Seat height**

Some stairlifts can be pre-adjusted to different seat heights. This assists you to transfer in and out of the stairlift from/to a seat height that suits your specific needs. Being able to choose a specific seat height can also be useful for sliding transfers from/to wheelchairs.

**Swivel seat**

This means you can swivel the chair at the top and bottom of the stairs. This helps at the bottom of the stairs as you have more room to approach the stairs and sit down. It also helps when you reach the top of the stairs, as if you swivel the chair you are facing away from the staircase when you get off. This makes it easier and safer to get on and off the stairlift, as the chair acts as a barrier if you were to lose your balance so you would not fall down the stairs. A swivel seat is a standard option on most stairlifts, but you can choose between manual and powered swivel seats. With manual seats you need to turn the seat yourself by twisting your body in the same way you turn while seated in a standard office chair. With a powered seat swivel you maintain pressure on the lever or switch which operates the stairlift and the seat is turned automatically by electric motors. Check that you will be able to operate the seat swivel mechanism.

If a powered swivel seat isn't necessary at the moment but could be useful in the future ask whether the seat...
can be adapted in future. Note: For safety the seat should always be locked in position before sitting or standing from it, regardless of whether the swivel is manual or powered.

If you will not be able to transfer on/off the seat independently seek expert advice as assisted transfers at the top of the stairs could be very dangerous and should be avoided. Remember that it may also be very difficult for a carer to pass you whilst you are seated on the stairlift at both the top and bottom of the stairs.

Armrests
Armrests are helpful to push up from when standing, or for support when sitting or travelling on the stairlift's seat. Lift-up armrests will allow more space when the stairlift is not in use.

Footrest
Stairlifts have a footrest to support your feet whilst in transit. As with the armrests this can be folded up when not in use. Check that you are able to fold the footrest, seat and armrests without bending. Some are linked together so that raising the armrests also raises the footrest, others have power assisted operation. This saves you from bending down to fold up/down the footrest.

View a short demonstration of how to use a stair lift when going up and down the stairs. [http://www.dlf.org.uk/stairlift](http://www.dlf.org.uk/stairlift)

View our impartial list of seated stairlifts

Standing and perching stairlifts

These can be used if you are able to walk to the stairlift and stand while travelling up and down stairs. These may be chosen in preference to seated models if the staircase is exceptionally narrow or if you have a stiff leg/s and are unable to bend your knee/s when seated. These stairlifts usually have one or two guard rails that you can hold onto during transit.

Perching stairlifts are very similar to standing stairlifts except that they provide a small amount of additional support underneath the buttocks. You will travel in a perched position, i.e. between sitting and standing. These stairlifts usually have one or two guard rails that you can hold onto during transit.

View our impartial list of standing and perching stairlifts
Stairlifts with a wheelchair platform

These eliminate the need to transfer out of a wheelchair and onto a stairlift. Instead you wheel, or are pushed, straight onto the platform.
Although most of the platforms fold up against the wall when they are not in use, this type of stairlift takes up a lot of room on the stairs and many domestic stairs are not wide enough to accommodate them.

View our impartial list of Stairlifts with a wheelchair platform

Stairlifts designed for external outside use are also available.

Considerations when choosing a stairlift

Before deciding on the most suitable form of stairlift consider the following:
Your needs:

- if you have a condition that could deteriorate, consider what the best long term solution will be. Although you may be able to use a seated stairlift now, it may be wise to consider installing a through-floor lift so that in future the option to travel in a wheelchair is available.
- are you able to bend your knees sufficiently to travel in a seated position?
- does the lift need to be operated by you, your carer, or both? Remote controls are available to allow users and carers to operate the lift but it will be easier to order these during the initial installation.
- other users of the stairs, e.g. children, pets, visitors with reduced mobility or standing tolerance.
- will you need a special seat with extra support, for a child, or with a harness? If so, seek specialist advice. Moulded seating systems may need to be removed before the seat can be folded.
- which direction do you need to face when seated on the stairlift? Most seats face sideways, but if you have a stiff knee, or a narrow staircase you may need to face forwards to give you more room. Some stairlifts are available with seats which face forwards

Your home environment / dimensions:

- If a standing stairlift is preferred, is there sufficient headroom?
- Your home environment (e.g. doors or thresholds near the staircase, bulkheads or banister rails, radiators near the staircase). If the track for the stairlift cannot continue beyond the bottom or top step of the staircase, usually because it will obstruct a door, some companies can provide a fold-up, hinged rail to overcome this problem. This rail may be manually or electrically operated. Alternatively some stairlifts are designed to work with a lot less room at the bottom of the stairs than others.
- It is advisable that the stairlift covers the whole staircase. If your staircase has a sub-landing at the top, with a few steps to the left or right, some companies may suggest fitting a manual or motorised folding platform which bridges the gap between the top of the stairlift and the landing. This can lead to problems, e.g if the platform is down and someone else tries to walk up the stairs.
- if you have a staircase consisting of two straight flights of stairs with a landing area between them it may be cheaper to purchase two straight stairlifts instead of a curved one as long as you can transfer between them.
- Can other members of the household easily use the stairway when the lift is folded against the wall? This may depend on the width of your staircase.
The stairlift's controls:

- Will you be able to operate the standard controls, usually toggle controls sited on the end of the armrest, or is an alternative method required, for example a joystick?
- Will the controls need to be sited in another position?
- Remote controls allow you to operate the stairlift from the most comfortable position, or for a carer to operate the stairlift.
- Lifts are available with an audible signal to alert people who are blind or have sight loss that the lift is at the top or the bottom of the track.

**Second hand and rented stairlifts**

A number of companies offer stairlifts for rent / hire, usually charging an initial fee for installation and then a regular monthly sum. Check with the company what the minimum rent / hire period is. These rental stairlifts are often pre-used so your choice of colour and style may be limited. Hiring may be ideal if you are recovering from an accident or operation. Alternatively it is possible to save money by buying a second hand stairlift, but it is advisable to purchase from a stairlift manufacturer, or an authorised company dealing in reconditioned stairlifts. The company should have checked that the stairlift meets current safety standards and check that they will provide a guarantee. Please remember that it may be a good idea to look for companies that are members of the BHTA and LEIA (see Useful Organisations).

**View our impartial list of second hand stairlifts**


**View our impartial list of suppliers who rent stairlifts**

http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/group.php?groupid=3785

**Arranging quotations**

If you intend to purchase privately please consider these tips:

- Always obtain more than one quote, ask for an approximate price and write it down.
- Try to obtain quotes from both a manufacturer and a local supplier for a comparison.
- Ask for brochures to be posted to you and read them, know what you're buying, and prepare a list of questions.
- When arranging a quotation confirm with the company that you will not need to pay for the quotation.
- Confirm with the company that they are the approved distributors for the stairlift / lift they are selling. This is important as, for example, it may determine whether they are able to supply spare parts.
- Read about stairlift features and prioritise what is most important to you
- If possible arrange to have an Occupational Therapist present during the visit. If this is not possible, ask a trusted friend or family member to be present during the visit.
- If possible try a stairlift or lift out in an equipment demonstration centre, a showroom or in the house of someone who already has one fitted.
- Ask who will look after your lift if it breaks down. What are the company's response times? All lifts should have a 12 month warranty but ask about the terms and conditions. You may have to pay extra for 24-hour call-out cover. Are there any maintenance costs, and is there an expensive ongoing contract?
- Ask how many engineers the company has in your area
- Beware of hard sale techniques. Ignore special offers, which only apply if you 'buy now'. Some salesmen/women start by quoting a high price and then offer discounts to close the sale.
A reputable company will quote the best price from the start. Do not feel pressurised into signing up during the visit.

- Ask if the company has a buy back policy and, if so, get it confirmed in writing.
- If you do have to pay a deposit, ask for the company’s cancellation policy in writing.

**Vertical / through-floor lifts**

Vertical, or through floor lifts, may maximise your independence by enabling you to move from one floor to another within your home or a public building. If you use a wheelchair they may make it unnecessary for you to transfer out of your chair and onto, for example, a stairlift.

However, vertical lifts need more space than a stairlift and it is sometimes necessary to make structural alterations to your property. It is essential that the lifts are installed by a qualified engineer, that regular maintenance is carried out, and that lifts are inspected and tested every six months by a qualified lift engineer.

**Vertical lifts without a shaft**

Vertical lifts without a shaft are commonly used in home environments as they require less structural alterations than lifts with a shaft. Although versions are available that carry a seated or standing passenger, most are used by wheelchair users. The lift car is either partially or fully enclosed and usually travels up and down a wall-fixed track(s).

Partially enclosed cars let you see outside and may be more suitable if you do not like enclosed spaces. The doors on totally or partially enclosed carriages are electronically interlocked as a safety precaution so that they cannot be opened when the lift is moving, and the lift will not move if the door is open.

In order to travel between floors a trap door or aperture is constructed in the ceiling/floor which automatically opens and closes. When the lift is on the ground floor the gap in the ceiling is covered by an infill that matches the ceiling of the room, whilst when on the upper level the infill blends in with the flooring of that room.

[View our impartial list of vertical lifts without a shaft](http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/group.php?groupid=2245)

**Vertical lifts with a shaft**

Lifts for use in any nursing, residential or public building must be enclosed within a shaft and usually require extensive structural alterations. Shafts are usually made of sheet metal or glass, and therefore require minimal building disruption during installation. They can carry more than one person at a time, either someone standing, someone in a wheelchair or both. They can be accessed via a ramp or recessed into a shallow pit for level access.

**Considerations when choosing a vertical / through-floor lift**

When choosing a vertical/through-floor lift consider the following:

- For wheelchair passengers lift cars offering level or ramped access will be necessary. If you use a self-propelling wheelchair you should make sure that you can open the lift door easily. Some lifts have doors that can be opened using push button controls.
- For seated passengers there is a choice of fixed seats, fold-down seats, perching seats and seats which slide forward to assist access in and out of the lift. Some companies will fix the seat at the most appropriate height for the user.
- Dimensions and house design considerations - it is important that there is enough space for you to approach and enter the lift easily. Most lifts are accessed from the front of the car but some companies are able to offer side door entry.
- Controls - most lifts have push button controls sited within the car. Some companies offer alternative...
control mechanisms and some can position the controls to suit the user. Illuminated controls are available and may be particularly helpful for users with low vision.

**Safety features**

Check the following safety features when choosing a lift, many should be included as standard:

- emergency lowering via a wind-down handle or a battery operated back-up system
- an in car alarm or telephone to call for help
- an overspeed governor
- an automatic door locking mechanism when the door shuts
- smoke and fire detection monitors within the car that will automatically take the car away from the fire and seal the ceiling aperture
- a lockable car door, especially if there are young children in the household
- sensors underneath the car to detect any objects that could possibly block its path, e.g. toys.

**Additional features**

Most companies are also able to offer:

- grab rails to assist entry and exit
- a telephone
- lights
- a carpet inside the car

**Short rise lifts - fixed and mobile**

Short rise lifts can be used indoors or outdoors where a change in level occurs, e.g. at a front step or in a split level hallway. They are particularly useful in confined spaces where installation of a ramp is not possible. They may make it possible for individuals using a wheelchair to independently propel directly onto the platform and move between levels without assistance. Some short rise lifts are able to carry both the wheelchair user and carer. Fixed short rise lifts may require structural alterations before installation.

To provide level access, the mechanism of many models has to be sunk below ground level in a pit so that the platform is flush with the ground at its lowest position. Where this is not possible, ramped access to the platform will be necessary. Some platforms lift vertically so they would have to be placed next to, or instead of, steps. Others may have a bridging mechanism so that when they are not in use the steps can be used in the normal way, and when in use, the platform lifts up and over the steps.

Check whether the lift has a back-up emergency battery in case of mains failure. Some models have side support rails.

View our impartial list of fixed short rise lifts


**Mobile short rise lifts**

Mobile short rise lifts do not require structural alterations. They may be useful for overcoming a small change in level which does not need to be accessed very often, e.g. into the garden or on to a stage.

The lifts are usually operated electrically, powered by a rechargeable battery, and are accessed via a ramp.
The ramp then folds up whilst the lift is in use. Some enable a carer to travel with the wheelchair user.

Check how easy it is to move the lift. Those with larger wheels may be easier to transport.

View our impartial list of mobile/portable short rise lifts


STAIRCLIMBERS/MOBILE STAIRCLIMBERS

These are operated by a carer and are designed to climb up and down a flight of stairs with you sat on the device. As they are not attached to the staircase they can be transported and used on different staircases. They are available either as a seated device into which you transfer or as an attachment that fits onto a standard manual wheelchair or powered wheelchair. Some have caterpillar tracks that grip the stairs, and others have a wheel cluster which rotates as you go up or down. They are powered by a rechargeable battery.

Some of the stairclimbers with an attachment onto which a wheelchair can be attached require the wheelchair's rear wheels to be removed when going up / down stairs. These are only suitable for wheelchairs with quick release wheels and a carer / attendant who is confident to remove and re-attach the wheels.

It is essential that your carer is familiar with, and has been trained on using, the equipment before trying to operate it. It is important to consider the staircase, as stairclimbers will only cover a certain depth of tread and only some types of stairclimber can manage curved staircases. In public buildings, carer operated mobile stairlifts can be used for emergency evacuation if approval is obtained from relevant safety officers.

View our impartial list of stairclimbers/mobile stairclimbers


Service and maintenance

Most major companies guarantee their lifts/stairlifts for one year. After this it is recommended that they are inspected every six months and serviced annually. Some companies offer an emergency call-out service. However, check that they have fully trained service engineers on call 24 hours a day. On completion of your one year warranty most companies will offer to re-guarantee the lift/stairlift for a charge. It is advisable to check these charges before purchasing.

Some lift/stairlift companies will not supply their parts to other repair engineers. The lift/stairlift mechanism is a complicated piece of equipment and is subject to a great deal of wear and tear. It is essential that regular maintenance is carried out and that lifts/stairlifts are inspected and tested every six months by a qualified lift/stairlift engineer.

Stair safety

If you have uncarpeted stairs, such as tiled or lino covered communal stairs then slip resistant and high
visibility treads, cleats, edgings, tiles and tapes could enhance the grip on your stairs.

It is very important that you have good lighting on your stairs. Some energy efficient bulbs take a lot longer to reach full brightness than others, 'quick start' CFL bulbs are best for lighting your staircase. For more information and to compare bulbs full brightness times visit [www.rica.org.uk/content/things-consider-when-choosing-light-bulbs](http://www.rica.org.uk/content/things-consider-when-choosing-light-bulbs).

It is also important that you can turn your stair light/s on when you are downstairs and up stairs. If this is not possible please consider having a switch, a wireless switch or automatic lighting installed. If any rewiring is required this should be completed by a competent qualified electrician. To search for electricians in your area with the required certification (Part P Certification) visit the [Competent Person Register](http://www.electricalcompetentperson.co.uk/).

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**Useful Organisations**

**British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA)**

New Loom House  
Suite 4.06  
101 Back Church Lane  
London, E1 1LU  
Tel: 020 7702 2141  
Fax: 020 7680 4048  
Email: bhta@bhta.com (and bhta@bhta.net)  
Website: [www.bhta.net](http://www.bhta.net)

The British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) is the UK's largest healthcare association. Members of the BHTA sign up to a code of practice designed to ensure the public can trust that members will give a good service, and a high standard of behaviour. You can search for members on their website.

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**Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE)**

4th floor, Holyer House  
20-21 Red Lion Court  
London EC4A 3EB  
Tel: 020 7822 8232  
Email: info@cae.org.uk  
Website: [www.cae.org.uk](http://www.cae.org.uk)

The Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) is the UK's leading authority on inclusive design. Their aim is to help secure a built environment that is usable by everyone, including disabled and older people.
GOV.UK is the website for the UK government. It's the best place to find government services and information. GOV.UK has a section devoted to providing information on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). This grant (providing you meet the relevant eligibility criteria) could be used towards the adaptation of your living environment: www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants

Lift and Escalator Industry Association
33-34 Devonshire Street
London W1G 6PY
Tel: 020 7935 3013
Fax: 020 7935 3321
Email: enquiries@leia.co.uk
Website: www.leia.co.uk

LEIA is the trade association and advisory body for the lift and escalator industry. LEIA aims to ensure its members have the best and most up to date information on safety, standards and legislative matters – supported by professional assistance. Membership covers 95% of the lift and escalator industry. You can search for members on their website.

Planning Portal
Website: www.planningportal.gov.uk

Planning Portal is the first port of call for anyone wanting to find out about the planning system in England and Wales. Its aim is to provide a one-stop-shop supplying answers, services and information to anyone involved in the planning process - from home owners and businesses to planning professionals and Government officials. Further guidance and regulations about protection from falling, collision and impact (Part K): www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/partk/approved

Rica
G03, The Wenlock
50-52 Wharf Road
London N1 7EU
Tel: 020 7427 2460
Email: mail@rica.org.uk
Website: www.rica.org.uk

Rica (formerly Ricability), the Research Institute for Consumer Affairs, are a national research charity dedicated to providing independent information of value to disabled and older consumers. Their reports are based on rigorous research and provide practical information needed by disabled and older consumers. They have a number of articles relating to managing stairs www.rica.org.uk/search/content/stairs

Which?
2 Marylebone Road
London NW1 4DF
Tel: 01992 822 800
Email: which@which.co.uk
Website: www.which.co.uk/elderlycare

Which? is a brand name used by the Consumers’ Association. It promotes informed consumer choice in the purchase of goods and services, by testing products, highlighting inferior products or services, raising
awareness of consumer rights and offering independent advice. Which? have produced a useful guide using the stairs: http://www.which.co.uk/elderly-care/housing-options/using-the-stairs

Draft released December 2014, to be reviewed by December 2017, Version 1.0

References


Disabled Living Foundation (2014) Trusted Assessor Training Course handbook, Disabled Living Foundation: London - (Type 2)


For more information on the Types of Evidence, please visit http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/scenario.php?csid=276

AskSARA
If you would like further advice regarding daily living equipment related to stairs could try relevant sections of AskSARA. AskSARA is our free online guided advice tool. AskSARA will ask you questions about yourself and your environment and then offer relevant advice, product suggestions and supplier details.
Handicare™'s 3D Vision Technology

At Handicare we understand how difficult it is to imagine what a stairlift will look like on your stairs by just looking at pictures in a brochure or on a website. We know that you want to make the best choice possible and we are delighted to be able to offer you additional help to make choosing the right stairlift a lot easier.

You can now have a 3D preview of Handicare’s stairlift range in the comfort of your own home, and see how each one would look in your hallway too.

Vision allows you to see your stairlift in a range of different colours and styles to suit you and your home!

Handicare work with a national network of trusted partners providing local expertise for thousands of stairlift users. Handicare partners conduct free of charge, detailed user assessments and staircase surveys to enable them to tailor your stairlift solution to your specific needs and environment, indoor or out. To arrange a no obligation visit from a trusted partner call now or visit our website.

Free Call 0800 977 5995
www.handicare-stairlifts.co.uk
The majority of DLF’s advice is now online. If you would like advice or support to get online or information on local courses about getting online please contact:

**Age UK**  http://www.ageuk.org.uk/work-and-learning/technology-and-internet/  Call 0800 169 8787

**BBC Webwise:** http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/  Call 08000 150 950

**Digital Unite:**  http://learning.digitalunite.com/category/using-the-internet/
Call 0800 228 9272 Or write: Digital Unite Limited, Unit 2B, Poles Copse, Poles Lane, Winchester, SO21 2DZ

**Go On:** http://www.go-on.co.uk/  Call 0800 77 1234
UK online centres, The Quadrant, 99 Parkway Avenue, Parkway Business Park, Sheffield, S9 4WG

**UK Online Centre:**  http://www.ukonlinecentres.com/

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