

# News Release

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## Launch of Wheelchair Service Mapping Project *BOTTOM-UP FOR BEST PRACTICES*

Disability charities consortium, *emPOWER*, today launched a two-year project to conduct an extensive survey of all 151 NHS Wheelchair Services in England.

The project, funded by the Department of Health and managed by the Limbless Association, will survey all NHS Wheelchair Services, providing a picture of eligibility, criteria, referral, assessment and specification procedures across the country.



Welcoming the project, Health Minister JACQUI SMITH (pictured) said:

"In the 'old' NHS Wheelchair Services were dispersed. There was a lack of real opportunities for staff, with Users, to tell us what their best practices are, and to help spread them more widely.

"*emPOWER*'s new Wheelchair Service Mapping Project, with its 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down' communications, will help to change all that. The findings will help us to identify good practices, so that these can be built upon to improve the service provided to those who rely on this vital Service."

SAM GALLOP, Chair of *emPOWER*, and of the Mapping Project said:

"As a double amputee with spinal and hand injuries, I know how vital having the right wheelchair at the right time is to achieving and sustaining one's independence and lifestyle. Because of the wonderful efforts of caring and skilled staff, there have been significant individual improvements and developments – and frustrations – since devolvement of the Wheelchair Service. The Minister's welcome new initiative will give all concerned the opportunity to say what are the best practices of which they are justifiably proud, and how the Service can help to spread them more widely."

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***emPOWER***

***Prosthetics/Orthotics/Wheelchairs/Equipment/Rehabilitation***

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This Project will work alongside other initiatives that the Government is funding with the Modernisation Agency. There will be a regular flow of information between *emPOWER*'s project and collaborative-based work that is already being conducted by the Modernisation Agency. This is also aimed at establishing but also at spreading good practice.

## Notes to Editors:

- This Project will receive £75,000 by the Department of Health over a two-year period - 2002-2004.
- The Consultative Group monitoring the Project will include representatives from the Department of Health, *emPOWER*, British Society of Rehabilitation Medicine, College of Occupational Therapists, Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, British Healthcare Trades Association, National Forum of Wheelchair User Groups, National Wheelchair Service Managers Forum, Purchasing and Supply Agency, Rehabilitation Engineers Managers Group, Children's Mobility Inter-Charity Group, Forum of Mobility Centres.
- The Department of Health has also awarded a two year grant to the Whizz-Kidz Association "The Movement for Non-Mobile Children" to establish six specialist mobility centres for disabled children and young people throughout England.
- *emPOWER* is the charities consortium of Users of Prosthetics, Orthotics, Wheelchairs and Electronic Assistive Technology and campaigns for a 'national look' based on individual needs. We currently have 46 member charities who foster local initiatives and spread best practice worldwide.
- *emPOWER* focuses on the five Cs: Cosmesis, Capability, Comfort, Caring and Choice.
- *emPOWER* has published National User Standards for Mobility Services and has gained political support for the implementation of these through EDM 929. The Standards and the wording of EDM 929 are available from Kaya Mallinder, Secretary to *emPOWER*, on 020 8355 2341 or email [kaya@empowernet.org](mailto:kaya@empowernet.org).
- *emPOWER* members include:  
Age Concern, Aim Hi, Arthritis Care, Association for Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus, BALASA, British Computing Society, British Deaf Association, British Polio Fellowship,

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## *emPOWER*

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Brittle Bone Society, Changing Faces, Contact A Family, Council for Disabled Children, Deafblind UK, Diabetes UK, Disability Action (N.I.), Disability Sports England, Disabled Drivers' Motor Club, Disabled Living Centres Council, Disabled Living Foundation, FAST, Help the Aged, Leonard Cheshire Foundation, Limbless Association, Meningitis Trust, Mobility Trust, Motivation, Murray Foundation, Muscular Dystrophy Campaign, National Federation of Shopmobility, National Forum of Wheelchair User Groups, National Information Forum, Osteogenesis Imperfection Foundation, RADAR, Reach, REHAB UK, REMAP, SCAMP/ASPIRE, SCOPE, SOVIL, Spinal Injuries Association, SSAFA &FHS, StartHere, STEPS, Talking Newspaper Association UK, Whizz-Kidz and Workable.

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