

Wheelchair Therapist Competencies

Therapists should be competent in assessing an individual's and carers' needs, environmental factors and personal goals relating to improvement in their function, capacity and social interaction.

The assessment process will involve the use of instrumentation, and use of quantitative and qualitative measurement techniques. The range of assessments undertaken may include any combination of the following: anthropomorphic and physiological cost/effort measurements, measurements of tissue interface, range and accuracy of movement, shape, stability, strength, spasticity, posture and function.

Therapists should also review the individual's current status, regarding perceptual, physical, sensory and cognitive abilities, relevant to the current treatment plan.

Full consideration needs to be given to environmental factors (user environment), existing equipment and devices.

The solutions considered may include – rehabilitative/assistive technology, biomechanical technology or other intervention provided through multi-disciplinary teams.

Therapists require a working, updated knowledge of the range of wheelchairs, seating and accessories available, including adjustability, functionality, and compatibility with other assistive technology. Training the individual in the safe use of the equipment, whilst taking full advantage of its features, so maximising functionality.

Required Skills	Entry Level Practitioner	Advanced Level Practitioner
1. Broad knowledge of Disabling Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To demonstrate the Core Competencies expected of the College of Occupational Therapists/ Chartered Society of Physiotherapy • Demonstrate knowledge of medical conditions and their effects on, and implications for, mobility • Have knowledge of relevant legislation and guidance • Have knowledge of disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive knowledge of tissue viability and pressure care intervention • Spasticity management, including the effects of medical interventions • Multi-pathologies and the effects on seating, function and prognosis

	<p>politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic principles of bio-mechanics • Normal and pathological principals of functional anatomy, physiology and their application in determining investigations for the individual 	
<p>2. Assess the need for wheelchairs, accessories and associated seating</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm the reason for referral, clinical need, objectives of assessment in meeting the goals of users and carers • Sensitively exchange relevant information with users and carers, using terminology which aids communication • Identify the nature, type and extent of measurements that will be required to complete the assessment • Take accurate, relevant and sufficient measurements to assist with specification or decision on alternative solutions • Identify the scope and limitations of the individual's function, capacity and social interaction that will influence the type, nature, design or use of intended solution • Identify environmental factors which influence function, capacity and social interaction of users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Pressure Mapping System • Identify need for specialised bespoke seating • Fundamental engineering principles and practice

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek advice and support from relevant people to inform judgements and decisions 	
3. Identify wheelchair and related equipment to meet assessed needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss and evaluate options with all involved in the assessment process • Outline all funding options and methods of provision i.e. charities, voucher etc. • Produce complete and accurate records of the assessment process and results • Report on the assessment, relating results directly to the agreed objectives and referral questions raised • Maintain comprehensive information on the range of wheelchairs, postural management and pressure care equipment available • Complete correct documentation and prescription form to ensure agreed equipment is supplied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and evaluate available products in order to be able to suggest, discuss, demonstrate and trial different options of appropriate equipment to meet assessed needs • Conduct user/carer trials and risk assessment, taking account of current legislation
4. Adjust wheelchair, accessories and seating to clients requirements and train in its use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust wheelchair for comfort, convenience, safety and aesthetic acceptability in line with manufacturer's instructions • Provide tuition to user and carers in a relevant format on the basic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correctly interpret stability testing information and relay in a clear manner to users and carers • Adjust seating, using tools as necessary, to suit bespoke needs and alter as appropriate

	<p>handling and use of the wheelchair and associated equipment including safety aspects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inform users/carers of basic maintenance of equipment and access to repair services• Identify and report any adverse effects of the equipment to senior colleague and agree solution• Agree relevant trial and review periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inform user/carers of guidelines regarding safe transportation of equipment• Maintain comprehensive records of MHRA publications, guidance and bulletins
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