Specialist Disability Service

Appointments for computer access, environmental control systems (ECS), mobile arm supports (MAS) and wheelchair controls

Information for patients and carers
You have been referred to the Specialist Disability Service. This information leaflet tells you what you can expect to happen at your appointment and afterwards. We will explain in more detail what will happen when we meet you and you will be able to ask questions at any time.

The additional information sheet (enclosed) gives the reason for your visit. Your appointment letter will tell you whether we need you to come to the Oxford Centre for Enablement or if the team will be coming to you.

Please note that whilst we offer a range of services, your appointment will only be related to the specific service for which you have been referred.

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The computer access service aims to provide you with comprehensive assessment and advice if you have difficulty using a computer because of a physical disability.

**Where will the appointment take place?**
Most assessment appointments take place in your home. This helps the clinician assess the best way to set up the equipment, so that it works within your home environment.

**What will happen during the appointment?**
The assessment starts with a conversation, covering subjects such as your daily routine and your care provision. We will talk about your present and past use of computers.

We have a variety of specialist keyboards, mice and alternative methods of access, as well as specialist software that you can trial during the appointment. We may be able to arrange an extended trial with some of the equipment.

**What happens after the initial assessment?**
We will send you a report detailing the recommendations that we have made and will arrange a follow-up visit if further support and training is required.

Please note that the service does not hold a budget for equipment. Funding may be available from statutory or charitable bodies who we may approach on your behalf.
Environmental control systems (ECS)

An ECS can help you if, through your disability, you have difficulty operating electrical appliances around your home. An ECS can operate a range of devices, such as audio/visual equipment, door entry systems, intercoms and alarms, as well as powered door and window openers.

Unlike standard remote controls, which often have a large number of buttons, environmental controls can be operated with the minimum of effort using an appropriate access method, such as a single switch, voice or eye movement.

**What will happen during the appointment?**

Assessments are carried out in your own home. The first appointment will involve discussing your needs and what you would like to control using the ECS.

**What happens after the initial assessment?**

If it is decided that a system is appropriate, a further home visit will be arranged with a representative from an appropriate company who will carry out the design. Sometimes there is a need for electrical work to be carried out to accommodate the system.

Installation usually takes place within eight weeks, and takes one or two days to complete.

All systems are supported by an NHS funded comprehensive maintenance and support service that is arranged with the company that supplies the system.

Please note that funding for items which require adjustments to your house, such as door and window openers or additional sockets, are not funded by the NHS. You will usually need to contact Social Services to arrange for this work to be carried out. We will discuss this with you at the appointment.
Mobile arm supports

A mobile arm support (MAS) is a piece of equipment that supports the forearm, making it easier to move with less effort. A MAS can be used to help with activities such as eating, turning pages, using a computer, tablet or communication aid, and pressing buttons on a telephone or remote control.

Where will the appointment take place?
Most assessment appointments take place in your home. This helps the clinician assess the best way to set up the equipment, so that it works within your home environment.

If you are a full time wheelchair user and you eat, access your computer or read from your chair, then an outpatient appointment may be suitable. You will need to be sat in your main wheelchair for the assessment.

What will happen during the appointment?
The assessment starts with a conversation covering subjects such as your daily routine, your home environment and care provision. We will check the pain free range of movement in your arms and shoulders. You do not need a lot of strength to use a MAS, as it is more about control.

If we then feel you would be suitable to try a MAS, an assessment kit will be set up for you.

What happens after the initial assessment?
Not everyone likes or can easily use a MAS. Even if it works well, we will check that you would like us to go ahead before we make up a kit, as custom parts are often required. We will make a follow-up appointment for you when the MAS is ready to be issued to you.

If your circumstances change within a year from receiving your MAS, you can contact us for a review. The equipment costs are still covered by the initial funding during this time and parts can be exchanged to adapt your MAS.
Wheelchair controls

The wheelchair controls service can help find alternative drive methods for you to manoeuvre your electric wheelchair, if you are finding it difficult to use a standard joystick. This could be due to reduced dexterity, strength or range of movement. Alternative drive mechanisms include head switches, chin control and minimal force (‘mini’) joysticks.

What will happen during the appointment?
During the assessment we will discuss the relevant background information, such as what methods you have used in the past to manoeuvre your chair. We’ll also discuss the environments where you most often use your chair. We will then set up alternative drive mechanisms for you to trial, either during the initial appointment or at a later date.

What happens after the initial assessment?
A report will be written to summarise the assessment for your records. This will be sent to you and the person who referred you to our service.

If we think that an alternative drive method would help, we will request funding for this from the referrer (usually your local wheelchair service).

Once funding is agreed we will arrange a follow-up appointment with you, to set up your chair with the equipment.
How to contact us

Specialist Disability Service

Tel: 01865 227 447
     (8.00am to 4.00pm, Monday to Friday)

Email: specialist.disabilityservice@nhs.net

Website: www.ouh.nhs.uk/oce/

Address:
Oxford Centre for Enablement
Windmill Road
Oxford
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OX3 7HE
If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221 473 or email PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk

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