



Forum of Mobility Centres

AIDS TO FOR ACCESS INTO A CAR

Adaptation Guide 17

If access into the seat of a vehicle, from either a standing position or a wheelchair is difficult for a disabled or older motorist, there is a range of equipment that may help, such as a turning/swivel cushion, leg lifter, glide sheet, push up bar, transfer board, handling belt and tip up plates/platforms.



Turning/Swivel Cushion

This is a double layered cushion that is laid on top of the car seat where the top layer rotates to alleviate the strain on a person's back or hips when accessing a car seat. When a person has lowered him or herself onto the turning/swivel cushion with their legs outside the vehicle, the cushion reduces friction enabling them to pivot round to face forwards inside the vehicle. Although the bottom layer may have a non slip underside, it is advisable that the cushion be securely tied down or fixed to the car seat for stability. Various styles of cushion are available. If the person has difficulty lifting their legs over the car sill, a leg lifter may help.

Leg Lifter



This is a reinforced rigid shaped loop with a large loop at one end, which acts as a foothold, and a small loop at the other end for a hand hold. This helps a person who has difficulty lifting their legs over the sill of the car when swivelling round in the seat to face forward, or helps a carer if assisting. Using this lifter does require some amount of arm strength, but is an alternative to lifting the leg by holding clothing or lifting the leg manually. Use the leg lifter to lift one leg in at a time.

Push up bar



This is a steel shaft with a non-slip, soft grip handle which is inserted into the door striker on either the driver or passenger door. It then provides a solid support bar that a person may push down on to help them stand up from the car seat or to help them lower themselves down onto the car seat. The bar is locked into the door striker with a rotation action and is easily removed after use. The bar does not fit all vehicles.

Transfer Boards



These are either straight, curved or angled boards, which bridge the gap between a wheelchair seat and a car seat for a person who is unable to manage a standing transfer from a wheelchair. The wheelchair is placed alongside the front passenger or driver's seat and the person in the wheelchair has to be able to lean over slightly so the board can be placed underneath them. The person then transfers via the board either independently or with the help of a carer. When on the other seat, the person again has to be able to lean over so the board can be removed.

Glide Sheet



This is a roll of low friction nylon sheeting which, when laid on a car seat, enables a person to twist round and centralise him or herself with less effort. This can be easily pulled out; it is essential that this is removed before travelling.

Turning disc/Turntable



This is a small double layered disc with a non slip base and a ridged upper layer to prevent slipping, which is positioned on the ground beside the open car door to help with a standing transfer between a wheelchair and a car seat. Either independently or with the help of a carer (using handling belt – see below), the person stands on the disc from the wheelchair/car seat and the

rotation of the disc helps them to pivot to the side of the car seat/front of the wheelchair from where they can lower themselves or be assisted. Using the turning disc is a more stable method of turning as it reduces twisting the body and 'shuffling' the feet to change position. A turning/swivel cushion or glide sheet may help to turn forwards and be centrally placed on the car seat but should only be used if the person is able to take their own weight.

Handling Belts



This is a padded fabric belt that is placed around a person's waist to help a carer assist and support that person when being transferred to a car seat from a standing position, on a turning disc (as above) or from a wheelchair using a transfer board.

Using the vertical padded hand grips gives the carer more control and is a safer handling technique. It is more comfortable for the person being repositioned, rather than being held by their clothing or 'hugged' when being assisted to turn, lower onto a car seat or transfer across the board and also reduces the strain for the carer.

Fixed Tip up plate / platform



This is a platform/plate that is fitted to the vehicle and bridges the gap between the wheelchair and car seats when a person is not able to manage a standing transfer. The platform is fitted level with the height of the car seat and flips down for use so the person can slide across from the wheelchair. It flips up out of the way or can be removed or rotated behind the 'B' post of the car when not required.

Tip up plate / platform that raises and lowers

This has 2 functions:

1) To help a person transfer from a wheelchair to a car seat that is at a different height, the platform/plate electrically raises and lowers to the required height. For access into the car, the platform/plate is positioned level with the wheelchair seat and the person slides onto the platform, which then can be raised or lowered to be level with the car seat for transferring. To exit the vehicle the process is reversed. During the journey the plate can be removed or tipped vertically to be out of the way.





2) To help a person stand up from a car seat, the plate/platform is electrically positioned level with the car seat. The person slides from the seat onto the plate/platform and then pivots so they are seated with their feet on the ground. The plate/platform is then raised to bring the user to a standing position using the electrically powered unit. The process is reversed for entering the car. The raiser can be folded down or lifted off the fixing bracket if not required for any journey.

For details of suppliers of these products, please contact the Forum of Mobility Centres on 0800 559 3636.

If you are planning to change your vehicle, there are several points to consider before purchase, such as the height of the car seat as one that is too low may make a difference when standing up from the seat, particularly if parked by a curb. Two door cars usually have a wider door opening if you need more space for access or a carer's assistance. Ricability at 30 Angel Gate, City Road, London EC1V 2PT, has published a booklet, 'The ins and outs of choosing a car' which is available by telephone 020 7427 2460 or from their website www.ricability.org.uk.

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