



Capability Scotland

Case Study

Claire Dempsey

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Topic(s): Postural Care

Position Deteriorating Over Time

When people with asymmetric postures are not supported well in their wheelchairs, this can make their body shape worse. That's why it's important to look at provision of equipment including wheelchairs with an eye on preventative postural care, otherwise you're always behind the curve, reacting to established changes instead of preventing them.



2015
Claire leaning to her right



2017
Claire leaning and hanging



2024
Full mould for midline support



Postural Care Prevents Pain

People with asymmetric postures may experience pain. The likelihood of this happening increases with the level of disability. Frequency and intensity of posture related pain also increase with age. This pain comes from a variety of sources, such as joint stiffness, muscles tension, nerve impingement, pressure issues and compromised organ function.

When your muscles don't work ergonomically because your posture is off, or you have some kind of movement restriction, the effort of trying to fight gravity increases muscle effort and fatigue. We can reduce these effects through changes of position, including the use of tilt-in-space, and through increasing support, such as well fitted or moulded seating and snugly fitting accessories.



The Importance of Postural Care Training

Not Just Moving & Assistance

Moving and Assisting (also known as Manual Handling) is about getting safely from point A to point B without harm to yourself or the person you are assisting. Postural Care is about the person you support arriving at point B in a good posture that protects their **body shape** from harm

If Claire is not positioned well in her wheelchair, she cannot participate in and enjoy life in the moment because she can't use her arms or concentrate on anything else. And it allows gravity to pull on her in a way that makes her bodyshape worse.



Good position indicators:

Small gap between knees and **seat edge**.
Both feet rest on footplates



Bad position indicators:

Large gap between knees and **seat edge**.
Left foot off footplate.

Capability Scotland is delighted to have received a grant from The Hospital Saturday Fund, allowing us to deliver so much of our postural care training in the charity. A huge thank you to them for making this possible!

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Long-Term View

What Happens to Quality of Life When Posture Changes

Postural Care considers the whole 24 hour period, including overnight, because how we lie affects how we sit.

Claire needs the right kind of positioning support whenever she lies down. If Claire was not properly supported during the night, sitting in any kind of seat would become more difficult, and this would affect what she can participate in, including going out or accessing transport.



Symmetrical support against gravity



Body shape unprotected

Reduction in Therapy Provision

Postural care often goes wrong at transition points. Transition points are when something changes, either in your body as a result of growing up, ageing or illness. Or in your environment, such as where you live, who looks after you, whether you're going into hospital or transitioning from child to adult services, or when services change.

Claire's most recent transition point was a time of ill health, with prolonged periods of bedrest, weight loss, pain and skin issues. It's important to respond to these changes quickly with a review of postural care needs, to prevent more problems down the line.

A big transition happened in the 1970s, when for children with complex disabilities there was a move to focus on the provision of education at the expense of therapy services. This led to a reduction in therapy provision in children and adult services, including at Capability Scotland, but was later acknowledged as a mistake. That's why it is great that the National Postural Care Strategy makes postural care everybody's business.

Further Reading

The Warnock Report:

<https://www.ipgce.com/glossary/warnock-report-1978-international-education-explained/>





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