

# Get wise to buying a mobility vehicle

A guide to helping you make an informed choice



A mobility vehicle can definitely improve your lifestyle. No longer will you be confined to your home, reliant on others and unable to fully control your own life.

- Total Freedom
- Total Independence
- Total Dignity

## Making the right decision

The best way to ensure you make the right decisions is to see, and try, a wide range of models from different manufacturers. You should first contact a local BHTA specialist, and visit their local showrooms. Here you can see a number of models, and make proper comparisons of size, comfort and handling. You will also meet and get to know their staff and your backup team. If you cannot visit, then book a home demonstration, and try the different products in and around your own home. Give yourself time and try to avoid rush decisions.

## Making an informed choice

Today it is increasingly common to see a scooter or power chair being used by people of all ages and abilities. People have now found out that these mobility vehicles are popular because without them they would be housebound, or restricted to only very limited distances, and that they are easy to control, economical to keep, and actually pretty good fun!

However, deciding on which model to see and which company to buy from is very important, and can be difficult. You need to know that the product is suitable for all your needs, and that the company is a qualified and experienced supplier. You need to know that they will look after you and your vehicle, now and in the future.

This is why the BHTA has produced this guide to help you choose the best combination of product and supplier, helping you to make an informed choice and decision.

### Points to ask:

- Is the company a member of the BHTA?
- Does the company offer a choice of manufacturers and models?
- Is the company based near you with showrooms, servicing facilities, and on the road repair and service engineers?
- Can the company provide servicing and finance plans and information about comprehensive insurance?
- Do you know the cost of call outs and in-house servicing?
- Does the company supply other independent living products to help you maintain your independence?
- If you are away on holiday you can find a list of BHTA members on our website should you need some help.

Always look for the BHTA and Trading Standards logo as a sign you are dealing with an approved member.



### Scooters – How do I choose?

There are many variations of scooter, offering differing features to suit you, the environment you live in, and the terrain you wish to cover. Here are some questions to discuss with your local BHTA retailer when considering your options:

- Is the scooter comfortable to ride?
- Can I get on and off it easily?
- Are the controls suitable and comfortable for me to use over a long period?
- Is the scooter going to suit my needs for at least a few years?
- Can the scooter carry me and my shopping?
- Will the scooter be suitable for all types of terrain I anticipate wanting to use it over?
- Do I need the scooter to be able to climb kerbs?
- Can I dismantle the scooter to transport it in the car if needed?
- Does the scooter give me the mileage range I need, not only when shopping locally, but also, for example, when I want to visit a National Trust stately home or gardens, participate in outdoor activities or when I go rambling?
- Is the scooter stable and safe enough for my needs?
- Do I have somewhere to store and charge up my scooter?

The models offered come in many styles: the smaller offering easy manoeuvrability, and portability, but often with smaller wheels which will not go up kerbs or over rough ground. Small batteries restrict range (possibly down as low as 10 miles), however, they may be better for indoor or short journeys. BHTA members are there to guide you through the process and make sure all your questions are covered and offer you reassurance.

Note that dismounting and mounting kerbs with any mobility vehicle can be very bouncy, and for some people can be uncomfortable, but with the increased availability of dropped kerbs and pedestrian areas you should find the need for kerb climbing less necessary.

### Powerchairs – making the right choice

Powerchairs are usually more difficult to select than scooters. Most of the aspects you would consider when buying a scooter still apply, but generally a powerchair user has more limitations to their personal mobility, and will probably be using their vehicle more regularly, often all day, and may depend on it in their home and outside.

Comfort and support are essential and battery range is important if using all day.

### Points to ask:

- Where do I want to use it? Indoors – size of doors? Outdoors – level or rough ground? Are dropped kerbs available?
- How far do I want to go?
- Do I need it to go in a car? Does it dismantle easily? Who will dismantle it? How often?
- Where will my vehicle be stored and charged?
- Will I be in the vehicle for long periods?
- Can I use it easily and safely?
- Do I need it to be adapted for my particular comfort and safety?
- Do I need special seating, backs, armrests, footrests?
- Is there clear indication of the amount of charge remaining?
- Is it available in different colours of frame and upholstery?

- Who will service my vehicle?
- Do I want extended warranty, insurance and a service contract?
- Does my supplier adhere to the BHTA Code of Practice?

### **Is it a good idea to buy second hand?**

Buying a second hand scooter or wheelchair can be as difficult as buying a second hand car. But it is here that you will reduce the dangers if you buy from a BHTA specialist.

- They will check that your second hand vehicle is safe and road worthy, and they offer a proper guarantee.
- They will help you to assess its suitability.
- They will offer all the services of training and backup that you would receive if you had bought new.
- They will charge a fair price.

### **Training me to use my vehicle**

All of your BHTA specialists are keen to provide you with proper training to help you be in proper control and at ease with your newly found independence.

So ask them to accompany you in and around your home, and out to your local shops and venues. Your BHTA specialist will want you to feel confident so that you get the most pleasure and use from your new product.

### **Battery care**

Looking after and regularly charging your vehicle will increase its reliability and reduce its running costs. You must always read your owner's manual and take particular note about how to charge the batteries. Battery charging uses about the same electricity as a 100 watt light bulb, so it won't eat you out of house and home.

For further information see the BHTA leaflet – '**Get wise to getting more from your battery**'.

### **Caring for my vehicle**

Your BHTA mobility specialist will always discuss the long term needs of you and your vehicle. After years of extensive design and development these products have become more reliable and durable, and you should enjoy independence without worry. However, you must appreciate that with time, as with any mechanical product, components can go wrong.

It is at these times it is most important that you have taken your local BHTA mobility specialists' advice on regular servicing plans, extended guarantees and policies. If you are unfortunate enough to break down, you will realise why it was so important that you have a BHTA mobility specialist supply your mobility vehicle supported by factory trained and qualified service engineers, they will get you back on the road quickly and efficiently.



## For years to come

Looking after your mobility vehicle properly will help you ensure trouble free mobility. However, just like a car, you should expect to incur some running expenses for servicing and new batteries, for example. So we recommend putting a little aside each week to cover maintenance costs, or alternatively, investigating extended warranties, service contracts and insurance.

We hope you enjoy your newly found freedom.

## Help is at hand

These are some of the organisations which provide useful information and advice

### Mobility Centres

Driving Mobility is a network of 16 independent organisations covering England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, which offer professional, high quality information, advice and assessment to people who need to gain or retain independence through mobility.

### Driving Mobility

Telephone: 0800 559 3636  
[www.drivingmobility.org.uk](http://www.drivingmobility.org.uk)

### Motability

Motability is a scheme that lets you lease a mobility scooter, powered wheelchair or car using your benefits. They also run Motability One Big Day events where you can see and try out equipment.

Telephone: 0300 456 4566  
Textphone: 0300 037 0100  
[www.motability.co.uk/scooters-and-powered-wheelchairs/](http://www.motability.co.uk/scooters-and-powered-wheelchairs/)

## National Federation of Shopmobility UK

If your local shopping centre or town centre has a Shopmobility Scheme, you can hire a scooter from them. Find out more from The National Federation of Shopmobility.

Telephone: 01933 229644  
[www.nfsuk.org](http://www.nfsuk.org)

## Which?

Publish independent test reviews on 10 smaller scooters on their subscription website.  
[www.which.co.uk](http://www.which.co.uk)

## RICA (Research Institute for Consumer Affairs)

Independent research charity providing free practical and detailed guidance for older and disabled consumers. Rica has an guidance on choosing a mobility scooter and a powered wheelchair, a search of measurements, features and details of over 400 powered wheelchairs/mobility scooters.

Also Rica has information on rights and regulations for travelling on public transport including which mobility scooters can go on buses, trains and trams plus advice on car boot hoists and blog posts written by scooter users with practical tips and advice.

Telephone: 020 7427 2460  
[www.rica.org.uk](http://www.rica.org.uk)

## BHTA Members

Remember to always look for the BHTA and Approved Code Trading Standards logo (below) to get the support and advice you need to make the right choice. Visit our website to find your nearest BHTA member to where you live.

**[www.bhta.com](http://www.bhta.com)**

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The BHTA represent almost 500 companies, all of whom commit to the BHTA Code of Practice, the only one in this industry to be approved by The Chartered Trading Standards Institute. BHTA member companies operate to higher standards of customer protection than the law requires.

### British Health Trades Association

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