

## **SMART Wheelchair Loan Service**

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The SMART Wheelchair is a powered wheelchair fitted with sensors and a computer which can be driven by severely disabled adults and children. The sensors in the bumpers enable it to detect obstacles and avoid them. It is a great assessment and learning tool and can be fitted with a variety of seating systems.

The SMART platform is the latest development on which the patient's normal wheelchair can be placed to enable them to get a chance to try a powered chair but stay in their normal seating. This project arose because there were a number of children with complex disabilities who were being issued with powered indoor chairs in the hope that they would then learn how to use them. The work of correct positioning, and finding the correct control system had then to be carried out- which was a ponderous and time consuming process which was not always successful.

It was felt that such children would benefit from being assessed in the SMART system and a source of funding was found - a local radio station provided £25,000 to get both a SMART chair and a SMART platform. These are provided on loan to schools for a period of 4 months and this scheme has been running since May 2007. A second loan period can be requested. In this time the child is assessed as to which type of control is needed for the chair. The co-operation of the school staff is required and a careful activity record is made. There are regular assessment visits.

The platform is still on its first loan, the wheelchair is about to go on its second. The first wheelchair loan was interesting- the child with Lesch- Nghan Syndrome was very enthusiastic and rapidly mastered fine control of the chair, even through narrow doorways. Unfortunately the wheelchair then became a tool by which they could self harm, by rubbing their hands and arms on the walls as they went past. The chair had to be withdrawn for safety reasons.

It is hoped to get 2 further chairs - and have one for Fife, and 2 for Lothian and Borders