

Equipment to help you use the bath or shower

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Information sheet B7

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Introduction

There are many types of equipment available to help with using the bath or shower. This Information Sheet describes the things that are used most often. It will help to guide you to find the best pieces of equipment to meet your needs and to consider the practical and safety issues associated with them.

We recommend that you try any equipment you might be interested in before buying it.

Things to think about before buying equipment

Would equipment fit in your bath?

- **Length** - if it is a short bath there may not be enough leg room once a bath lift or bath board and seat have been fitted. A 1700mm long bath allows room for most bath equipment
- **Width** – some equipment (bath boards in particular) are available in various widths
- **Bath rim** – Bath boards rest on the rim at the top of the bath. If the rim beside the wall is very narrow, check with the supplier that it is wide enough to support a bath lift.
- **Built in handles** - these can get in the way of some equipment. Some bath lifts come with side flap protectors to prevent the flaps getting caught under built in handles
- **Plastic or acrylic baths** – check with the supplier if the equipment is suitable for these baths as they may not be strong enough for some items.
- **Corner baths** – there are not as many options available for corner baths – check with the supplier to find out what is compatible.
- **Shower screens** – these can sometimes limit the legroom available to lift your legs over the side of the bath if you are sitting on a bath board or bath lift.

Suggested equipment

To help with using the bath

Bath board

This is a platform across the top of the bath, secured into place by adjustable brackets. Most are either slatted or perforated to allow water to drain through.

For safety the board must not extend beyond the rim of the bath.



How to use a bath board

Instead of stepping over the side of the bath, sit on the edge of the bath board or bath lift, wriggle back and swing your legs over the rim of the bath (see pictures below). Move to the middle of the bath board or bath lift - using a grab rail may help you. From the board you can stay sitting to use a shower, or you can lower yourself onto a bath seat.

Using a non-slip mat or slip resistant surface is recommended with this equipment.



Bath seat

This provides a platform to sit on halfway down into the bath. It allows you to be close to the water to have a wash. It is usually used with a bath board (see above) which you can lower yourself from. This requires good strength in both arms. A bath seat does not allow you to lie in deep water and stretch out. Using a grab rail and non-slip mat or slip resistant surface is recommended with this equipment.



Bath lift

There are many types of bath lifts. They fit inside the bath and can lower you down and raise you up inside the bath. To get onto the bath lift, use the same method as for using a bath board (see above) while the bath lift is in its upper position. Bath lifts can be hydraulic or battery operated. Some have solid plastic seats whilst others are inflatable or are made of a fabric band across the bath. As a result some are less stable than others and therefore require you to have better sitting balance. We strongly recommend that you try the equipment before buying it.



To help with using a shower over the bath

Shower board

This is similar to a bath board but is generally wider, and is used in the same way to help you get over the side of the bath (see above). You can stay sitting down to use the shower – if you have a shower curtain this can be tucked in. Again, a grab rail and a non-slip mat or slip resistant surface rails are recommended.

Swivel bath seat

This is a plastic chair-type seat, which is fitted across the top of

the bath. The seat can swivel around as you lift your legs over the side of the bath. Many have a locking mechanism to secure the seat while you get on and off. You can remain seated while you



are using the shower. The swivel bath seat is easier than using a bath board if you require support behind your back when you lift your legs over the side of the bath. It also reduces drag on your skin when you move. A grab rail and non-slip mat or grip resistant surface are recommended if you are to stand up from the seat to use the shower.

Using the shower hose

If you find that the shower does not reach you while you are sitting on a shower board or swivel bath seat, it may be easier to take the showerhead from the wall and hold it by hand. It may be necessary to fit a longer shower hose for this.

To help with using a shower cubicle

Shower stool or chair

These can be free standing or fixed to the wall. Some can fold out of the way for other users. Whether or not this equipment is suitable will depend on the space available within the shower cubicle - not only for the seat itself, but also for your knees and feet when you are sitting on it.



If you want to install a shower cubicle, shower tray or shower area

- **Access** - It may be difficult to manage a step into a shower cubicle. A wet floor shower area has no step, and a level access tray has a small step (about one centimetre).
- **Flooring** - Shower trays and cubicles can usually be placed on top of the existing floor. A wet floor shower has a waterproof non-slip floor **but the existing floor will need to be adapted.**
- **Temperature and shower controls** - some shower units have a pre-set temperature control and some have controls that are easier to adjust.
- **Seating** - see above.

General equipment to help with bathing and showering

Bath step

Bath steps provide a platform on the outside of the bath or shower cubicle. This reduces the height that you need to lift your legs to get into the bath or shower. They are not suitable if you have difficulty keeping your balance, and they will not help you to lift your legs out from a deep bath. If used, a slip-resistant step provides a safer surface to stand on; and a grab rail mounted on the wall will give a secure handhold.



Grab rails

Grab rails can help give you support when you are getting in and out of the bath and standing to use the shower. They can be fitted on the wall beside the bath, either straight or at an angle.



To help you reaching to wash all over your body

Long handled sponge

A long handled sponge may allow you to wash parts of your body that are difficult to reach. Some are angled and some can be bent to the angle you want.

Long handled toe washers

These can be made of towelling or sponge and some can be angled to your individual needs.



Equipment for safety

Bath thermometers

A bath thermometer can be used to check the temperature of bath water before you get in. It is particularly useful if you have reduced skin sensation.

Water temperature indicators

These devices change colour to indicate water temperature. Some people may find them simpler and easier to read than a bath thermometer.

Water level indicators

These give out a warning sound when they are in contact with water. This means that they can alert you when the bath is full. This can be particularly useful for people who have short-term memory problems or a visual impairment.

Bath mats and slip resistant materials

A slip resistant surface will help to prevent you slipping in a wet bath or shower. Self-adhesive strips or spray-on slip resistant material may be used, or removable mats which are secured with suckers to the bottom of the bath.

Trying out or buying equipment

For more information or advice, phone Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224.

Please see our Information Sheet '**B4 How to get good advice about equipment and adaptations**'. This will give you ideas for getting independent advice about equipment if you feel that you would prefer not to approach a company in the first instance.

Remember that you have rights as a consumer if the product you buy is not 'fit for purpose' and these rights entitle you to return equipment if it does not solve your problems. Go to:

www.gov.uk/consumer-protection-rights for more information.

Getting advice on minor adaptations

Please see our information sheet '**B5 Adapting your home**', this tells you how to contact the local Home Improvement Agency. They can help with fitting things like rails and give you advice about minor adaptations.

If you need more help finding a solution

Use the national **AskSARA** website to find the 'right' bit of equipment without the hassle of going into shops or being pushed into buying something you really don't want or need. It asks you questions about

about what you need and then it gives recommendations about what equipment may help you. www.asksara.dlf.org.uk/

Then use the “find services” section of the Somerset Choices website to find local places where you can buy the equipment you have researched. www.somersetchoices.org.uk/

If you'd like help with accessing these websites but do not have internet access, please phone Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224.

Your opportunity to feedback

We welcome your comments about the services you receive. If you would like to tell us what you think, please either:

Contact us by going to our website, www.somerset.gov.uk, or

- Speak to your social care worker
- Phone Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224, or
- Contact the Adults and Health Customer Experience Officer
Floor B2 East
County Hall
Taunton
TA1 4DY
Email: customerexperience@somerset.gov.uk

This document is also available on request in Braille, large print, tape, disc and can be translated into different languages.

Where can I go to choose my own care and support?

Go to www.somersetchoices.org.uk



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