



Hoists in hotels – an investigation

Key findings

- 8 in 10 (almost 80%) of respondents have been unable to go on holiday because of the lack of hoist facilities in hotels in the past 5 years.
- Over 85% can use a mobile hoist if necessary.
- According to Ceiling Hoist Users Club¹ which is a well trusted website which many disabled people refer to when looking for somewhere accessible to stay, there are only 18 known hotels in the UK with ceiling hoists available for use free of charge.

Other key statistics

- Almost 15% cannot use a mobile hoist to transfer if a ceiling hoist is unavailable
- Over 35% of survey respondents don't go anywhere overnight because of the lack of hoists.
- Over 25% of survey respondents only stay in accommodation that supplies hoists (either ceiling or portable).
- Over 35% of survey respondents are forced to take their own portable hoist on holiday with them.
- 9 out of 10 respondents said if a hotel had a complimentary mobile hoist it would incentivise them to stay there.
- Almost 30% of survey respondents would be willing to travel over 50 miles from their chosen destination if the hotel had a hoist.

Hotel Survey

The Trailblazers survey asked respondents to rate their experiences for 7 major hotels chains as well as independent hotels/B and B's. Some 103 people responded to the survey conducted between 17 July and 14 August 2017

¹ <http://chuc.org.uk/index.php/accommodation-with-hoists/hotels-in-uk>

Mystery Shopper

We also conducted a mystery shopper (on 9 August 2017) of a selection of hotels. We asked them if they were able to offer a complementary mobile hoist free of charge to those who needed it. Some of the responses included:

Major UK Cities

We called two major chain hotels, each in London, Manchester, Glasgow and Belfast. The only hotel who were able to offer help to hire a hoist was one of the major chains in Glasgow, but the cost of hiring the hoist would fall to the customer booking the holiday. One other hotel in Glasgow from another major chain had a hoist available free of charge to their customers who needed it. All of the other hotels we called in London, Manchester, Glasgow and Belfast did not have any hoists, nor did they offer help to hire one.

We spoke to a customer service advisor at one of these chains, who was able to give full details of the accessibility of their rooms, including the type of flooring available. Unfortunately, none of their rooms had a level entry wet room and there was no complementary hoist free of charge. However, they were willing to take delivery of the hoist.

Other UK tourist destinations

We called a number of other hotels in various destinations across the UK. This included:

- Oxford
- York
- Brighton
- Newport
- Cardiff

The information we received varied across four different UK chains. None of the five above were able to offer a hoist free of charge, or offer assistance with hiring a hoist. One major chain recommended that we bring our own hoist, but said that their beds were not suitable for use with a portable hoist. Another hotel told us that they had a hoist in the swimming pool, and one member of staff we spoke to did not know what a hoist was.

Summary

From our mystery shopping there is only one hotel out of the 20 that we called able to offer a free hoist for those who need it at the hotel. None of the disabled people

who have responded to our survey have said they've been given assistance to have a hoist hired at any hotel.

Policy Recommendations

Government

- Building regulations must be amended to reflect the changing needs of disabled people, including the provision of overhead hoists in accessible rooms and the inclusion of Changing Places toilets for functions.
- Independent businesses may not have adequate funding to make these choices. Government should create an 'access renovation fund' which independent businesses can access money to install hoists in hotel rooms, or other access requirements such as Changing Places toilets.

Local Authorities

- As the collective spending power of disabled people has been estimated at £249bn to the economy, local authorities must provide assistance, including financial and planning advice or permission to ensure that access is at the centre of all major renovations and new buildings.

Tourism Industry

- Hotels should purchase mobile hoists as an urgent measure, and provide these as a complimentary service to wheelchair users who need them. However, many require overhead hoists and we call on hotels to have their accessible rooms assessed to have these hoists fitted.
- We call on the tourism industry to provide staff training with disabled people so that their staff know what a hoist is, are aware of their policy regarding helping disabled people get a hoist for their stay, and to educate those in charge of hotel development of why having hoists available is so important.

Case Study

Carrie Aimes is 27 from the West Midlands. She told us her story.

"I am an infrequent traveller, not because I lack the desire but because it is so difficult to find appropriately adapted and affordable hotels. Even getting away for a single night is an almost impossible challenge, since hotel rooms are, disappointingly, not equipped with ceiling track hoists as standard.

Although some people get around this problem by hiring (at an extra cost) or taking with them a portable hoist, this is not practical for all. Portable hoists are

cumbersome, difficult to store, transport and manoeuvre. Furthermore, many people simply don't have access to a vehicle large enough to carry such large-scale equipment.

I have Ullrich congenital muscular dystrophy and am completely non-ambulant. I can't safely transfer and so I either have to be hoisted or manually lifted. Understandably most people, excluding family, are reluctant to do the latter. So, if I want or need to get away from home, my only current option is to ask family members if they are willing to lend their time and support (far from ideal).

With so few hotels in the UK equipped with ceiling track hoists, our options are severely limited. For those of us who need this facility, a premium cost is incurred, and then we are restricted to specific locations. Sadly we are not free as others are, to occupy any hotel room in a hotel of our choice, anywhere in the country."

About Muscular Dystrophy UK

Muscular Dystrophy UK is the charity for 70,000 children and adults living with muscle-wasting conditions. We provide vital information, advice and support to help people live as independently as possible. We accelerate progress in research and drive the campaign for access to emerging treatments.

About muscle-wasting conditions

Muscle-wasting conditions cause muscles to weaken and waste over time, leading to increasingly severe disability. Some affect the heart and muscles vital for breathing, cutting lives short.

Do you want to get involved with our campaign for more hoists in hotels? Do you have a burning question about disability rights in the UK?

Get in touch with Lauren, Victoria and Michaela at trailblazers@musculardystrophyuk.org