

# Buying a stair lift

## Introduction

There are several options if using the stairs becomes difficult. You could install stair rails, consider living downstairs if you have the room and bathroom facilities or even consider moving to a bungalow or a ground floor flat. Another option is installing a stair lift which is a powered device that takes you up and down stairs.

## Considerations

Type of stairs - The stair lift needs to be appropriate to the type of stairs. If you have a curved stairs then the lift needs to be able to go around the curve too. It either has to go beyond the stairs to enable you to get off away from the top of the stairs or swivel so that the chair faces away from the stairs. There needs to be enough room for you to safely travel up the stairs without catching limbs as you go.



Doorways – If there is a doorway near where the bottom of the track ends this needs to be considered. It may be that the track can be hinged or move to avoid blocking the doorway.

Swivel seats – There is a manual and a powered swivel depending on your ability to twist.

Lift controls – There are various types of controls including joy sticks, buttons and switches. You also need to consider which hand would be better able to use them.

Weight – All stair lifts have a maximum weight limit which needs to be kept in mind when purchasing a lift.

Lap straps – Make sure you are able to operate the type of strap before purchase.

Other considerations – Health conditions such as epilepsy, dementia or those who suffer with dizzy spells may not be compatible with a stair lift or may require an individual risk assessment.

Try before you buy – Depending on where you live there may be an Equipment Demonstration Centre nearby who will be able to offer you impartial advice to help you choose appropriately. Look on the Disabled Living Foundation's web page to see if there is a centre near you. Alternatively many stair lift companies will have a showroom where you can try different types of lifts before you buy.

Second-hand / Reconditioned lifts - It is possible to buy a second-hand stair lift. If doing this we would advise that you purchase from a stair lift manufacturer, or an authorised company dealing in reconditioned stair lifts who will have checked that the stair lift meets current safety standards. They may also be able to provide a guarantee and possibly a warranty.

Warranty – When considering purchasing a stair lift please consider servicing and warranty options. Consider an extended warranty and check what the warranty covers. Also consider the companies out of hour's service.

Long term needs – Installing a stair lift can be a costly adaptation (a straight stair lift costs on average around £2,000, curved stair lifts can cost £6,000 and second hand stair lifts around £1,500 (Which?, 2014)). It therefore needs to meet your needs now and in the future whenever possible and is why we suggest looking at all the above considerations.

## **Choosing a contractor**

When choosing a contractor it is always useful to get quotes from at least two companies.

Nottinghamshire County Council works in partnership with Checkatrade to provide an approved trader scheme to help Nottinghamshire consumers choose a trader they can trust and rely upon. Please visit [www.checkatrade.com](http://www.checkatrade.com)

## **Are you entitled to VAT relief?**

Find out more at: [www.gov.uk/financial-help-disabled/vat-relief](http://www.gov.uk/financial-help-disabled/vat-relief)

## **More information**

**Please note this leaflet is a guide and not an exhaustive list of recommendations which will depend on your unique circumstances.**

**If you require an Occupational Therapy assessment please contact Nottinghamshire County Council's Customer Service Centre on 0300 500 80 80.**

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