

Title of WI: Use of Lap Belts

Custodian: Group Managing Director

Version Number: 03

Issue date: 05.01.26

Review date: 05.01.29

## WORK INSTRUCTION (WI)

Title of WI	Use of Lap Belts		
What type of document is this?	Work Instruction	WI Reference Number	HHH-W.I-002
Purpose of WI	To give guidance to employees in conjunction with manufacturer's instructions, for the use of Lap Belts e.g., wheelchairs, bath seats and adapted chairs with them built in by manufacturer.		
Role	Responsibility		
Carers	To ensure correct lap belt procedure is followed during customer care to ensure safety		
Branch Employees	To ensure training on lap belt use and risks is covered in moving and handling training when required, and that a risk assessment is in place detailing the use of lap belts.		
Scope of WI	This work instruction discusses the Dos and Don'ts of using a lap belt on customers within Helping Hands.		

### 1.0 Introduction

There are several types of belts that can be used with wheelchair equipment and other adapted chairs, such as wheeled lounge chairs and bath chairs. Lap belts or straps help with the safe management of positioning in wheelchairs (or other mobile chairs). They help provide stability and can reduce the risk of slipping and tipping in people with poor independent postural control.

They do, however, restrict active movement and are considered a form of restraint. Therefore, use of a lap belt needs to consider the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and the Mental Capacity Act. If a chair user with a lap belt with mental capacity consents to the use of the belt because they feel safer this is fine and this should be documented in their care plan. If the person is unable to consent, then a best interest decision may be made provided this can be

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demonstrated and should be recorded in the care plan with a risk assessment. The most common belts are a safety belt and a pelvic lap belt.

- **safety belt** is used to help maintain an individual's safety when whilst being manoeuvred in the wheelchair or sat in a chair.
- **pelvic lap belt** is designed to help maintain the correct sitting position in a wheelchair or chair and can often be used in combination with other types of harnessing to provide specific postural support.

If not used correctly, pelvic lap belts and safety belts can be dangerous to people using chairs with them built in and can result in severe injury or death, if not used correctly. They must never be used with a purpose of restraint.

## 2.0 Do's

- Before each use, ensure the pelvic lap belt or safety belt is in good condition, is appropriate for use and adjusted correctly. Check there are no frayed areas, broken clasps or mounting brackets. Also ensure that the belt is fitted from the mounting brackets or from the secure fixings as per manufacturer's instructions.
- The belt should be fitted low down across the pelvis (not at the waist) and especially if it is a pelvic lap belt, it should be tight enough to get one finger's width space between the user and the belt.
- When not in use, fasten the belt and place on the seat or back board to prevent contact with moving parts of the wheelchair. If this advice is not followed the belt may become trapped in the wheels.
- Always follow manufacturer's guidelines for correct use.
- If a fault is identified, please talk to the customer/family member immediately.
- When folding and unfolding a wheelchair, ensure the belt is correctly located and not trapped round the wheelchair framework.
- If the customer has capacity, document the informed consent and reason for use.
- Complete a risk assessment detailing the rationale and risks for using the lap belt.

## 3.0 Don'ts

- Do not adjust the belt anchoring points.

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- Do not attach any additional objects to the belt.
- Do not use a wheelchair without first ensuring the belt is correctly positioned and fastened.
- Do not use the equipment for any other purpose other than identified by your therapist and/or the instructions provided.
- If after reading this work instruction you think the pelvic lap belt needs adjusting, please consult the customer/family member.
- NEVER leave a customer unattended with a lap belt or safety belt in place where they are at risk of sliding down the chair/ are unable to release the belt on the chair and may then become trapped around the neck by the belt causing asphyxiation (or drowning if in the bath chair) and death.

### 4.0 Correct Posture and Pelvic Lap Belt Position

The position of a pelvic lap belt will be dependent upon the clinical need of the individual wheelchair user but in general terms the wheelchair user should be in or near a 90-degree sitting position.

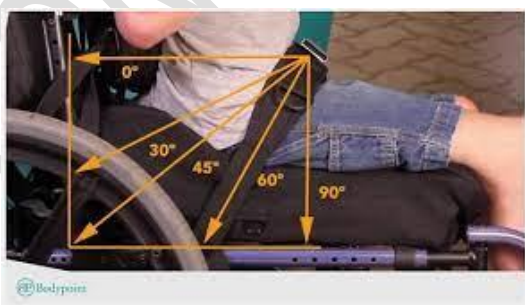
The pelvic lap belt should either:

have the fixing points located near the corner of the seat or base with the belt at about 45 degrees to the seat base, with a snug fit over the pelvis.

OR

have the fixing points forward of the corner position on the seat rails, with the belt in a more upright position across the top of the person's thighs, again with a snug fit to ensure the position is maintained.

### 5.0 Correct Position of a Safety Belt



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It is important that the wheelchair user sits well back in the seat of the wheelchair with the safety belt positioned as low as possible over the pelvis.

## 6.0 Incorrect Posture and Safety Belt Position

The pelvic lap belt or safety belt positioned above the pelvis against soft tissue area or lower abdomen, with the hips forward in the seat, giving a reclined posture. In this situation, the belt will not stop the person slipping further down in the wheelchair seat. There is the further risk of strangulation if the person continues to slip further down in the wheelchair because of an incorrectly applied belt.

Incorrect position can be caused by:

The wheelchair user being unable to achieve a 90-degree sitting position, the wheelchair user slipping down in the wheelchair due to inappropriate fitting and/or adjustment of the belt being 'held away' from the wheelchair user by a part of the seating system or wheelchair, for example the belt being positioned over the top of the armrest.

<b>TRAINING</b>  Is training required?	Yes, to be included in moving and handling training as required
<b>COMPLIANCE</b>  How is compliance with this document going to be monitored?	Documentation audits completed by the Independent Audit Team
<b>PROCEDURAL INFORMATION</b>	
Changes since previous version	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Added to new template</li> <li>Minor updates to terminology throughout</li> </ul>
Who was involved in developing	Clinical Manager

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/reviewing/amending the document? (list titles)		
How confidential is this document	Public	Can be shared freely within and outside of Helping Hands
References	<i>Mental Capacity Act 2005</i>	
Associated Documents	<i>HHH-POL-033 Mental Capacity Act Policy v3</i>	

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