

## Guide to using wheelchair scales

It is recommended that **ALL** Service Users (SU) have their weight monitored regularly. How often depends on each individual's needs – See page 2.

SU's who cannot stand safely should be weighed using suitable scales. If your unit does not have suitable scales then please consider either purchasing a set of scales or making arrangements to take the SU to a location that has wheelchair scales – See 'Accessing Wheelchair Scales' leaflet.

### Step 1- Setting up the scales

Set up the scales on a solid flat floor e.g. wood, lino or tiles.  
Follow the manufactures guidance to set up scales.  
Turn on and check that the weight displayed is 0 kilograms (Kg).



### Step 2- Weighing the empty wheelchair



Remove items from that have been hung on wheelchair; bags, backpacks, blankets, clothing etc.

Leave on all wheelchair attachments including headrest and footplates.

Write a list of the attachments and brief description to identify the wheelchair.

- Check the scales are turned on and the display is showing 0kg.  
Wheel the chair onto the scales; make sure all wheels are in the centre of the weighing plates. Apply the brakes, let go of the chair and check it is not touching anything.



- Electronic scales will usually 'bleep' when ready. Record the date and wheelchair weight.  
Repeat the process 3 times to ensure accuracy.

### Step 3- Weighing the person + wheelchair together

- Check the person being weighed is not wearing any heavy items of clothing (remove coat) and does not have anything heavy in their pockets (e.g. coins or phone). Check that extra items have not been added to the chair; no bags or blankets etc. and all wheelchair attachment are still in place (footplates, head rest).

It is recommended that people are weighed after receiving personal care so that continence pads are dry.

Explain to the procedure to the person and if possible gain their verbal consent to being weighed.

- Check the scales are turned on and the display is showing 0kg  
Wheel the person onto the scales; make sure all wheels are in the centre of the weighing plates.  
Apply the brakes, let go of the chair.
- Electronic scales will usually 'bleep' when ready. Record the date and person + wheelchair weight.  
Repeat the process 3 times to ensure accuracy.

#### Step 4- Calculating actual weight

Subtract (take away) the weight of the empty wheelchair (step 2) from the combined weight of the person + wheelchair (step 3) to obtain the persons weight.

$$\frac{\text{Person + Wheelchair step 3} - \text{Empty Wheelchair step 2}}{= \text{Actual Weight}}$$



Record this date and actual weight.

#### Step 5- Calculating percentage weight change

! Tip- you may find a calculator helpful.

You will need a historic weight from 3-6months ago and you will need the current weight. Work out the difference by subtracting '-' the bigger number from the smaller number. Divide '÷' your answer by the historic weight. Multiple 'x' by 100 to get a percentage (%).

If the previous weight is bigger than the current weigh you will have calculated percentage weight loss.

If the current weight is bigger than the previous weight you have calculated percentage weight gain.

*More than 10% unintentional weight loss/ gain in 3 to 6months maybe a cause for concern. It is important to alert the person's GP or other health care professional who may consider referral to a Dietitian.*

#### Monitoring weight

It is recommended that **ALL** Service Users (SU) have their weight monitored regularly. Routine weighing will increase compliance with CQC Outcome 5 regarding Nutrition. How often depends on each individual's needs; a dietitian or GP can advise if you are unsure.

Although there are no national guidelines for how often people in care should be weighed, the Specialist Dietitians (for Learning Disability & Forensics) recommend the following:

- Routine:** 6 monthly. Routine for all SU's.
- Monthly:** SU at risk of weight loss or weight gain, who are receiving prescription supplements, reduced appetite, pressure ulcers, other clinical concerns.
- Other:** As advised by Dietitian or other health care professional.

For more information please contact West Hertfordshire Dietitian 01442 283464 or East & North Hertfordshire Dietitian 01438 792 160.