

Merton Mencap

Safe use of slings & hoists

Policy & Procedure

Last reviewed: January 2026

Next review: January 2027

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Introduction

Some people may require special assistance when moving from one area to another because they lack the ability to weight-bear. In such instances, the use of slings and hoists may be required as a means to safely assist people.

This document sets out the charity's approach to using slings and hoists to assist people attending our services and activities.

Definitions

Staff & staff member: our employees, bank workers and volunteers.

Service users: people who access the charity's services and activities.

Slings: A sling is used to support the entire body of the service user. The sling passes underneath the service user and attaches to a hoist by a series of sling loops. Slings are often made of heavy-duty material and can be generic or customised.

Hoists: A hoist is used to take the weight of a service user. After using a sling to attach a service user to a hoist, the lifting mechanism of the hoist lifts the service user from one area to another. Hoists may be fixed or mobile.

Policy & Procedure

Staffing

Only staff who have received training and have been 'observed' as competent are authorised to use slings and hoists.

Two staff must always hoist a service user, one of whom is the Lead Hoister.

Reference should be made to our Care Planning & Delivery Policy & Procedure for care delivery, eg male staff are only permitted to provide personal care to male service users.

Role of Lead Hoister

Lead Hoists are required to have training in the use of slings and hoists by an appropriately qualified person (eg physiotherapist), renewed every 2 years, plus be observed as competent by our Hoist Champion when hoisting 3 times.

The Lead Hoister has overall responsibility for ensuring a safe hoist is conducted. They are responsible for ensuring the following:

- ✓ the Support Hoister is authorised by the charity to hoist, eg have received training
- ✓ the area is uncluttered and other items are in good condition and positioned correctly, eg changing mat
- ✓ the hoist is fully charged and appears in good working order, eg no obvious cracks/breaks
- ✓ the service user's Moving & Handling plan is present, understood and followed by them and the Support Hoister
- ✓ the correct sling is used and appears in good condition, eg no obvious tears, loose seams
- ✓ the loops and straps of the sling are correctly managed at each stage of hoisting
- ✓ other items have been removed from the service user before hoisting begins, eg straps connecting the service user to their wheelchair
- ✓ the service user is reassured during the hoisting process and their dignity is maintained
- ✓ any damage to equipment, eg to sling or hoist, is reported to a manager promptly and not used until repaired/replaced

Role of Support Hoister

Support Hoisters are required to have training in the use of slings and hoists by an appropriately qualified person (eg physiotherapist), renewed every 2 years, plus be observed as competent by our Hoist Champion when hoisting 1 time.

The Support Hoister is responsible for following instructions from the Lead Hoister and supporting a safe hoisting process.

Role of Hoist Champions

Hoist Champions are Lead Hoists who have also had additional 'Champions' training by an appropriately qualified person (eg physiotherapist), renewed every 2 years.

Hoist Champions are responsible for

- ✓ observing staff competency to use slings and hoists and authorise them to be Lead Hoisters or Support Hoisters
- ✓ conduct periodic spot checks of authorised hoisters competency during hoisting and following up with any corrective action.

Equipment

Merton Mencap will ensure hoists our staff use receive regular inspections by an appropriately qualified person (eg whether hoists are owned by Merton Mencap or by a third party).

We will own 4 Guldmann High Back slings in 4 sizes, only to be used if a service user arrives without their personal sling or it is damaged AND it is referenced in their Moving & Handling Plan.

Internal audit guidance

Check	Evidence
Are all training and observation records up to date?	Ask Office Manager and CEO Check training records
Are authorised Lead and Support hoisters provided to staff?	Check registers and cross-reference with training records
Are incidents relating to hoisting recorded and followed up?	Check Incident form log, ask CEO for incident report summary
Are Moving & Handling Plans available to staff?	Check care plans and dates for updates?