



# Using Bad Language

**Our language tells us a lot about how we see the world. Use the wrong term, and we risk ending up using some equipment inappropriately – we also get sloppy using colloquial terminology without thinking about whether the words we use are communicating the right image to the listener or reader.**

At the simplest level, let's look at items on a wheelchair, e.g. items which we refer to as 'rests' such as arm rests, back rests, and foot rests. Most of these items have been added to the chair for a functional purpose, and should be referred to as 'supports', e.g. arm support, back support, and foot support.

In these cases, using the correct term will lead subliminally to more careful selection, prescription, and placement. This is such an important issue that even international standards exist for the correct terminology: e.g. ISO 7176-26<sup>1</sup>, which lists all the 'correct' terms, and lists dozens of so-called 'deprecated' terms, for items fitted to wheelchairs and their seating systems.

Use of the term 'lap belts' does not provide the differentiation needed between pelvic restraints (belts fitted at the back support-seat junction), and pelvic positioning belts, which are best mounted for most people anterior to (i.e. on the knee side of) the hip joint (many wheelchairs are supplied with their positioning belts in the restraint position and the belts need to be moved to the appropriate position for the wheelchair user. This has been addressed in the British standard BS 8625<sup>2</sup> and the International standard ISO TS 16840-15<sup>3</sup>.

The correct placement position of positioning belts, and the use of the term 'pommel' are the subjects of other 'Let's Get it Clear' pieces.

## References

1. *ISO 7176-26:2007 Wheelchairs - Vocabulary*
2. *BS 8625:2019 Selection, placement and fixation of flexible postural support devices in seating. Specification*
3. *ISO TS 16840-15 Wheelchair seating - Selection, placement and fixation of flexible postural support devices in seating.*



'Lap belts': Restraint seat belt vs pelvic positioning belt

