



## One fall too many..... Summer 2021....

A fall. A bad fall. Agony. Lots of pain. I couldn't put any pressure at all through my right leg. My knee was throbbing and badly swollen. I sprained my ankle and pulled the tendons that support the patella / knee. Fortuitously, two days later I had a physio appointment at the NMC. Hubby kindly took me. The physios worked their magic to help relieve the pain, using massage and the Hiva mat.

Two months later at follow up physio appointment, we had **'that conversation'**. You know the one. You know it's coming. It's been mentioned before but today is **'the day'** when those words will resonate. I glanced over to my husband as the physio said, 'I think it's time you considered using a wheelchair'.

He continued, "I know it's not what you want to hear but this fall has been a bad one and you have had lots of falls this year". You will need a WAV but that will make you more independent as you will be able to drive from your chair. I responded...."But I like my current car and I am only mid-way through the lease". The physio then added, "if your condition changes during the lease period you just need to contact Motability, explain everything and you will be able to change your vehicle".

My husband was exhausted from having to support me and lift me these past two months due to still not being able to weight bear. This was the nail in the coffin.

We drove home trying to absorb the information, knowing deep down that it made sense, but it was a massive step. An NMC friend of mine had recently bought a chair for use indoors so I contacted her for more information.

That weekend my husband and I went to Warrington Disability Partnership's showroom to have a look and see what might be suitable for me. I needed a chair that had a rise feature and luckily a new model had been launched which I was able to try. I felt safe in it and it wasn't too big. Apparently, it could be hoisted into my current car, an added bonus, so a WAV wouldn't be needed at this point in time. My husband thought it was perfect for me. We paid for it and it was delivered the following week.

'Luca' (a derivative of 'Lucas' which means bringer of light in Latin), my indoor wheelchair arrived and has given me a new lease of life. I feel much safer and more independent. I can wheel around different parts of our bungalow, and with the rise feature, reach so many more things. Using a joystick on a wheelchair is very different to driving a scooter, which was my previous means of getting around, but I am getting there. Thankfully several years ago we had all our doors widened, however despite this, Luca has made some lasting impressions on the doors, skirting boards and kitchen units!

One of the lovely things Luca has enabled me to do is to enjoy sitting in our conservatory, overlooking the garden, something I wasn't able to do before now. I sit in there, with a cuppa, catch up on emails, make phone calls and have zoom meetings. It's particularly lovely when the sun is shining and I am unable to go outside. It's like bringing the outdoors in.

If the doorbell rings, I can wheel to the front door in record time, rather than stagger on my frame with the fear of falling.

Having Luca helps conserve what little energy I do have and reduces the amount of transfers I do in a given day, thus reducing the risk of falling. This has in turn reduced my anxiety. Luca also keeps me safe.

This is a huge relief for my family. In addition, having the rise feature helps makes transfers that bit easier. I have been told that Luca can be hoisted into my current car so I have spoken to the hoist company to arrange this.

It's now three months since my fall and I still can't weight bear. However, despite this, and thanks to Luca, I do feel reasonably independent at home.

All my family have had to adjust to Luca and we are doing so in our own time.

Since the fall, my daughter and husband have been such a huge support day to day at home, and without them I wouldn't be in such a good place. My son also helps when he visits. My PA's have also upped their game too. I am very fortunate.

I emailed family and friends to explain my 'new normal' and said that having Luca wouldn't change our relationship other than sometimes it might just not be possible for me to go to a gathering / event.

I hope that friends, family and people in general still see me as a person. I am still me.... the person who likes to wear nice fluffy coats, hats, jewellery and make up sometimes. The wheelchair is simply my means of getting around – 'my legs'. It will not stop me having my own style nor personality.... once a chatterbox, always a chatterbox!!

So, to those of you who have had '**that conversation**' I hope you can be reassured that life continues when you are in a wheelchair ...in fact your life opens up. Although it is a huge psychological shift, and you may have to make some adjustments at home and for travelling, you have more freedom and independence. Every cloud.....

