

IRIC Safety Bulletin

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Portering chairs: preventing footplate failures through safe use and effective maintenance

What happened?

Portering chairs are widely used to transport patients throughout healthcare facilities. They depend on both correct operation and effective maintenance to remain safe.

IRIC is aware of two recent adverse incidents involving hospital portering chairs. Both incidents involved footplate lock failure.

One of the incidents resulted in serious injury (a dislocation) to a vulnerable patient. It happened when the footplate swung away unexpectedly while their foot was still resting on it.

What did we learn?

Investigation identified different causes leading to the same outcome:

- Incident 1: the footplate was not locked correctly before use, indicating a training and pre-use check issue.
- Incident 2: a component was missing from the footrest assembly, indicating inadequate maintenance and servicing.

There is no suggestion of an emerging trend involving portering chairs. However, these chairs are widely used throughout health and social care settings and failures can result in significant patient harm.

Safe use of portering chairs depends on both correct operation by staff and effective equipment management.

How can we prevent it?

Ensure that:

- staff using portering chairs are trained and have access to the manufacturer's Instructions for Use (IFU)
- pre-use and routine inspections are undertaken in accordance with the IFU
- critical components, including footplates, brakes and wheels, are regularly checked
- a planned preventive maintenance and servicing programme is in place

Refer to [SHTN 00-04 Guidance on Safe Management of Medical Devices and Equipment in Scotland's Health and Social Care Services](#) for further information.

