

## **Steps towards inventing new or finding and perhaps improving existing products for relatives with disabilities**

1. Try and find a suitable product on the market
  - a. Write down a few notes (specification) of what you want the product to do
  - b. Try all the information services (like the Internet) you and others can think of to see if something like it is already on the market
  - c. If a product meets or comes fairly near meeting the requirements it is almost always best to buy that. It may be possible and will almost certainly be far simpler to use that and if necessary cautiously adapt it to "personalise" it for the user.
  
2. If you can't find any suitable product on the market
  - a. If you think it is too difficult for you or are short of time and don't know anyone who has the time, ability and interest to do it ask REMAP, a charitable engineers organisation. They may be able to design and make it for you, fairly locally. Telephone 0845 1300456 for your local branch's contact details.
  - b. If you have the time and practical ability it is usually best to start by sketching out (preferably in 3 dimensions) as many possible solutions as you can think of. Then pick out a few of the most promising solutions and think hard about safety, practicality, cost and perhaps combining the best features of the different solutions. If you can't make it yourself, local skilled people like friends, blacksmiths etc. may be able to help and also advise on sizes necessary for the required strength and safety.
  - c. Try the new product out very cautiously, perhaps using yourself as a guinea pig, if appropriate. After that the recipient should also try it out very cautiously.
  
3. If the new product works well and you think it would benefit a lot more individuals

It may be worth thinking about market research, patents and licensing out. But first get a lot of advice (much can be had free from your local Business Connect-see telephone directory). Then think long and hard before going ahead. It is likely to take a vast amount of time and determination and success is very far from guaranteed. But if you decide to try I wish you the very best of luck because in my own experience you'll certainly need that as well!

David Good. (updated April 2007)