



Transport and travel for people with disabilities

Disability Factsheet 6

People with disabilities are entitled to supports on public transport and when driving. If you have a physical disability and cannot walk, you may be eligible for a means-tested Mobility Allowance. Free travel on public transport is available to people aged 66 or over and to people getting Carer's Allowance and certain disability payments.

Mobility Allowance

This is a means-tested supplementary monthly payment from the Health Service Executive (HSE) for people with severe disabilities who are unable to walk.

How do I qualify for Mobility Allowance?

You must be between the ages of 16 and 66 and unable to walk, even with the use of artificial limbs or other suitable aids, or the exertion required to walk would be dangerous to your health. The inability to walk must be likely to persist for at least one year and you must be able to benefit from a change of surroundings. You must satisfy a means test which is similar to

the means test for Disability Allowance.

People living in institutions may qualify for the allowance provided they meet the medical and means requirements. The allowance is not available to new applicants aged 66 or over. If you were getting the allowance before reaching 66, however, you can continue to receive it.

Mobility Allowance is paid monthly. There are two rates of payment. The higher rate is only paid to people who do not claim the Disabled Drivers and Passengers Tax Relief (see below). Mobility Allowance is not paid to those who received a Motorised Transport Grant for three years from the date of the grant (see below).

How to apply for Mobility Allowance

Apply to your Local Health Office.

Free travel

The Free Travel Pass is available to people aged 66 and over and to certain incapacitated people under age 66. It allows you to travel, free of charge, on public transport and on a number of private bus and ferry services. There is no restriction on the amount of free travel you use or the times of travel. People who are entitled to free travel are also entitled to have their spouse or partner travel free with them. In addition, if you are unable to travel alone for medical reasons, you may get a Companion Free Travel Pass (see below) which allows a person over the age of 16 years to accompany you, free of charge.

Where can I go?

Free travel is available on road, rail and DART services operated by Dublin Bus, Bus Éireann, Iarnród Éireann, LUAS services, the Aran Islands ferry service and on certain private services which have opted into the scheme. You can also use your Free Travel Pass on any of the schemes under the Rural Transport Initiative. Free Travel Pass holders can complete return trips to Northern Ireland free of charge. If you are aged 66 or over, you can also travel free on journeys that start and end within Northern Ireland. In order to do this, you must have a Senior SmartPass. You can get an application form for a Senior SmartPass from your local social welfare office.

Companion Free Travel Pass

This pass allows you to have someone aged 16 or over accompany you free of charge when travelling if you have been medically assessed as unable to travel alone.

How to apply for a Free Travel Pass

A Free Travel Pass is issued automatically if you are resident in the State and receiving Blind Person's Pension, Invalidity Pension, Disability Allowance or Carer's Allowance. It is also issued automatically when you reach the age of 66 if you are getting a pension from the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA) and are resident in the State.

If you do not get a Free Travel Pass automatically, but think you may qualify, you can apply to the Free Travel section of the DSFA.

Using public transport with a disability

The National Disability Authority (NDA) has produced *Recommended Accessibility Guidelines for Public Transport Operators in Ireland* to help bus, rail and light rail operators in Ireland make their services more accessible to passengers with disabilities.

Trains

Iarnród Éireann produces a guide for rail travellers, including DART users, entitled *Guide for Rail Passengers with Disabilities*. This is available free of charge at stations and can be downloaded from www.irishrail.ie. It offers advice and also provides information on facilities available at each station.

Buses

Dublin Bus has a travel assistance scheme. The scheme helps people with disabilities to build confidence to use the service by themselves. Trained travel assistants accompany you on your journey for the first few times you use the service. The scheme is available to anyone over the age of 18 who would like to use public transport but needs assistance and information in order to use it independently. The service is free.

Transport services for people with disabilities

Various organisations provide transport services for people with disabilities. Vantastic Dial-a-Ride provides a transport service for people with disabilities in Dublin and in a number of other areas around the country. To find out what service is available outside Dublin, contact your local Centre for Independent Living (see *Useful addresses*).

Driving with a disability

Having a medical condition or disability does not mean you cannot or will not be allowed to drive. You may have to complete a medical report if you are 70 years of age or over or have certain disabilities or diseases (listed on the medical report form). There are various supports including special provisions for drivers with disabilities while taking driving tests, grants for adapting a vehicle, the Disabled Persons Parking Card and tax relief for necessary adaptations to vehicles (see Factsheet 7: *Income tax*).

Driving tests for people with a disability

You are asked on your driving test application form to outline whether you are driving an adapted vehicle. This will ensure that any necessary arrangements are in place for you on the day of your test. Driving tests for drivers with a disability are broadly the same as those for all other motorists. Your examiner should be specially trained to be aware of your needs. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you are allowed to have an interpreter accompany you for the first part of the test.

Motorised Transport Grant

This is a means-tested grant paid by the Health Service Executive (HSE) towards the purchase and/or adaptation of a car by a person with a severe disability where the car is essential to retain employment. The grant can be made to a self-employed person. If you avail of the grant, you will not be eligible for Mobility Allowance for three years from the date of the grant.

Adaptations and driving

The Irish Wheelchair Association and the Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland provide advice on suitable car adaptations to meet individual needs. They run driving schools for people with disabilities and can provide information and advice on all aspects of motoring.

Disabled Person's Parking Card

The Disabled Person's Parking Card (also known as the European Parking Card) is for people with certain disabilities, whether they are drivers or passengers. It costs €25 and it applies to the person rather than the car. Card holders can park in designated disabled parking spaces.

How do I qualify for a Disabled Person's Parking Card?

It is for people whose disability affects their mobility, including people who are registered as blind. If you already have a Primary Medical Certificate from the HSE, you automatically qualify but must apply. Generally, the card is not issued to anyone under five years of age.

How do I apply for a Disabled Person's Parking Card?

The parking card scheme is administered by the Disabled Drivers Association and the Irish Wheelchair Association. The application form is available from either organisation (see page 7). Apply in writing for an application form, stating your disability and how it affects your mobility, and enclose a stamped addressed envelope. You have to get the form completed by the Gardaí and by your doctor unless you have a Primary Medical Certificate.

Disabled Drivers and Passengers Tax Relief

This scheme provides a range of tax reliefs in connection with the purchase and use of specially adapted vehicles by drivers and passengers with severe disabilities.

How do I qualify for Disabled Drivers and Passengers Tax Relief?

You must meet the specified medical criteria and have a Primary Medical Certificate to that effect. (A Primary Medical Certificate is a certificate signed by your doctor certifying your level of disability.) If you qualify, you may claim:

- » Exemption or refund of Vehicle Registration Tax (VRT) and Value Added Tax (VAT) on the purchase of a specially adapted car
- » Exemption or refund of VAT on the cost of adaptation, up to a maximum of €9,525 for a disabled driver and €15,875 for a disabled passenger
- » Repayment of excise duty on fuel used (petrol, for example) up to a maximum of 600 gallons (2,728 litres) per year
- » Exemption from annual motor tax

To qualify for this relief, the maximum engine size allowed for a driver with a disability is 2,000cc and 4,000cc for a passenger. A car which qualifies for tax relief cannot be sold for at least two years.

You apply to the Revenue Commissioners for the relief.

Note: People who benefit from the Disabled Drivers and Passengers Tax Relief are only eligible for the lower rate of Mobility Allowance.

AA breakdown service

The Automobile Association (AA) offers a limited free breakdown service to members of the Disabled Drivers Association and the Irish Wheelchair Association, provided such service can be delivered by the AA's own staff. The free service does not extend to Home Start or other specialist services. You have to pay for any service provided by AA contractors.

Toll road charges

Disabled drivers and disabled passengers with specially adapted vehicles are exempt from toll charges on national roads throughout Ireland. A toll is a levy on each vehicle that passes through a designated toll road.

Useful addresses

Department of Social and Family Affairs

Free Travel Section
Social Welfare Services
College Road, Sligo
Lo-call: 1890 500 000
Tel: (071) 915 7100
www.welfare.ie

Dublin Bus

Accessibility Officer
59 Upper O'Connell Street
Dublin 1
Tel: (01) 703 3204
Email: travelassist@dublinbus.ie
www.dublinbus.ie

Centres for Independent Living

Carmichael House
North Brunswick Street
Dublin 7
Tel: (01) 873 0455 or (01) 873 0986
Email: info@dublincil.org
www.dublincil.org

Disabled Drivers' Association of Ireland

Ballindine
Co. Mayo
Tel: (094) 936 4266/4054
Email: info@ddai.ie
www.ddai.ie

Irish Wheelchair Association

National Mobility Centre
Ballinagappa Road
Clane
Co. Kildare
Tel: (045) 893 094
www.iwa.ie

Office of the Revenue Commissioners

Central Repayments Office
Coolshannagh
Co. Monaghan
Tel: (047) 82800
www.revenue.ie

Vantastic Dial-a-Ride

Unit 2A
Howth Junction Park
Kilbarrack
Dublin 5
Freephone: 1800 242 703
Tel: (01) 839 2449
Email: info@vantastic.ie
www.vantastic.ie

The Citizens Information Board is the statutory body which supports the provision of information, advice and advocacy on the broad range of social and civil services to the public. It provides the Citizens Information website and supports the voluntary network of Citizens Information Services and the Citizens Information Phone Service.

Factsheets in this series

- 1 Disability payments**
- 2 Health services for people with disabilities**
- 3 Supports and entitlements for carers**
- 4 Education, training and employment for people with disabilities**
- 5 Housing for people with disabilities**
- 6 Transport and travel for people with disabilities**
- 7 Income tax for people with disabilities**

You can find more information on all the entitlements covered in this factsheet in the booklet *Entitlements for people with disabilities* (available from your local Citizens Information Centre) or on www.citizensinformation.ie

Citizens Information 

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