



Citizens **Information** Board
information · advice · advocacy

Entitlements for People with Disabilities



2010
European Year
for Combating
Poverty and
Social Exclusion

Chapter 8

Transport and travel

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 for people aged 66 or over, for recipients of Carer's Allowance and for people on certain disability payments.

Mobility Allowance

This is a means-tested supplementary monthly payment from the 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.

Key points

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 Chapter 8). Mobility Allowance is not paid to those who have a HSE's 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 Free Travel Companion Pass (see below) which allows a person over 16 to accompany you, free of charge.

How do I qualify for free travel?

The following groups qualify for free travel:

- » Everyone aged 66 or over and permanently resident in Ireland
- » Recipients of Disability Allowance, Blind Pension and Invalidity Pension and people who have been receiving Incapacity Supplement (with Disablement Pension) for at least a year
- » Those registered as blind or with a severe visual impairment who satisfy the medical conditions for Blind Pension

Chapter 8 Transport and travel

- » Anyone who has been receiving an Invalidity Pension for at least 12 months from an EEA state or from a country that has a bilateral social security agreement with Ireland and is permanently resident here
- » People who were receiving Invalidity Pension or Disability Allowance and changed to State Pension (Transition) at age 65
- » People in HSE-approved residential care who were previously getting Disability Allowance (DA) or who would satisfy the conditions for DA and are medically assessed as being unable to travel alone
- » Recipients of Carer's Allowance and carers providing full-time care and attention to those getting Constant Attendance Allowance or Prescribed Relative Allowance
- » A Widow/er aged 60-65 inclusive, getting certain payments whose late spouse held a Free Travel Pass

Key points

Where can I go?

Free travel is available on road, rail and DART services operated by Bus Átha Cliath, 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 Programme.

Travel in Northern Ireland

Free Travel Pass holders can complete return trips to Northern Ireland free of charge. Residents of Northern Ireland who hold Northern Ireland concession passes can complete return trips to Ireland free of charge. If travelling by rail, you must complete a travel warrant which is available from most rail stations or post offices. You should complete this in advance of your journey and get the rail ticket at least 15 minutes before train departure time.

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 the application form for the Senior SmartPass (Form FTNI1) from your local social welfare office or Citizens Information Centre. The extension of the scheme for travel within Northern Ireland does not apply to free travel passes for spouses and companions, but these passes can still be used for travel across the border to or from a destination in Northern Ireland.

Free Travel Companion Pass

This pass allows you to have someone aged 16 or over accompany you free of charge when travelling. The following people qualify for Free Travel Companion passes:

- » Disability Allowance recipients (medically assessed as unfit to travel alone)
- » Invalidity Pensioners (medically assessed as unfit to travel alone)
- » Disablement Pension and Incapacity Supplement recipients (medically assessed as unfit to travel alone)
- » Pensioners and recipients of certain qualifying payments who are medically certified as permanent wheelchair users
- » Blind pensioners and people registered as blind
- » Persons aged 66 and 69 inclusive who are medically assessed as unfit to travel alone
- » People in HSE-approved residential care who were previously getting Disability Allowance and who are medically assessed as unfit to travel alone
- » Travel Pass holders being looked after by a recipient of Carer's Allowance
- » People aged 70 or over who are unfit to travel alone

Chapter 8 Transport and travel

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 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 or are a qualified adult on another social welfare payment from the Department of Social Protection and are resident in the State.

If you do not get a Free Travel Pass automatically, but you feel you qualify, you can apply to:

Free Travel Section

Social Welfare Services, College Road, Sligo.

Lo-call: 1890 500 000

Using public transport with a disability

The 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. The guidelines cover information provision, infrastructure and buildings, vehicle design, customer relations, disability awareness training and procedures for disruption and emergencies.

In addition, the guidelines explain the barriers to travel faced by passengers with disabilities, and outline the current Irish legal and regulatory position.

Getting There - Transport and Access to Social Services published by the Citizen's Information Board, is based on feedback from members of the public to the Citizens Information Services and highlights their experiences accessing relevant services. Visit citizensinformationboard.ie

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 in all stations. It offers advice and also provides information on facilities available at each station. You can also get the guide from:

Accessibility Officer, Iarnród Éireann

Tel: (01) 703 2634

Email: access@irishrail.ie

Buses

Dublin Bus operates 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. Contact:

Accessibility Officer, Business Development

Dublin Bus, 59 Upper O'Connell Street, Dublin 1.

Tel: (01) 7033204

**Email: travelassist@dublinbus.ie
dublinbus.ie**

Vantastic Dial-a-Ride

Vantastic is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that provides an accessible door-to-door transport service for people with disabilities in the Dublin Area. They can provide for transport outside of the Dublin Area on request. To find out what service is available outside Dublin, contact your local Centre for Independent Living. For the greater Dublin area contact:

Vantastic Dial-a-Ride Limited

Unit 2A, Howth Junction Park, Kilbarrack, Dublin 5.

Freephone: 1800 242 703 or Tel: (01) 839 2447, 839 2449

Email: info@vantastic.ie

vantastic.ie

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 more 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.

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 or hearing, you are allowed to have an interpreter accompany you for the first part of the test.

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?

To qualify for Disabled Drivers and Passengers Tax Relief, you must hold a Primary Medical Certificate. This is a certificate that confirms that you are severely and permanently disabled according to the criteria set out in the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations 1994. It is only used for tax purposes and is issued by the HSE. Application forms are available from HSE Local Health Offices and should be returned there. You will then receive an appointment for an assessment with a Medical Officer which confirms that you meet the specified medical criteria.

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 passenger or family member with a disability
- » 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

Chapter 8 Transport and travel

To qualify for this relief, the maximum engine size allowed for a driver with a disability is 2000cc and 4000cc for a passenger. A car which qualifies for tax relief cannot be sold for at least two years.

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

How do I apply for the relief?

Application forms available from:

Revenue Commissioners,

Disabled Drivers Section,

Coolshannagh, Co. Monaghan.

Lo-call: 1890 606 061 or Tel: (047) 38010

revenue.ie

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, primarily where the car is essential to obtain or retain employment. The grant can be made to a self-employed person.

How do I qualify for a Motorised Transport Grant?

In order to be eligible for the grant:

- » You must be over 17 years.
- » Your disability must impede your use of public transport.
- » You must hold a driving licence.
- » You must be physically and mentally capable of driving.

- » You must require a car or other vehicle in order to obtain or keep employment or because you live in a very isolated location. Where your application is made on the basis of obtaining or retaining employment or self-employment, the HSE must be satisfied that you are capable of holding down a job.

If you avail of the grant, you will not be eligible for Mobility Allowance for three years from the date of the grant.

How do I apply for a Motorised Transport Grant?

You apply to your Local Health Office.

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.

Irish Wheelchair Association

National Mobility Centre, Ballinagappa Road, Clane, Co. Kildare.

Tel: (045) 893 094

iwa.ie

The Disabled Drivers' Association of Ireland,

Ballindine, Co. Mayo.

Tel: (094) 936 4266/4054

ddai.ie

Disabled Person's Parking Card

The Disabled Person's Parking Card (also known as the European Parking Card) is for people with severe disabilities, whether they are drivers or passengers. It costs €25 (€50 to replace a lost card) and it applies to the person rather than the car.

People who have the EU Disabled Person's Parking Card displayed on their windscreen may park in assigned disabled person's parking spaces. These have the wheelchair symbol painted on the ground within the bay or a sign with the symbol displayed.

A review of the disabled person's parking scheme was published by the Department of Transport in 2010. Key recommendations from the review include:

- » Changing the medical eligibility criteria for the Disabled Person's Parking permit
- » New measures to reduce the fraudulent use of permits
- » An increase in the size of some types of parking bays
- » The introduction of new types of disabled parking bays
- » Giving powers to local authorities to introduce time restricted parking spaces and
- » New set down and pick-up only disabled spaces.

The recommended changes will be put in place shortly but are not yet in force.

Can I use the card while I am abroad?

The Parking Card can be used in other EU countries and it is also recognised in the US and Canada. However, you must observe the motoring laws and restrictions on parking in other countries.

How do I apply for a Disabled Persons 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. 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.

Irish Wheelchair Association

National Mobility Centre, Ballinagappa Road, Clane, Co. Kildare.

Tel: (045) 893 094

iwa.ie

The Disabled Drivers' Association of Ireland,

Ballindine, Co. Mayo.

Tel: (094) 936 4266/4054

ddai.ie

AA breakdown service

A long-standing arrangement exists whereby the AA provides courtesy services to disabled drivers in the event of a vehicle breakdown on the open road. This means that AA will send an patrol service van to your assistance and repair the vehicle or if this is not possible, tow it to a local garage or home (whichever is the nearer).

Chapter 8 Transport and travel

This service is only provided “free” by AA staff and only for incidents on the open road. If the vehicle is at home, or if for any other reason AA cannot send its own staff, service from an AA garage contractor would be offered. This service is not free and you are liable for all costs.

Further information is available from:

AA Ireland

56 Drury Street, Dublin 2.

Tel: (01) 617 9999

Fax: (01) 617 9900

Email: aa@aaireland.ie

aaireland.ie

Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland

Ballindine, Co. Mayo.

Tel: (094) 936 4054

ddai.ie

Toll road charges

Disabled drivers and disabled passengers with specially adapted vehicles in Ireland 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. Toll charges are currently in operation on the following national roads in Ireland:

- » M1 Motorway (Gormanston to Monasterboice Toll Road)
- » M50 Barrier Free Tolling
- » East Link Toll Bridge
- » Dublin Port Tunnel
- » M4 Kilcock - Enfield - Kinnegad Motorway
- » N6 Galway - Ballinasloe

- » N8 Rathcormac - Fermoy Bypass
- » N25 Waterford City Bypass
- » M3 Clonee – Kells
- » M7 Portlaoise - Castletown/M8 Portlaoise – Cullahill
- » N7 Limerick Southern Ring Phase II (Limerick Tunnel Scheme)

How to apply

You need to show you are a disabled driver, driving an adapted vehicle (or are a passenger in an adapted vehicle) to qualify for free passage through the tolls. Passes issued by any one operator will be accepted by all other toll road operators. For further information and to obtain an application form, contact your nearest toll road operator.

Tourism

The European Commission published a guide *Improving Information on Accessible Tourism for Disabled People* which provides information on how tourist facilities and destinations as a whole can improve the quality of the service that they offer to disabled people and others who will benefit from better accessibility. The guide aims to help tourist facilities and destinations provide the basic information that disabled people need when deciding to visit.

A key aim of the guide is to present a consistent and practical European wide approach to providing accessible information so that tourists can compare their options. The guide contains a glossary of terms and a directory to European contacts who can advise further on disabled travel.

Visiting heritage sites/accessibility

The National Disability Authority has published a draft code of practice that explains the obligations of public bodies to ensure that, as far as practicable, the whole or part of a heritage site in its ownership,

Chapter 8 **Transport and travel**

management or control and to which the public has access, is accessible to people with disabilities and can be visited by them with ease and dignity.

The Code is supported by a complaints process which applies under the Disability Act. These sections provide that an individual with a disability can make a complaint about any failure by a public body to comply with the Act to an inquiry officer appointed by the body concerned. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint you can appeal to the Ombudsman under section 40 of the Act (See Chapter 14).