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Motoring

The choice of whether to use public or private transport is often not a viable option for people with a mobility or sensory impairment and waiting at a bus stop for a bus that never seems to turn up or paying high charges for a taxi journey is not feasible. For these groups of people (along with elderly people, pregnant mothers etc) having a car is the only reasonable means of transportation.

If you have a disability that restricts your driving a “standard” car, there are many adaptations and modifications that can be fitted that will allow you to drive, whatever your special needs are.

If you are new to driving and wish to start driving lessons, a number of driving instructors can provide specialist training for disabled drivers, either in the pupils own car or the instructors or driving school’s vehicle.

If you are looking to purchase a car, there are a number of finance options available, including the “Motability Scheme”.

All these topics, and more, are discussed in the following pages. If you do not find the information you require, or need further assistance, please contact the Information Office at the HAD.org.uk office.
(Details above)

GETTING STARTED

Licences

You can hold a provisional driving licence for a car from the age of 17. If you receive the higher mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (see Fact Sheet 10 (Welfare Benefits)) you may be able to apply for a provisional licence at the age of 16.

If you are an existing driving licence holder and you become disabled, you are legally required to inform the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) if your disability may affect your driving or your existing medical condition worsens.

If your disability is stable and non-progressive you will normally be issued with a licence to drive up to the age of 70. In other cases you may be issued with a restricted licence permitting you to drive only certain vehicles or those fitted with an adaptation suitable for your needs. You may additionally be issued with a time limited licence for one, two or three years, after which you will have to re-apply to renew your licence when it expires.

There are a number of medical conditions where someone is deemed unfit to drive and a licence cannot be issued. These are:

- Epilepsy, unless free of seizures for at least 12 months, or only had seizures whilst asleep during the previous 3 years.
- Severe mental health needs.
- Liable to sudden attacks of fainting or giddiness.
- Inability to read a car number plate at a distance of 20.5 metres in good daylight and with the aid of glasses, if usually worn.
- Persistent drug misuse.
- Any other condition liable to cause danger to the public whilst driving.

Driving Assessments & Mobility Centres

If you have a disability you should get advice from one of the many

assessment centres around the UK before you start learning to drive. They can offer you advice on different types of vehicles and controls and equipment available to help you to drive. They can give you an assessment and recommend the best type of car and equipment to suit you. The level of service varies from one centre to another and you may need to visit a centre out of your area to get the best assessment. It is a good idea to ring the centre first to discuss your requirements before you book an appointment. If the centre can not meet your requirements they will be happy to recommend another centre to you. (See list of Mobility Centres at end of this fact sheet.)

Driving Lessons and Tests

If you are new to driving and have a disability it is essential that you receive driving lessons from a recognised driving instructor or school. The British School of Motoring (BSM) retains a list of instructors able to provide specialist instruction to disabled drivers, either in the pupil's own car or one of the school's adapted cars.

To find the details of a suitable instructor contact:

BSM (The British School of Motoring)

Telephone: 0330 100 7501

Website: www.bsm.co.uk

The driving test is in two parts, theory and practical. The theory tests are taken at an authorised test centre whilst the practical test is carried out on the road in the instructor's car or the student's own car.

If you are unable to take the theory test at your local centre because of accessibility problems you may be able to sit the test at another centre, more suitable for your accessibility requirements.

If you are unable to complete the forms for the written test, arrangements can be made for you to take the test in an alternative format. An interpreter can be provided if you are Deaf.

You need to inform the test centre if you need adjustments when you apply to sit the test. Additional time may be given for applicants with a disability when taking the practical test to enable them to get into and out of the vehicle.

BUYING YOUR CAR

Paying for it yourself with a loan

If you are considering buying a car (new or used) and require help with the payment, consider applying to your bank or building society for a loan. Make very sure that you can afford the repayments before signing for the loan. Never apply for a loan from a “loan shark” or someone who offers something that is too good to be true – it invariably is. When calculating how much you need to borrow, do not forget to include things like pre-sale inspection costs from the AA or RAC if the car is second-hand and to make sure that you can afford to maintain and run your car.

If you have a disability and are registered disabled with your local authority, but do not qualify for the Motability Scheme (see below) you may be able to get a discount on a new car from a manufacturer’s authorised dealer. You need to ask for this from the car salesman and do not forget that it always pays to “shop around”.

Financial Assistance – The Motability Scheme

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a benefit for adults under 65 not so and children with disabilities. It includes a mobility component, which is available for people who find it difficult to walk or get around. DLA is tax-free, not means tested and is not dependent upon paying National Insurance contributions. DLA is paid at two rates dependent upon your ability to walk or travel independently.

If you receive the higher rate of the mobility component of DLA you can use your benefit to help with the cost of purchasing a new or nearly new vehicle. (This includes electric scooters and wheelchairs).

If you get the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance you will be eligible for:

- Exemption from road tax
- Blue Badge scheme
- Motability Scheme
- Driving licence at age 16

You do not have to be the driver to apply for the Motability Scheme. You can be a regular passenger in the vehicle, driven by, say, a spouse or parent.

There are three main ways available to obtain a vehicle. These are:

- A new car on a three-year contract hire lease.
- A new or used car on hire purchase, over a term of two to five years.
- A new or used powered wheelchair or scooter on hire purchase, over a term of one to three years.

There are some restrictions from Motability on who is allowed to drive your car. Also, there are some age restrictions for insurance purposes, so if you are likely to be using a young driver, check insurance regulations on the vehicle you are intending to purchase.

You normally forfeit some or all of your DLA mobility component to pay for the vehicle and you may be required to pay a “one-off” initial deposit. (Depending upon the chosen vehicle). The Motability Scheme does not include the cost of installing any necessary adaptations or modification fitted to the vehicle, to enable you to drive.

The Motability Scheme is also available for drivers or passengers receiving the War Pensioners Mobility Supplement.

There is a very large range of vehicles available under the Motability Scheme (most car manufacturers participate in the scheme) and usually road tax, insurance and maintenance (apart from day to day running costs) are included in the package.

To find out more or apply for the scheme contact Motability. You can view a selection of vehicles available on the web site (See below).

Motability

(Address at the end of this fact sheet)

Help line 0845 456 4566.0300 456 4566

Fax: 020 7928 1818

Webiste: www.motability.co.uk

DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE (DLA)

Applying for DLA

You can get a claim form from 'disability Benefits helpline':

If you were born on or before 8 April 1948

Telephone: 0345 605 6055

Textphone: 0345 604 5312

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm

Find out about call charges

If you were born after 8 April 1948

Telephone: 0345 712 3456

Textphone: 0345 722 4433

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm

If you live in Harrow you can get help completing the form the Welfare Benefits Advice Service at HAD.org.uk. Telephone 020 8861 9920 for an appointment. (Please ask for fact sheet 10 for more information about Welfare Benefits).

BLUE BADGE SCHEME

The blue badge scheme applies to disabled people who are either drivers or passengers.

It gives blue badge holders parking concessions nationally for on street parking. To be eligible to a blue badge you must be over two years old and fit one of the following criteria:

- Receive the higher rate of the mobility component of DLA
- Use a motor vehicle supplied by a government department
- Receive a government grant towards their own vehicle
- Receive war pensioners' mobility supplement
- Registered blind

If you don't fit into any of these categories you may still be entitled to a blue badge if:

- You have a severe disability in both upper limbs and cannot turn a steering wheel by hand even if it is fitted with a turning knob
- You have a permanent and substantial disability which means you are unable to walk or have considerable difficulty in walking

In these cases you will need medical evidence from your doctor or physiotherapist to support your application and it will be issued at the discretion of your local authority.

The scheme applies throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. There may be restrictions in parts of Central London and certain town centres, please see Fact Sheet 1 on Blue Badges for further information on restrictions.

Applying

If you live in England or Wales you should apply to your local authority social services department. People living in Scotland should contact their Chief Executive or local authority, and people living in Northern Ireland should apply to the Department for Regional Development, Roads Service, Western Division.

You will have to complete an application form and provide two passport-sized photographs, which should be signed on the back.

There is a charge of £10 to cover the cost of the Blue badge. The blue badge can be used in any vehicle but is for your use only. It must not be used by anyone else; you risk being fined up to £1,000 and having the badge withdrawn if you breach this condition.

Where you can use the badge

You can use the badge to park free of charge and without time limit at on-street parking meters and pay and display on-street parking. You can park in places that have time limits, for example on dotted yellow line, for as long as you wish. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland you can park on single and double yellow lines for up to three hours, in Scotland there is no time limit. The local authority can impose time limits for badge holders.

If a police officer or traffic warden asks you to move your vehicle you must oblige. You can get a leaflet giving full details of the scheme from: Department of Transport/Local Government and the Regions Mobility and Inclusion Unit. (Address and telephone numbers at end of this fact sheet.)

Congestion Charges and Blue Badge Holders

If you are a Blue badge holder you are exempt from London Congestion charges. However the exemption is not automatic, you must register with Transport for London and pay a one-off administration charge of £10.

If your car is taxed under “Disabled” class you do not need to pay any registration fee or inform the Congestion Charging office as your car details are automatically logged on their system. To obtain a registration pack or find out further information contact Congestion Charging (Address and telephone number at end of this fact sheet).

Disabled Motoring Organisations

There are a number of “clubs” for drivers with a disability. They all produce a newsletter and offer other services including help lines, social activities and ferry concessions. Contact the numbers below for more information about each group.

USEFUL NUMBERS

Congestion Charging

Address: PO Box 4783, Worthing, BN11 9PT.

Tel: 0845 900 1234, 0343 222 2222

Minicom: 020 7649 9123

Website: www.tfl.gov.uk/roadusers/congestioncharging/6736.aspx

Motability Operations

Address: City Gate House, 22 Southwark Bridge Road, London, SE1 9HB

Telephone: 0845 456 4566, 0300 456 4566

Email: correspondence@motabilityoperations.co.uk

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

Address: Customer Enquiries (Drivers) Unit, Swansea, SA6 7JL,

Driver Licence Enquiries

Address: Customer Enquiries (Vehicles) Unit, DVLC,
Swansea, SA99 1BL,

Telephone: 0300 790 6801

Vehicle Registration & Licensing Enquiries

Telephone: 0300 790 6802

Disabled Motoring UK

Address: National Headquarters, Ashwellthorpe, Norwich NR16 1EX

Telephone: 01508 489449

Website: www.disabledmotoring.org

Disabled Motorist's Federation

Address: 145 Knoulberry Road, Blackfell, Washington, NE37 1JN

Telephone: 0191 416 3172

Website: www.freewebs.com/dmfed

Ford Mobility

Address: 2 Wintersells Rd, Byfleet, KT14 7LF

Telephone: 0845 604 0019

Website: www.ford.co.uk

AA (Automobile Association)

Address: Norfolk House, Priestly Road, Basingstoke,
Hants, RG24 9NY

Telephone: 0800 262050 (Disability Helpline)

Telephone: 0870 544 4444 (Membership Enquiries).

Telephone: 0800 887766 (Breakdown).

Textphone: 0800 328 2810

Website: www.theaa.com

RAC (Royal Automobile Club) Motoring Services

Address: Great Park Road, Bradley Stoke, Bristol, BS32 4QN

Telephone: 0870 572 2722

Website: www.rac.co.uk

Green Flag Motor Assistance

Address: Cote Lane, Pudsey, Leeds, LS28 5GF

Freephone: 0845 246 1557

Website: www.greenflag.com

MOBILITY ASSESSMENT CENTRES

Always telephone the centre to ascertain the range of vehicles available before booking an assessment appointment.

Queen Elizabeth's Foundation Mobility Centre

Address: Damson Way, Fountain Drive, Carshalton, Surrey, SM5 4NR

Telephone: 020 8770 1151 Fax: 020 8770 1211

Email: info@mobility-qe.org

Website: www.qefd.org/mobilitycentre

Hertfordshire Action on Disability Mobility Centre

Address: The Woodside Centre, The Commons, Welwyn Garden City,
Hertfordshire, AL7 4DD

Telephone: 01707 324581 Fax: 01707 371297

Email: driving@hadnet.org.uk

Website: www.hadnet.org.uk

Do you need further help?

**Please contact HAD.org.uk on 020 8861 9920,
Or visit us at The Wealdstone Centre,
38-40 High Street, Wealdstone, Harrow, HA3 7AE.**

This fact sheet is one of a series, providing information and advice on a number of topics.

HAD.ORG.UK FACTSHEETS:

- Access to Shops, Cafes and Everyday Services
- Accessible Public Transport
- Aids and Adaptations
- Blue Badge Scheme
- Concessionary Travel
- Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard Schemes
- Education and Learning
- Holidays
- Leisure at Home
- Motoring
- Performing Arts
- Self Directed Support
- Sports
- The Care Act 2014
- Universal Credit
- Utilities
- Visiting Places of Interest
- Voluntary Transport
- Welfare Benefits
- Wheelchairs

HOUSING MATTERS:

- A General Guide to Housing Benefit
- A Guide to Housing Benefit for Disabled Students
- Applying as Homeless (Priority Need)
- Homelessness (Out of Hours) Emergencies
- Private Tenants: smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Rent Increases : Assured Shorthold Tenancies
- The Right to Rent
- 10 Rights of Private Tenants