An introduction to Motoring for Disabled Drivers

Enjoy the Freedom of Getting Out and About
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Comments are invited about the content or presentation of this booklet. To submit a comment, to be included in any future issues or to amend an entry, contact Disability Nottinghamshire (see next page).

All information contained within this booklet is correct to the best of our knowledge at the time of going to press. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information, Disability Nottinghamshire cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions that may have been made.

Booklet produced by Disability Nottinghamshire.

This booklet is available in large print, audio tape, Braille and plain text formats. Please contact (01623) 658 060 for copies or further information.
Disability Nottinghamshire, formerly DIAL Mansfield & District, has been providing a free, confidential and impartial service of information and advice on any aspect of disability for over 25 years. The service is open to disabled people of all ages and their family, friends and carers, as well as professionals and students throughout Nottinghamshire.

The service is provided by a team of staff and volunteers who all have a personal experience of disability, and have the necessary expertise and knowledge to pass on valuable information and advice.

Disability Nottinghamshire is supported by the Nottinghamshire County Council and Coalfields Regeneration Trust.

We meet the requirements of the Community Legal Service Quality Mark Standard for General Help in Welfare Benefits and have passed DIAL UK Quality Standards at Level 1.

Disability Nottinghamshire
1 Byron Street, Mansfield, Notts, NG18 5NX
Advice Line: 01623 625 891
Fax: 01623 427 753
Textphone: 01623 656 556
Email: advice@disabilitynottinghamshire.org.uk
Website: www.disabilitynottinghamshire.org.uk
This booklet aims to give a broad introduction to the issues you may come across as a disabled driver, including: obtaining a driving licence; driving lessons and tests; choosing a car and how to purchase your vehicle; car adaptations; insurance; exemptions and concessions; parking; and car hire.

Each issue is covered individually under clear headings and helpful contact points are given throughout. A list of other useful contact addresses is given at the end of the booklet.

Personal mobility is a vital aspect of independence, allowing full participation in the life and work of your community, increasing leisure opportunities and making necessities such as shopping and going to the doctors much easier.

Finding the right advice about motoring for disabled drivers can still prove surprisingly difficult, so it is hoped that this booklet will be a useful point of reference. It is intended to provide information for everyone, disabled people, family members and carers alike - on driving or being a passenger.

We have literature about motoring issues in stock and can advise on motoring issues in general, and about the issues and schemes you will read about in this booklet - see page 3 for our contact details.
Obtaining a driving licence and notifying the DVLA if you become disabled or there is a change in your disability

If you receive the higher rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) you can obtain a provisional driving licence when you are 16 (otherwise the legal driving age is 17). When applying you must declare to the Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA) any disability or medical condition that affects your fitness to drive.

If the DVLA is uncertain of the effects of your disability on your ability to drive safely, you may be asked to attend a medical examination. This all takes time, so it is advised to apply for your driving licence well in advance.

If you already hold a driving licence you are legally required to inform the DVLA if you acquire a disability or if there is a deterioration or change in any existing disability or medical condition. If a disability is stable and non-progressive, a licence will normally be valid until the age of 70; otherwise it may be restricted to one, two or three years.

It is possible to apply to renew a restricted licence just before it expires. Every effort will be made by the DVLA to allow you to continue to drive; they would only withdraw a licence if your driving could be hazardous to yourself or other road users.

There are some medical conditions that will usually mean that someone is judged unfit to drive. These are:

- Epilepsy, unless the applicant has been free of seizures for a year or for the previous three years, or has had seizures only when asleep.
- Severe mental disorder.
- Liability to sudden attacks of giddiness or fainting.
- Inability to read a standard number plate at a distance of 20.5 metres in good daylight, with the aid of spectacles if usually worn.
- Persistent drug or alcohol misuse.
- Any disability likely to cause the driver to be a danger to the public.

Contact:
DVLA, Drivers Medical Group, Swansea, SA99 1TU
Tel: 0300 790 6806 for car/ motorcycle
Fax: 0845 850 0095
Text phone: 0300 123 1279 for vehicle enquires
E-mail: eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.dvla.gov.uk
Nottingham Local Office: Nottingham Business Park, Unit D, Orchard Place, off Woodhouse Way, Nottingham. NG8 6PX
Tel: 0300 790 6802.
Driving Lessons

All new drivers are strongly advised to have professional driving lessons at least at the beginning of their learning period. There are some driving instructors with experience in teaching disabled people to drive. These driving instructors, as well as teaching driving skills, know about techniques for transferring between a car and a wheelchair and operating adapted controls.

If your disability is such that you cannot drive with basic adaptations, you may have to get a car and have it adapted before you can start learning to drive. If you don’t know what adaptations you need you can contact a Mobility Centre, which offers a range of services and advice. The Centres can provide a personal assessment for a fee, and will also be able to help you find a driving instructor. There are 17 centres across the UK. See page 15 for details of the Mobility Centre serving people resident in Nottinghamshire.

The BSM Mobility Service for disabled learner drivers has about 200 instructors. They also have some automatic cars with standard adaptations although additional equipment can be provided if required. BSM list of instructors

Mansfield area: 24 Albert Street, Mansfield, Notts. NG18 1EB.
Tel: 01623 626 392
Nottingham area: 23 Mansfield Road, Nottingham. NG1 3FB
Tel: 01159 417 511

The following is taken from the Register of Driving Instructors for Disabled People (Note: Inclusion in this booklet should not be taken to imply a recommendation):

- Sherwood School of Motoring Tel: (01623) 622 351
- Mr John Scrimshaw (John Scrimshaw Automatic) - Tel: (0115) 921 1580
- Mr John Rogers (Mobility Driving School) - Tel: (01246) 430403
- Mr Victor Rust (Victory SoM) - Tel: (01332) 793074
- Mr John Smith (BSM) - Tel: (0121) 236 6295

Driving Tests

The driving test is in two parts: theory and practical.

The theory test is taken in a test centre. These are usually accessible, but if there are any access problems, arrangements can be made to have the test in another centre or somewhere more accessible. Arrangements can also be made to assist people who would have difficulty using a touch screen computer and mouse. However, advance notice should be given for this, preferably at the time of applying for the test.

Disabled people are given priority when booking the practical test. Additional time is allotted so that the instructor can be informed of the nature and function of any adaptations, to allow for extra time to get in and out of the car or any other reasons. Deaf people can take an interpreter with them, who must not be a driving instructor. The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) asks anyone who has a disability that may affect their driving or taking their test to let them know when applying.

Contact: Driving Standards Agency, Tel: 0300 200 1122, Website: www.dsa.gov.uk.
Obtaining a Vehicle
Motability Scheme

Motability Operations is an independent not-for-profit organisation which provides affordable motoring solutions for disabled people. It runs the Motability Scheme under contract to Motability. The Motability Scheme was established to provide disabled people with safe, reliable and affordable transport.

Who can apply to the scheme?
To be able to buy or lease a car using the Motability Scheme, you must be in receipt of either the Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance or War Pensioners Mobility Supplement (you should be expecting to receive the allowance for the full length of the agreement, however, applications are welcomed as long as you have at least 12 months award length remaining when you apply). A car can be leased or purchased through Motability on behalf of a disabled child aged three or above. The most popular way of getting a car through Motability is the Contract Hire Scheme - a leasing arrangement with a range of benefits included.

You use your mobility allowance to fund a car on the Motability scheme. There are two options:

1) A new car on a three year contract hire lease which includes:
   - A new car of your choice every three years (or longer if the car is heavily adapted).
   - Insurance and loss/damage protection.
   - Full breakdown assistance.
   - Servicing, maintenance and repairs - arranged through a Motability dealer - at no extra cost to you.
   - Road tax disc delivered to your home annually.
   - All replacement tyres.
   - An allowance of 60,000 miles over the three years of your agreement.
   - Network of over 4,500 dealers.
   - A single one stop shop customer helpline.
   - A ‘package approach’ (ie everything taken care of except fuel costs) which makes it easier to budget and there is less paperwork.
   - Pass Plus driver training
   - A ‘good condition bonus’ of £200 awarded to customers who have made no claims for loss or damage, and return their car in good order at the end of the lease.

2) A new or used car on hire purchase, over a term of three to five years, which may be preferred if you:
   - Want to buy a new or used car (rather than ‘lease’).
   - Car must be less than three years with a mileage no more than 45,000 when purchased. Maximum age of car to be no more than seven years at the end of HP agreement.
Choosing this option means you are responsible for insurance, breakdown recovery, repairs and servicing.

How does the scheme work?
You pay a down payment (where required; some cars require no advance payment) and agree for the mobility component of your DLA to be paid to Motability Operations who then use it to meet the monthly payments for a lease. This includes all motoring costs apart from the fuel used.

Turn over for more information about Motability...
What help is on hand for choosing a suitable Motability vehicle?

Motability’s online Vehicle Suitability Guide offers a useful starting point for making an initial assessment of your mobility needs. By answering a few simple questions you can get suggestions about the type of vehicle which would meet your needs, and a list of recommended adaptations if required. You can access the online Vehicle Suitability Guide from your own PC (at www.motability.co.uk) or when you visit a Motability dealer.

You can also use the online searchable price list to draw up a shortlist of the makes and models you prefer from the full range of 3,000 cars available, searching by features such as manufacturer, fuel type, size, style or price.

Experienced Motability specialists are on hand in more than 3,800 dealerships across the country to help guide your choice in selecting your new car. All specialists have been through extensive Motability training, including meeting the needs of disabled customers, advising on how the scheme works and helping to choose a suitable model. The Motability specialist will also go through the ordering process with you and place the order for the chosen car. The full list of local dealers is available online at www.motability.co.uk or via the contact details below. Motability recommends visiting a number of dealers to get the best advice as some sell only one model, while others are multi-franchise with a selection of car brands to choose from.

For enquiries about the Motability Car Schemes, contact:

Motability Operations,
City Gate House,
22 Southwark Bridge Road,
London, SE1 9HB
Motability Helpline: 0845 456 4566
Minicom: 0845 675 0009
Website: www.motability.co.uk

What financial assistance is available?

If money is a problem, or you need a specially adapted vehicle, Motability may be able to provide a grant through its own Charitable Fund or other funds it administers on behalf of the Government. Other sources of funding may be available for car adaptations, information is available from Disability Nottinghamshire (see page 3 for contact details).

Anyone who is eligible for the Motability Scheme can apply for financial assistance towards the cost of the advance payment for a car, adaptations or driving lessons.

If financial help is needed, you must complete an Application for Financial Help form. To receive a copy contact the Motability Helpline on Tel: 0845 456 4566. The completed Application for Financial Help form should be sent to: Motability, Goodman House, Station Approach, Harlow, Essex, CM20 2ET.
Other Ways to Purchase a Vehicle

For many disabled motorists, the Motability Schemes are the preferred way of obtaining a motor vehicle but they are not the only way. If the Motability Scheme is not for you, then there are a number of other options to get you on the road. The following is a summary of the main ways of buying or leasing a vehicle:

- **Hire Purchase**: This is a method of financing a new or used vehicle with the vehicle becoming your property at the end of the finance period. The monthly payment is determined by the amount of deposit paid, the contract period and the purchase price of the vehicle.

- **Contract Hire**: This is a hiring agreement where the vehicle remains the property of the finance company and is returned in a fair condition at the end of the lease period. The contract hire period is usually set between two and four years, with a set mileage.

- **Personal Contract Purchase**: This is half-way between buying and renting a car. A large portion of the anticipated value of the vehicle is deferred to the end of the agreement. You can then either keep the car and pay an agreed amount, trade in the car for a new one or hand back the car to the dealer with nothing more to pay.

- Using **savings or a bank/building society loan** to buy a car outright.

Considerations when Purchasing a Vehicle

Along with basic requirements or considerations such as reliability, performance, comfort, appearance and the cost of purchase and operation, you also need to make sure the car is one that you can use taking into account your disability.

**Manual or automatic transmission**: Generally it is easier for a disabled person to drive a car with automatic transmission, especially if the car needs to be adapted with hand controls or if the driver has impairment, loss of function or amputation of the upper or lower limbs.

**Power assisted steering**: Most disabled people would benefit from driving with power assisted steering, especially people with weak upper limbs or impairment/amputation of an upper limb. Lightened power steering is also available for people with severe disabilities.

**Number of doors and style of vehicle**: There are pros and cons to three door and five door cars depending on whether the disabled person has problems entering or exiting the car and whether equipment or a wheelchair needs to be stowed, for example, a three door car generally has wider doors. The choice of whether to have a saloon, hatchback or estate car will depend on personal preference, family needs and the circumstances of the disabled person, for example, a large hatchback or estate car will be needed if there is a lot of equipment or a powered wheelchair to be carried. There are some types of van that can be converted to be driven from a wheelchair. Many disabled people have problems entering and exiting a vehicle when: opening the car door, moving onto the seat, lifting feet over the sill, putting on the seat belt, stowing sticks, crutches, walking frames or wheelchairs, finding handholds and supports and (un)loading mobility aids and/or a wheelchair. Some of these problems can be overcome by features such as wide opening doors, low sills in the car and boot, adjustable seating and plenty of boot space.

Turn over for more information about vehicle adaptations...
Vehicle Adaptations

People who need adaptations to their vehicles have a number of options available to them to make life easier as there are numerous ways in which a car can be adapted.

It is vitally important to seek professional advice and have adaptations professionally made and fitted for both convenience and safety. Always ask the adaptation specialist how the work might affect car warranties or structural integrity. Adaptations should be regularly maintained and checked, as most are not checked as part of the standard MOT test.

Choosing the correct adaptation is as important as choosing the right vehicle. If you have never used adaptations before, it may be a good idea to have a driving assessment at a Mobility Centre (see page 15 for details).

You do not pay VAT for products designed and made specifically for disabled people. This means all adaptations and their installation, repair and maintenance are zero rated for VAT. Full details are available from HM Revenue & Customs - Tel: 0845 010 9000, Website: www.hmrc.gov.uk.

You might consider taking lessons from a driving instructor qualified in teaching motorists who use adaptations. On the Motability Scheme, adaptations can be ordered at the same time as the car, and when the car is collected, the adaptations are already fitted to it.

**Adaptations that are available include:**

- Hand controls to brake and accelerate (and to operate the clutch in manual cars).
- Key turners to help unlock the car doors.
- Handgrips fitted inside the car.
- Leg lifter to lift legs over the sills.
- Extended seat runners to allow the seat to be pushed further back to allow maximum leg clearance.
- Swivel seats or cushions (driver or passenger) for easier access.
- Electrically operated seat height and forward-back adjustment.
- Seat belt modifications.
- Transfer boards for transfer between wheelchair and seat.
- Hoists, lifts or lifting seats to raise people and/or wheelchairs into and out of the car.
- Pedals extended, lengthened or re-sited, eg left foot accelerator (in a car with automatic transmission) for those unable to use their right leg.
- Pedal guard to cover the foot control pedals if using hand controls.
- Steering ball (sometimes with infra-red box to activate secondary controls) for people needing to steer with one arm only.
- Horizontal steering wheel with hand controls or joysticks.
- Adaptations to operate the secondary controls (ignition, hand brake, indicators, wipers etc) such as extensions to switches or electric hand brake.
- Internal and exterior mirrors for better vision for people with limited neck movement.
Vehicle Taxation and Road Tax: Exemptions

VAT is a sales tax levied on the sale of goods and services. You don’t have to pay VAT on the cost of a new car, or on the cost of repairs, if the vehicle is supplied to a disabled person who normally uses a wheelchair or stretcher. The car must be adapted to suit the particular needs of the disabled person and seat no more than 12 people. Full details are available from HM Revenue & Customs - Tel: 0845 302 0203, Website: www.hmrc.gov.uk.

If you receive the Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance or War Pensioners Mobility Supplement, you can apply for exemption from Vehicle Excise Duty (road tax). This can either be for a vehicle you drive yourself or have driven for you but the vehicle must be registered in the name of the person with the disability or a nominee and must only be used by or for the purposes of the disabled person named. The exemption certificate (V188) can be obtained from your local Post Office or DVLA. Exemption is automatic for anyone on the Motability Contract Hire Scheme (ie the V188 form does not need to be completed and tax discs are automatically issued when the renewal date is due). Road tax exempt vehicles are automatically exempt from paying the Central London congestion charge.

Insurance

Under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), insurers are not allowed to refuse disabled drivers insurance or charge extra without justifying evidence. Premiums must be based on a reasonable assessment of risk. Insurers will take account of any DVLA restrictions on your licence, but this is not in itself justification for a higher premium. However, you may have to pay more while you are adjusting to a new disability if there is evidence that this will increase risk and/or to cover any extra cost of repairing an adapted vehicle.

As with all insurance, shop around to get the best deal. If you feel you are being charged more than other drivers in similar circumstances, ask the insurance company for details of why they consider you to be a greater risk.

Mobility Centres and organisations of disabled drivers can provide lists of specialist insurance companies if required (see page 15 for details).
Blue Badge Scheme

The Blue Badge Scheme provides a national arrangement of parking concessions for disabled people with severe walking difficulties who travel either as drivers or as passengers. The Blue Badge replaced the Orange Badge in April 2000.

The Blue Badge must be displayed clearly at all times, with the time of arrival also displayed (on the card provided) if parking on a single or double yellow line. The concessions apply only to on-street parking and usually include free use of on-street parking, parking meters and pay and display bays. Badge holders may also be exempt from limits on parking times and can park for up to three hours on yellow lines (except where there is a ban on loading or unloading, or other restrictions). The Badge also indicates that a car is rightfully using a designated space. Blue Badge holders are exempt from paying the Central London congestion charge, but this must be applied for in advance.

The Scheme does not apply to off-street car parks, private roads, parking at most airports and some town centres where access is prohibited. It is administered by local councils and rules may differ from one area to another (contact Disability Nottinghamshire for an in-depth leaflet on how to apply for a Blue Badge; our contact details are on page 3. Alternatively, contact your local council who will send you an application form). Children under two years of age do not qualify for a Badge as a passenger. Organisations caring for disabled people may be able to get a Blue Badge. The Badge can be used throughout the UK, European Union and in some other European countries.

How do I qualify for a Blue Badge?
You qualify if you: receive the Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance or War Pensioners Mobility Supplement; use a motor vehicle supplied by a government health department; are a registered blind person; have severe disability in both upper limbs and drive a motor vehicle but cannot turn the steering wheel by hand; or have a permanent and substantial disability that causes inability, or considerable difficulty, to walk.

Special Access Permits

Special Access Permits allow vehicular access to certain pedestrian areas in Nottinghamshire for people who have particular mobility difficulties. You are entitled to a permit if you receive any of the following as a result of a disability: free road tax; Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance or War Pensioners Mobility Supplement; or Motability. People not in receipt of the above allowances may still qualify for a permit if they have difficulty walking. Permit holders must be resident in Nottinghamshire.

Application forms for Special Access Permits are available from: Central Processing Unit, PO Box 9452, Nottingham. NG15 5BR. Tel: (01623) 434 942
Tolls: Road bridges, tunnels and motorways

Toll concessions are available for Blue Badge holders at a number of road bridges, tunnels and motorways, provided they meet certain conditions set by the owners or operators (note: not all toll crossings or motorways offer concessions). In some cases, to qualify for a concession an application has to be made in advance to the relevant crossing, motorway or local authority. It is, therefore, generally advisable to check with the owners or operators first.

Petrol Filling Stations

At every petrol filling station displaying the international wheelchair symbol, there should be at least one member of staff trained in the needs of disabled motorists, to provide assistance with obtaining fuel and any other necessary services such as air and oil during peak hours (ie between 8am and 6pm) on all days of opening.

The various ways in which disabled drivers might summon assistance (ie sounding the horn, flashing the headlights or using an electronic system such as Service call) should be clearly displayed on or near the pumps.

Breakdown Recovery

Some breakdown recovery providers offer preferential rates to Blue Badge holders. Mobility Centres and organisations of disabled drivers can provide lists of specialist breakdown recovery companies if required (see page 15 for details).

Car Hire

There are some companies that hire adapted cars for disabled drivers and passengers. The cars are usually adapted with hand controls and some may have wheelchair accessible vehicles for people who wish to travel whilst seated in their wheelchair.

Local car hire firms offering adapted vehicles to disabled people include:

- **Hertz**
  Weighbridge Road, Mansfield. Tel: (01623) 646060 and Bath Place, Nottingham. Tel: (0115) 958 0575

- **National Car Rental**
  40 Corporation Street, Sheffield. Tel: (0114) 275 4111

- **Lynx Hand Controls**
  Lynx hand controls (only suitable for people with a lower limb disability) are used by many car hire companies as they are easy to install and remove. Lynx can also make all your hire car arrangements for you by finding a hire car which is able to be adapted near to where you live. If a disabled driver is involved in a non-fault accident, Lynx can provide a hire car fitted with Lynx controls at no cost to the injured party (the negligent driver's insurance company is charged). Tel: (01695) 422622

Hire companies further afield include:
Wheelchair Travel - Tel: (01483) 233640; Mobility Europe - Tel: (020) 8924 7199; Atlas - Tel: (023) 9275 6265; DIG Car Hire Scheme - Tel: (01224) 587212; Wheels International - Tel: (01992) 715544.
Useful Contacts for Further Information

Blue Badge Network
198 Wolverhampton Street, Dudley, DY1 1DZ
Tel: (01384) 257001
Fax: (01384) 257 317
E-mail: headoffice@bluebadgenetwork.org
Website: www.bluebadgenetwork.org.uk

Disabled Motorists’ Federation
Vice President & Assistant Secretary - Mr P Lyne
Tel: 0151 648 3457 or 0777 4405 734
Secretary & Membership Mr J Killick
Tel: 0191 416 3172.

DVLA
Drivers Medical Group, Swansea, SA99 1TU
Tel: 0300 790 6806
Fax: 0845 850 0095
E-mail: eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.dvla.gov.uk

Mobilise Organisation (merger of Disabled Drivers’ Motor Club and Disabled Drivers’ Association)
National Headquarters.
Aswellthorpe,
Norwich.
NG161 EX
Tel: 01509 489 449
Fax: 01509 488 173
Email: enquires@mobilise.info
Website: www.mobilise.info
The **Mobility Centre** serving people resident in Nottinghamshire is:
DrivAbility Derby Regional Mobility Centre, Kingsway Hospital, Kingsway, Derby, DE22 3LZ  
Tel: 01322 371929  
Fax: 01332 382377  
Email: driving@derbyhospitals.nhs.uk  
Website: www.derbydrivability.com

**Motability Operations**
City Gate House, 22 Southwark Bridge Road, London, SE1 9HB  
Motability Helpline: 0845 456 4566  
Minicom: (01279) 632273  
Website: www.motabilityoperations.co.uk

**National Association of Blue Badge Holders**
Community Transport Association  
Tel/ 020 7944 2914 or 0161 367 0009  
E-mail: blue.badge@dft.gsi.gov.uk

**RADAR**
12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London, EC1V 8AF  
Tel: (020) 7250 3222  
Minicom: (020) 7250 4119  
Fax: 0870 141 0337  
E-mail: radar@radar.org.uk  
Website: www.radar.org.uk

**Ricability**
Ricability, Unit G03, The Wenlock Business Centre, 50-52 Wharf Road, London. N1 7EU  
Tel: (020) 7427 2460  
Minicom: (020) 7427 4119  
Fax: (020) 7450 0212  
E-mail: mail@ricability.org.uk  
Website: www.ricability.org.uk
Do you have some regular spare time available?
Join our friendly team!

Volunteer Now!

If you are a disabled person, carer or have experience of disability, Disability Nottinghamshire needs your time and talents.

Why not try volunteering as an:

- Adviser
- Administrator or
- Researcher

Full training and support is given

To enquire about joining us as a volunteer, call:
(01623) 658 060