

Factsheet 73 ● November 2011

Driving and parking

About this factsheet

This factsheet provides information relating to driving and parking that is particularly relevant to older people and those who have health conditions and/or disabilities. It includes details on renewing your driving licence, the Blue Badge scheme, arranging for disabled parking bays and electric scooters.

For specific information about public transport see Age UK's Factsheet 26, *Public transport and concessions*.

The information given in this factsheet is applicable in England. Different rules may apply in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Readers in these nations should contact their respective national Age UK organisation for information specific to where they live – see section 16 for details.

For details of how to order other Age UK factsheets and information materials go to section 16.

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1 Recent developments

From 1 January 2012 the following changes will be made to the Blue Badge scheme:

- A local council will be able to charge the fee for a Blue Badge to maximum of £10 (increase from £2)
- Customers will be able to apply for a badge online on the Directgov website
- The design of the Blue Badge will be changed to make it more difficult to tamper with or forge.

2 Introduction

Research and statistics do not indicate that there is an age at which all drivers become unable to drive safely.

As an older driver you may have many years of experience on the road and be more confident and tolerant, which will contribute to your safety on the road. On the other hand, your sight, hearing, reaction time, general fitness and physical mobility can be less good than they once were. It is important that you remain safe on the road by checking your ability to drive and adjusting your driving habits to compensate for any health deficiency that you may have developed.

There are some legal obligations on you as an older driver when you reach the age of 70 or develop a medical condition. There are also some voluntary steps you can take to improve your safety on the road such as having an independent assessment of your driving or driving only in conditions that do not cause you anxiety. You may also adapt or swap your car for another model to better suit your needs.

If you develop a disability it does not mean you have to stop driving. There are financial and practical resources that you may be able to access to help you adapt your car and park in convenient places.

3 Legal obligation

There is no upper age limit for driving a car but if you have or develop a disability or medical condition that affects your ability to drive, you must by law notify the Driver Vehicle Licence Agency DVLA (see section 15). The list of medical conditions that you must disclose can be found on Directgov website in the Motoring section or you can get in touch with DVLA for more information (see section 15).

Medical questionnaires for notification purposes and leaflets relevant to particular medical conditions are available from Directgov website or you can notify the DVLA directly. You will also have to provide the DVLA with written consent for their medical adviser to request a medical report from your general practitioner (GP) or consultant. You may be required to have a medical or driving test. These tests are free.

All drivers have to renew their licence when they reach the age of 70 and every three years from then on. The renewal form should be sent to you automatically by the DVLA 90 days before your 70th birthday. It requires you to declare whether you are suffering from any of the medical conditions that may affect your driving. Licences are renewed free of charge. If you do not receive the reminder application forms, get in touch with DVLA.

Having a disability or medical condition does not necessarily mean that your licence will be affected, but some conditions will lead to your licence being restricted, withdrawn or refused if you are applying for the first time. For more information see the Directgov website.

4 Tips for safe driving

Even experienced driver can pick up bad habits over the years. There may have been changes in the Highway Code since the last time you read it or there may have been changes in your health. To be safer on the road make sure that you:

- study the Highway Code
- check your eyesight regularly (people aged 60 or over are entitled to a free eye test)
- check your car regularly and make sure it is appropriate to your needs; for example, it has power steering or bigger mirrors and windows

- have an independent assessment of your skills (see section 5)
- drive in conditions that do not cause you anxiety, for example drive only in daytime and on familiar routes; avoid long distances
- use public transport when you are worried about any aspect of driving, such as weather conditions (For information about public transport and available concessions, see Age UK's Factsheet 26 *Public transport and concessions*.)
- drive regularly to stay in practice on the road
- plan for the future, think how you are going to move around if you do need to stop driving one day, eg if you are planning to move to the countryside find out if there is good public transport.

5 Experienced driver assessments

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) offers an experienced driver assessment. The assessment takes about one hour and can be done in your own car and at a time and place convenient to both you and the assessor.

The assessor is someone who is registered with the RoSPA Advanced Drivers' Association and who will give you a verbal report at the end of the drive that will be sent to you in writing later.

There is no pass or fail to the assessment but the report could include suggestions on how to improve specific driving skills and all-round driving ability. See section 15 for contact details.

A similar scheme, DriveCheck 55, is offered by the Institute of Advanced Motorists. See section 15 for contact details.

Some local authorities also run schemes that assess older drivers.

6 Mobility Centres

The Forum of Mobility Centres is a network of independent Mobility Centres that offers information, advice and assessment to people who wish to begin, or return to, driving following an illness, injury or accident. They will also offer advice on how to choose a vehicle that is suitable for your needs. To find your nearest centre contact the Forum of Mobility Centres (see section 15).

7 Motorcycles

If you are disabled and wish to take up motorcycling, the National Association for Bikers with a Disability can arrange assessment and training for you. They will also advise on adaptations to motorcycles and other matters relating to riding (see section 15).

8 Motability

Motability is an independent, non-for profit organisation that runs the Motability Scheme.

If you receive the higher rate mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement, the Motability Scheme can help you to buy or lease a car, wheelchair or scooter by using your mobility allowance to pay the costs.

For more information, contact Motability (see section 15). For information about the DLA see Age UK's Factsheet 52 *Disability Living Allowance*.

9 Exemption from VAT

If you are disabled you may not have to pay VAT on necessary adaptations to your car. Exemption may also extend to spare parts, accessories, and repair and maintenance. Contact your local VAT office (in the phone book under Customs and Excise) for more information. You can obtain leaflet *Notice 701/59 Motor vehicles for disabled people* by calling the National Advice Service on 0845 010 9000.

10 Exemption from Vehicle Excise Duty (road tax)

You may be entitled to an exemption from Vehicle Excise Duty (VED or road tax) if you receive the higher rate of mobility component of DLA or the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement.

To get a free disc you need to apply for an exemption certificate from the agency that issues your benefit. If you receive the higher rate of the mobility component of DLA or the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement you should automatically be sent an application form for a VED exemption. If you have not received one, or want guidance on it, contact the Disability Contact and Processing Unit, if you receive the higher rate of mobility DLA, or the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency, if you receive the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement (see section 15).

You can nominate somebody else to drive for you.

To qualify for the exemption the vehicle must be used only by the disabled person or for their direct purposes. If the disabled person is not driving or is not a passenger in the vehicle it can only be used to do errands for the disabled person such as shopping or getting prescriptions.

Customers who are on the Motability contract hire scheme do not need the exemption certificate (see section 8). Motability will automatically register the car in disabled class and they will not require the exemption certificate to do this. For more information contact Motability (see section 15).

11 The Blue Badge parking scheme

The Blue Badge parking scheme provides a national system of parking concessions for people travelling either as drivers or passengers who have severe mobility problems.

Badge holders are exempt from certain parking restrictions, including being allowed to park:

- free at on-street parking meters and in Pay and Display bays
- up to three hours on single and double yellow lines.

A leaflet, *The Blue Badge scheme: rights and responsibilities in England*, gives full details of where it can and cannot be used. You can get it from the Department for Transport website (see section 15) or download it from the Directgov website (see section 15).

The scheme does not apply in four local authorities in central London: the City of London, Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, and part of Camden. These boroughs operate their own parking schemes for residents and in some cases for people working in the borough. But they provide Blue Badge parking bays. You can find the location of these bays on the Blue Badge London map on the Directgov website.

Some other local authorities prohibit parking in town centres or restrict it to local permit holders. Contact the local authority to check the local situation. The scheme does not apply on the road systems at some airports.

The Directgov website contains more information about the Blue Badge and other information concerning disabled people and motoring.

Blue Badge holders may be able to take advantage of this concession in some European countries: for more information see the leaflet mentioned above.

11.1 Who qualifies

You can qualify for a Blue Badge if one or more of these criteria applies to you:

- you get the higher rate of the mobility component of DLA
- you receive a War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement
- you are a registered blind person
- you have received a lump sum benefit from the Armed Forces and Reserve Forces Compensation Scheme (within tariff levels 1-8). You must also have been certified as having a permanent and substantial disability which causes inability to walk or very considerable difficulty in walking
- you have a permanent and substantial disability which means you are unable to walk or have very considerable difficulty in walking (you will need to show that this criterion applies to you and you may have to be assessed by a medical professional such as physiotherapist or occupational therapist)
- you drive a motor vehicle regularly, have a severe disability in both arms, and are unable or find it very difficult to operate all or some types of parking meter (you will need to prove that this criterion applies to you; see bullet point above)

- you are a parent/guardian of a child who is less than three years old and has a specific medical condition.

A leaflet *Can I get a Blue Badge?* with more information is available to download from the Department for Transport website (see section 15).

11.2 Where to apply?

Apply directly to your local authority. If your local authority refuses to issue a badge because it does not consider you to have 'very considerable difficulty in walking', you have no formal right of appeal but you can ask them to consider your application again if you think they did not take all the facts into account. You can ask your councillor, local disability group or advice agency to support your request. You only have a formal right of appeal if you have been denied a badge on grounds of misuse.

11.3 Congestion charge

If you are a Blue Badge holder you can apply to the Congestion Charging Office for exemption from congestion charging in central London. You will have to pay a one-off fee of £10 (see section 15 for contact details).

12 Disabled parking bays

If you are a disabled driver and have difficulty parking close to your home your local authority may provide you with a parking bay outside or near your home. In most cases the bays are provided on advisory basis: this means they are not enforceable by the police and therefore rely on the good will of other drivers not to park in the bay. In addition, such bays are intended for any disabled badge holder to use – not just the applicant.

Some local authorities may decide to provide disabled bays using a traffic regulation order. This would make it legally enforceable and a vehicle found parked in a bay without a badge would be subject to police enforcement action. These bays are also usually available for any disabled badge holder not just the applicant.

Criteria for eligibility for applying for a disabled parking bay vary between different councils: some require that you hold a Blue Badge, others that you receive the higher rate mobility component of DLA. Following the application, an investigating officer will assess the highway conditions. Several issues will be taken into consideration, including safety, the width of carriageway, the number of vehicles using or parking in the road, the number of other disabled parking bays in the road, the availability of off-street parking. Neighbours will be consulted and notified about the outcome.

Payments for provision of the bay vary between local authorities with some providing them free of charge and others imposing a charge ranging from £30 upwards.

Contact your local authority for details and application form.

13 **Low speed scooters and buggies**

A variety of low speed buggies and scooters are available for driving either on the pavement or road. Get independent advice before making a purchase. The Disabled Living Foundation produces a guide, *Choosing a scooter or a buggy*, to help you choose or you may like to visit your local Disabled Living Centre (see the Disabled Living Foundation in section 15).

Consider purchasing a scooter from a company that is a member of the British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA). Members of the BHTA comply with a code of practice that has been approved by the Office of Fair Trading, which means they operate to higher standards of customer protection than the law requires.

In recognition that electric scooters and wheelchairs do not fit into any road user category, the BHTA produces a special highway code for users – *Get wise to using electric scooters and wheelchairs*. The guide includes guidelines for driving safely and advice on what you should consider before buying (see section 15 for contact details).

To be used on footpaths, vehicles must not go above 4 miles per hour (mph) but can travel at up to 8 miles per hour on most roads. No road tax is payable nor is a driving licence or insurance legally required to drive these vehicles but if your scooter is able to go above 4 miles per hour you have to have it registered with the DVLA and display a 'nil' tax disc. For more information and to check the legal requirements for using electric scooters and wheelchairs contact the DVLA or see the Directgov website (see section 15).

Consider taking out insurance to cover personal injury to yourself or others, and damage to the vehicle. Some insurance companies will also cover you for scooter breakdown but check out what services the insurer will provide. You can get in touch with British Insurers Brokers' Association for a list of brokers that may be able to find you a suitable insurance (see section 15 for contact details).

Scooters are not designed to be carried on public transport: they are often too big and unstable. Many rail companies will not carry scooters and many airlines will not take the older powered wheelchairs or scooters with wet cell or spillable batteries. If you want to take a scooter (or large powered wheelchair) on public transport, check first with the company that it is possible.

14 **National Key Scheme**

The National Key Scheme (NKS) was set up to allow independent entry by disabled key holders to accessible public toilets that have been locked to prevent vandalism. NKS keys can be bought from the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR) for £4.00. Your local authority, the Tourist Office or local disability group may also have stocks of the key for sale. For more information contact RADAR (see section 15).

15 Useful organisations

Association of British Insurers (ABI)

ABI (in partnership with Age Concern and Help the Aged) produced a guide *Motor insurance for older drivers* to help older drivers get motor insurance at best possible prices.

51 Gresham Street, London EC2V 7HQ

Tel: 020 7600 3333

Website: www.abi.org.uk

Automobile Association (AA)

AA produces guide *Disabled travellers guide* and a factsheet *Older drivers; ten tips to help if you're worried about an older driver*.

Member Administration Contact Centre, Lambert House, Stockport Road, Cheadle SK8 2DY

Disability helpline: 0800 262050

Textphone: 0800 328 2810

Website: www.theaa.com

British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA)

Britain's longest established healthcare trades association with a code of practice approved by the Office of Fair Trading.

New Loom House, Suite 4.06, 101 Back Church Lane, London E1 1LU,

Tel: 020 7702 2141

Website: www.bhta.net

British Insurance Brokers' Association (BIBA)

The UK's leading general insurance intermediary organisation, which represents the interests of insurance brokers, intermediaries and their customers.

8th Floor, John Stow House, 18 Bevis Marks, London EC3A 7JB

Tel: 0870 950 1790

Website: www.biba.org.uk

Congestion Charging Office

Tel: 0845 900 1234

Textphone: 020 7649 9123

Website: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/roadusers/congestioncharging/>

Department for Transport

Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DR

Enquiry helpdesk: 0300 330 3000

Website: www.dft.gov.uk

DIAL (the Disability Information and Advice Line)

DIAL UK is a network of local groups throughout the country providing information and advice to disabled people. They should be able to tell you if there is a group in your local area or it may be in the local telephone directory.

Tel: 01302 310123

Website: www.dialuk.info

Directgov

Directgov is the government website that provides online information on variety of subjects and services.

Website: www.direct.gov.uk

Disability Contact and Processing Unit

Part of the Disability and Carers Service, Department for Work and Pensions.

Warbreck House, Warbreck Hill Road, Blackpool, FY2 0YJ

Tel: 08457 123456

Textphone: 08457 224433

Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)

DPTAC advises the government on access to transport for disabled people. It has a website that gives information to disabled and less mobile people about travelling using all forms of transport.

2/23 Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0207 944 8011

Website: <http://dptac.independent.gov.uk/>

Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)

The DLF provides advice and information on disability equipment and assisted products. It has factsheets on a variety of subjects, including choosing wheelchairs and other equipment.

Tel: 0845 130 9177

Website: www.dlf.org.uk

Disabled Motoring UK

Disabled Motoring represents the interests of disabled drivers, passengers, scooter and wheelchair users and their friends, families and carers. It provides information and advice.

Ashwellthorpe, Norwich NR16 1EX

Tel: 01508 489 449

Website: www.mobilise.info

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

Customer Enquiry Department, Swansea SA6 7JL

Tel: 0300 790 6801

Website: www.dft.gov.uk/dvla

Forum of Mobility Centres

A network of independent organisations offering information, advice and assessment to individuals who have a medical condition or are recovering from an accident or injury which may affect their ability to drive or access a motor vehicle.

Prudential Chapel, Warehorne, Ashford, Kent TN26 2JX

Tel: 0800 559 3636 (free call)

Website: www.mobility-centres.org.uk

Institute of Advanced Motorists

The UK road safety charity, helps to increase skills for all road users and raise driving and riding standards.

IAM House, 510 Chiswick High Road, London, W4 5RG

Tel: 0845 126 8600

Website: www.iam.org.uk

Mobility Information Service (MIS)

MIS provides information service for disabled people who drive or want to drive. It is mostly run by volunteers, the majority of whom are disabled and who want to help others overcome their own mobility problems.

20 Burton Close, Dawley, Telford TF4 2BX

Tel: 01743 340 269

Website: www.mis.org.uk

Motability

The Motability Scheme enables disabled people to exchange either their Higher Rate Mobility component of DLA or their War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement to obtain a new car, powered wheelchair or scooter.

Motability Operations, City Gate House, 22 Southwark Bridge Rd, London SE1 9HB

Tel: 0845 456 4566

Minicom: 0845 675 0009

Website: www.motability.co.uk

National Association for Bikers with a Disability

A registered charity that provides advice, information and support for disabled people who wish to ride motorcycles.

Unit 20, The Bridgewater Centre, Urmston, Manchester M41 7TE

Tel: 0844 415 4849

Website: nabd.org.uk

Office of Fair Trading (OFT)

The OFT is a government department which aims to ensure that trading practices are fair and that customers are protected. It does not give direct advice to individuals, but produces a range of useful consumer leaflets and provides guidance on who to contact for help.

Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London EC4Y 8JX

Tel: 0845 722 4499

Website: www.of.gov.uk

RADAR (Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation)

RADAR is the UK's largest disability campaigning organisation, with a membership of over 900 disability organisations and individual campaigners

12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London, EC1V 8AF

Tel: 020 7250 3222

Minicom: 020 7250 4119

Website: www.radar.org.uk/radarwebsite

Ricability (Research Institute for Consumer Affairs: RICA)

Ricability provides independent consumer information, including guides on mobility and cars for consumers with mobility problems. They are available free with an SAE to cover postage costs or by downloading from the website.

Ricability, Unit G03, The Wenlock Business Centre, 50-52 Wharf Road, London N1 7EU

Tel: 020 7427 2460

Textphone: 020 7427 2469

Website: www.ricability.org.uk

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Driver Services

RoSPA is a registered charity that promotes safety and the prevention of accidents at work, at leisure, on the road, in the home and through safety education.

RoSPA House, 18 Calthorpe Road, Birmingham, B15 1RP

Tel: 0121 248 2000

Website: www.rospace.co.uk

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency

Norcross, Thornton Cleveleys, Lancs FY5 3WP

Tel: 0800 169 2277 (free call)

Textphone: 0800 169 3458

Website: www.veterans-uk.info

Transport for All

Provides specialised advice, information, advocacy and training to both service users and providers of accessible transport in London.

336 Brixton Road, London SW9 7AA

Tel: 020 7737 2339

Website: www.transportforall.org.uk

16 Further information from Age UK

Age UK Information Materials

Age UK publishes a large number of free Information Guides and Factsheets on a range of subjects including money and benefits, health, social care, consumer issues, end of life, legal, issues employment and equality issues.

Whether you need information for yourself, a relative or a client our information guides will help you find the answers you are looking for and useful organisations who may be able to help. You can order as many copies of guides as you need and organisations can place bulk orders.

Our factsheets provide detailed information if you are an adviser or you have a specific problem.

Age UK Advice

Visit the Age UK website, www.ageuk.org.uk, or call Age UK Advice free on 0800 169 65 65 if you would like:

- further information about our full range of information products
- to order copies of any of our information materials
- to request information in large print and audio
- expert advice if you cannot find the information you need in this factsheet
- contact details for your nearest local Age UK

Age UK

Age UK is the new force combining Age Concern and Help the Aged. We provide advice and information for people in later life through our publications, online or by calling Age UK Advice.

Age UK Advice: 0800 169 65 65

Website: www.ageuk.org.uk

In Wales, contact:

Age Cymru: 0800 169 65 65

Website: www.agecymru.org.uk

In Scotland, contact:

Age Scotland: 0845 125 9732

Website: www.agescotland.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact:

Age NI: 0808 808 7575

Website: www.ageni.org.uk

Support our work

Age UK is the largest provider of services to older people in the UK after the NHS. We make a difference to the lives of thousands of older people through local resources such as our befriending schemes, day centres and lunch clubs; by distributing free information materials; and taking calls at Age UK Advice on 0800 169 65 65.

If you would like to support our work by making a donation please call Supporter Services on 0800 169 80 80 (8.30 am–5.30 pm) or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/donate

Legal statement

Age UK is a registered charity (number 1128267) and company limited by guarantee (number 6825798). The registered address is 207–221 Pentonville Road, London, N1 9UZ. VAT number: 564559800. Age Concern England (charity number 261794) and Help the Aged (charity number 272786) and their trading and other associated companies merged on 1 April 2009. Together they have formed Age UK, a single charity dedicated to improving the lives of people in later life. Age Concern and Help the Aged are brands of Age UK. The three national Age Concerns in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have also merged with Help the Aged in these nations to form three registered charities: Age Scotland, Age Northern Ireland, Age Cymru.

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