

Driving, Travel and Mobility

This section covers the following topics:

Driving; Concessionary Rail and Bus Fares; Travel Support for the Disabled

Driving

The person you care for may be an experienced driver used to navigating both short and long distances and you may be confident that this will continue for a good while yet.

There is no upper age limit for driving in the UK, but after the age of 70 licences have to be renewed every three years. The DVLA will send out the relevant forms. All applications require a medical self-declaration (but not a doctor's sign off).

If you think there is a question mark over medical fitness at any point this should be discussed in the first instance with a GP or other professional. You might also wish to consult this guidance on health conditions and driving <https://www.gov.uk/health-conditions-and-driving> which gives detailed advice on what needs to be notified to the DVLA.

Of course reactions, hearing, eyesight and general health and alertness can decline slowly and imperceptibly with the risk that this may not be noticed soon enough and may not even be something that needs formal notification.

One further point to consider. If you are caring for a surviving partner in a married couple, you may find they are not familiar with routines for tax, insurance, MOT and servicing, if they have never done this before. We often hear of people who don't realise for instance that when their partner dies they need to transfer the car registration documents over. Equally they may not know how to go about organising all of the administration that will follow or be aware of the importance of routine maintenance issues such as checking tyre pressure etc.

Our Advice

- Make sure the person you are caring for knows that the GP and DVLA should be told of any specific medical conditions affecting driving
- Be alert to more subtle changes that may mean you should talk about how long it is safe to continue driving
- Perhaps discuss whether driving is best limited to short distances on familiar routes (shopping for instance) and in daylight hours
- Look for signs that essential car maintenance is still being done – tyre pressures, oil etc. and the car tax is up to day (which requires the MOT and insurance to be valid)

Top Tip

Renewing car tax by phone is incredibly easy if done by someone with good hearing and button control. As insurance and MOT checks are done electronically it also saves all that searching for paperwork.

Give them a helping hand and save them a trip to the Post Office next time they get their car tax reminder – full details are on the form.

Top Tip

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) offers confidential written assessments of people's capabilities behind the wheel.

It is not an assessment of medical fitness - that is for your GP – but it can give guidance and, potentially, re-assurance.

Costing £50 it takes place in your own car, and lasts about an hour. More at: <https://www.roadar.org/drivers/driving-assessments.htm>

Concessionary Bus and Rail Fares

Bus Passes

It used to be easy to remember – everyone got a free bus pass at 60, entitling them to free off-peak travel on a local bus anywhere in England (off-peak times are between 9.30 am and 11 pm on working days and all day at weekends and public holidays).

That changed in April 2010. Women can now get a bus pass when they reach state pension age (currently being increased in stages up to 65 by November 2018 and 66 by October 2020, with further increases to come – more details, including how to use date of birth to calculate state pension age can be found on <https://www.gov.uk/calculate-state-pension>)

Men have to be treated the same as women, despite at the moment having an older state retirement age than women. So they qualify for a bus pass at the age they would have received the state pension if they were a woman!

Don't worry if you are confused – you need to contact your Local Authority to apply so let them tell you the rules.

Concessions for Rail and Coach Travel

Anyone aged 60 or over can purchase a Senior Railcard – £28 for one year or £65 for three years (as of April 2013). This will give you 1/3 off most rail fares in Great Britain.

There is no single scheme for concessionary fares on coaches at the moment, although some operators may offer discounts. National Express has a Senior Coachcard for people over 60, costing £10 for a year and giving 1/3 off travel. There are also some very good deals for early bookers – best done by someone with on-line skills.

For people who have their permanent home in London there also is the 60+ Oyster photo card that gives free travel on London Underground, buses, trams, DLR, London Overground and most National Rail services in London. (It is not available to people who have or are eligible for a Freedom pass which also offers free travel in London - since April 2010 you need to be older than 60 to get a Freedom pass, with rules being similar to free bus passes).

Top Tip

You can use National Rail's on-line journey planner to book advance tickets at hugely discounted rates *and* get 1/3 off if you have a railcard, meaning some intercity travel costs as little as £5. You must travel on the specific train you book for, and carry your railcard, or you will pay a penalty.

Access the booking service here <http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/> Tickets can be posted first class (no charge) to any address, so you can easily book it for another person.

Travel Support for the Disabled

Blue Badge Scheme

Caring4Elders network members are great advocates of the blue badge scheme which enables people with severe mobility restrictions who are travelling by car (whether as driver or passenger) to get close to where they need to go. The badge can be used in any car in which the blue badge holder is being transported. The parking card and the 'parking clock' showing time of arrival have to be displayed.

Note that 'age' is not a criterion for eligibility for the scheme, there have to be severe restrictions on mobility to be eligible.

You can apply for a blue badge either on line (<https://www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge>) or via your local authority. The on line system is easy, but note that you will still have to copy and send two documents which prove identity and some of these are not necessarily easy to find. There is a charge of £10 for the badge (current at October 2012).

Renewing a badge follows the same format but you will also need the serial number of the current badge.

There are restrictions on use, some London Boroughs have their own schemes, and the scheme details differ across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Checking up to date information is essential (see website below). There are also informal arrangements in place across EU states so you may be able to use your blue badge abroad.

Do familiarise yourself with the rights and responsibilities of using the blue badge scheme – there are severe penalties for misuse.

For lots of helpful information, go to:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/disabledpeople/motoringandtransport/dg_4001061

Community Transport

For people who are disabled, cannot use public transport and do not have access to a car, there are several community transport schemes that you may be able to use. These include social cars (run by volunteers), dial-a-ride or taxicard schemes. In towncentres, shopmobility schemes help people shop by lending wheelchairs and scooters.

More detail about these schemes can be found at http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/Factsheets/FS26_Public_transport_and_concessions_fcs.pdf?dtrk=true

To find out about what is available in your area, contact your local authority or local Age UK

Trains

Train companies can provide special arrangements for disabled or mobility-impaired passengers. This includes wheelchair ramps or staff to help with getting on and off trains. You need to contact the train company at least 24 hours in advance to arrange this. For more information on services and arranging assistance go to:

http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/disabled_passengers.aspx

National rail also has some helpful information on their website about additional concessionary travel provided by some (not all) Local Authorities – see

http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/times_fares/46512.aspx