

Staying Active and Connected

Getting out and about

Enjoy yourself!

The Disability Discrimination Act has made a huge difference to the access people with mobility difficulties have to public buildings and sites. These changes make access easier for everyone, whether they are disabled or not. If you are taking elderly people out for a visit, they may not be able to walk very far and this can be limiting. Seek out attractions that have good facilities for disabled people. Check out their offer on line. Many parks, gardens and wildlife sites have self-drive disabled buggies for hire; they may need to be booked in advance, some offer 'land trains' so that you can hop on to be taken around a site. Many museums have good disabled facilities including disabled toilets, hearing loops, large print interpretation, and portable seats. Check out websites or phone for advice – you may have to dig deep – for example a C4E forums member found an excellent bookable volunteer-run mobility vehicle available in a local park – the details were found in the Friends of the Park website!

Some attractions hold special events and activities aimed at elderly people, often supporting reminiscence work, art and craft activity, 'heritage' skill sharing or just providing social opportunities. Check out what your local museums, art galleries and heritage sites offer.

[The National Trust](#) looks after a wide variety of properties and protected land in England and Wales and the National Trust for Scotland does the same in Scotland. Most of the sites have special facilities for disabled people and good quality access. Sites often have manual wheelchairs for loan and many have self-drive or volunteer driven mobility vehicles to help you access gardens and parks. Where possible, wheelchairs are allowed into the Trust's historic houses. You can search their website for places to visit by location and see what facilities are available or download their regional access guide which outlines facilities for each Trust site.

The Trust admits the necessary companion, or carer, of a disabled visitor free of charge, on request, while the normal membership, or admission fee, applies to the disabled visitor, or you can apply for a companions free entry 'Access for All Admit One Card' which is made out in the name of the disabled person, not the companions.

[English Heritage](#) looks after historic sites and monuments in England. You can search their website for attractions by area or type and there is good information about the special facilities available at each location. English Heritage also offer the opportunity for disabled visitors to bring a companion or carer in for free.

The [RSPB](#) website lists all its reserves and each has an accessibility statement. Larger reserves have wheelchairs, sometimes powered, for loan. There are opportunities for disabled visitors to bring a companion or carer with them for free.

The [Rough Guide to Accessible Britain](#) provides advice on attractions which are disabled friendly

Staying connected

Staying in touch with friends and neighbours – can be difficult if mobility is tricky. This is where companion carers can be such a help by offering taxi services, or if the distance is too great, by organising ‘virtual meetings’ using Skype technology for example.

Lunch clubs, social groups, special interest organisations may well have activities which would appeal to older people. ‘Pensioners lunch days’ at local pubs often act as a good social hub too. Going alone can be daunting, so companion carers could go along too on that first visit.

Volunteering – so many organisations need volunteers to keep going. Whether its helping at a charity shop, offering a listening ear, delivering newsletters or being a steward at a museum – there are lots of opportunities for people of all ages. It may be easier to volunteer with a friend. The commitment can be as much or little as individuals want.

Older people have a huge life experience and wide range of skills which they can share. They have lived experience. Being older isn’t a barrier it can be a positive advantage, for example at heritage sites where volunteers who have lived through periods of history can help bring the past alive for younger visitors. Children too benefit from being in contact with older volunteers, particularly if grandparents do not live locally. Does the local school need someone to help with craft activities or support reading? Would the youth club like to learn card games? Carpentry, gardening, cooking, singing, rhymes and games, are all skills that older volunteers have and can share with the younger generation.