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7.1. Health Benefits and Medical Items

Medical card

Medical Card holders are entitled to a range of health services free of charge. These include doctors, prescribed drugs and hospital services.

Who qualifies? Most Medical Cards are granted on the basis of a means test and / or medical need. The HSE issues income guidelines each year. Each individual case is decided on its merits but you may qualify if your income is not much above the guideline figure and your medical costs are exceptionally high. This website will help you to see if you are eligible for a medical card or GP visit card. www.medicalcard.ie

If you are 70 or over and living in Ireland, you are entitled to a medical card regardless of your income or state of health. When applying it is important to put in all your outgoing expenses ie mortgage, heating, transport. **NB:** If you are a medical card holder do not ignore renewal form as cut off is on expiry day and a new application must be submitted.

Doctor only medical cards

A new 'doctor only' card was introduced in 2005 for people whose income is less than the income guidelines plus 25%. It covers them for visits to their GP. They are not covered for prescription drugs and medicines and they are not entitled to services such as HSE dental, ophthalmic and aural services.

For GP visit card and medical card applications, the HSE now considers your income after tax and PRSI is deducted, rather than total income. They also make allowances for expenses on childcare, on rent and mortgage costs and on travel to work.

The HSE also has the facility to grant discretionary medical or GP visit cards to individuals or families who exceed the income guidelines, but who have particular circumstances, e.g. chronic illness, that mean medical costs would result in undue hardship.

Contact any Health Centre or Local Health Office. or call the HSE infoline 1850 24 1850. or www.hse.ie/en/GPVisitCard for online application form.

Recommended Reading:

“Entitlements for People with Disabilities”

Supplied by Citizens Information or Comhairle, 7th Floor, Hume House, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4. Tel: 01- 605 90 00

7.1 Health Benefits and Medical Items

The drug payment scheme (DPS)

Under the Drugs Payment Scheme an individual or family has to pay the first 85 euro per month of expenses incurred for all approved prescribed drugs, medicines and appliances for use by that person or his/her family in that month.

The following items can be obtained through the medical card or the drugs payment scheme.

- Urethral catheter
- All silicone urethral catheter
- Urinary incontinence sheath (urinary condom drainage)
- Leg bags
- Overnight bags (2 litre)
- Strapping
- Gauze dressing
- Medical adhesives
- Surgical condom
- Glycerine suppositories

A number of items are not covered under the prescribed drugs list these are:

- K.Y. Jelly
- Incontinence sheets
- Wipes
- Non sterile disposable gloves

It is important to contact Spinal Injuries Ireland so that we may liaise with the Drugs Payment Board on your behalf to have these additional items included on your list.

How to apply?

You should register for this scheme by completing the registration form, which is available from pharmacies or from the health board.

Where to apply? At your local health board office.

7.1 Health Benefits and Medical Items

Long-term illness scheme

A person suffering from any of a specified list of conditions, who are not already medical card holders, may obtain without charge the drugs, medicines, medical and surgical appliances for the treatment of their condition.

What are the qualifying conditions?

Mental Handicap, Mental Illness (for people under 16 only), diabetes, insipidus, haemophilia, cerebral palsy, phenylketonuria, epilepsy, cystic fibrosis, spina bifida, muscular dystrophies, hydrocephalus, parkinsonism diabetes mellitus, acute leukaemia.

People who suffer from any of the illnesses listed above can apply to their local health board for admission to the long-term illness scheme.

Treatment benefit scheme

Who qualifies:

The department provides dental, optical and aural (hearing) benefits under the Treatment Benefit Scheme for insured workers who have enough contributions. Any person who satisfies the PRSI requirements at age 60 or 66 retains the entitlements for life. People who are receiving invalidity pension or long-term disability benefit would normally also be entitled to these benefits.

Treatment is provided by private dentists and opticians/ophthalmic surgeons. The requirement of having 13 weeks PRSI paid in a recent tax year does not apply to those on invalidity pension, carer's allowance, pre-retirement allowance, retirement pension, long-term unemployment assistance or disability benefit for over a year or people aged 55 or over who are signing for unemployment credits.

How to apply:

Application forms for dental benefit are available from dentists. Contact the Treatment Benefit Section to get names of dentist on the social welfare panel. For Optical and Aural Benefit application forms are available from opticians, aural suppliers or from: Treatment Benefit Section, Department of Social and Family Affairs, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.

7.1 Health Benefits and Medical Items

Occupational injuries benefit scheme

The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs operates a scheme of benefits for people:

- Injured or incapacitated by an accident at work.
- Injured while travelling directly to and from work.
- Contracting a disease due to the type of work they do.

There are a number of benefits available and there are different conditions attached to each benefit.

The benefits are as follows:

- Injury Benefit.
- Disablement Benefit.
- Incapacity Supplement.
- Constant Attendance Allowance.
- Medical Care Scheme.
- Death Benefits (including Widow's/Widower's Pension payable at a higher rate than the ordinary Contributory.
- Widow's/Widower's Pension).
- Orphan's Pension.
- Dependent Parent's Pension.
- Constant Attendance Allowance.
- Funeral Grant.

Find out more information on the occupational injuries benefit scheme by contacting:

**Injury Benefit Section,
Social Welfare Services Office,
157-164 Townsend Street,
Dublin 2. Tel: (01) 874 8444**

7.2. Personal Assistants

How personal assistant services work

Essentially a personal assistant service is a service for persons with significant disability who need assistance in aspects of daily living, at home, travelling, at work, college or socially. In some cases a person who has sustained a spinal cord injury may need some degree of assistance to help them return to an active life. The degree of assistance depends on the level of injury sustained and the level of mobility.

There are several associations who can help you find a personal assistant. Following assessment you will be approved for an agreed number of P.A hours per week. The service is funded through the Health Services Executive (HSE) in different areas of the country, and is currently administered through a number of service providers, e.g. Centre for Independent Living (CIL'S), Enable Ireland and The Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA).

You will then have a contract with one of these providers and following training you either recruit the personal assistants directly, or in conjunction with the service provider. You provide most of the training, while the service provider provides essential health, hygiene and safety training. Although the P.A is employed by the service provider, the individual is the P.A's line manager, determining the work to be done and the hours of duty. A timesheet is then submitted to the service provider in order for the P.A to be paid.

Accessing P.A. services

There is no one process for individuals to access PA services as it varies around the country. You can apply directly to the service providers, but may be more successful through the Disability Area Manager in your local HSE area.

Recent services have been organised through 'service packages' by Disability Area Managers. These services are contracted by the HSE directly with a service provider to provide a defined number of P.A hours to a named individual with a disability. The service provider then invoices the HSE for the cost of providing the service.

7.2. Personal Assistants

Home Help Service

The health boards, with the co-operation of various voluntary organisations, supply the a service to anyone who is:

- Sick or infirm, or a dependent of a sick or infirm person
- A woman availing of maternity services, or her dependents
- Any person who, if they did not have the assistance of a home help, would have to be maintained away from their home.

Home Help services are provided in order to assist people to remain in their own home and to avoid the necessity of entering institutional care. However, your Local Health Office is not legally obliged to provide these services. In practice, the HSE either provides the home help service directly or make arrangements with voluntary organisations to provide them.

Home Help usually assists people with normal household tasks although they may also help with personal care. If you get a home help, you may have to make a contribution towards the cost, even if you hold a medical card. In some cases, you may have to pay all the costs involved. If you are in a position to pay the costs involved, you may approach the Health Service Executive (HSE) for an arrangement whereby the HSE has all the responsibilities of the employer while you pay the costs.

How to apply

Apply to the local public health nurse, who assesses your need for the service and then processes the application to your local health office.

Home care support scheme

The home care support scheme (also known as a home care support package) is an administrative scheme, operated by the HSE. The scheme is aimed mainly at those requiring medium to high caring support to continue to live at home independently. As the Scheme is still largely in its infancy so there are no national guidelines regarding how admission to the scheme is decided or how income or means are assessed. Some HSE administrative areas assess income on the same basis as medical cards. Check with your local health office for more details on how the scheme operates in your area.

7.2. Personal Assistants

Useful Contacts, Resources and Websites

Centre for Independent Living (Carmichael House)

C.I.L main aim is to empower and enable people with disabilities to achieve independent living. They provide personal assistance services and travel clubs throughout Ireland.

Carmichael House, North Brunswick St., Dublin 7,
Tel. 01 8730455 or 01 8730986 Email:info@dublincil.org
To locate Regional Centres for Independent Living go to
www.dublincil.org

Cheshire Ireland

There are fourteen Cheshire homes and centres located in ten counties around the country. The Foundation also provides outreach services to people with disabilities in their own home.

Central Office Block 4, Bracken Business Park
Bracken Road, Sandyford Industrial Estate Co Dublin
Tel: No.: (01) 297 4100 www.cheshire.ie

Enable Ireland

Services include greater independence and access to activities such as training and education, employment, social and leisure pursuits

Enable Ireland National Services 32F Rosemount Park Drive,
Rosemount Business Park, Ballycoolin Road, Dublin 11
Tel: (0)1 872 7155 www.enableireland.ie

Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA)

Services include assisted living services, independent living apartments.

Aras Cuchulainn, Blackheath Drive, Clontarf, Dublin 3.
Tel: (01) 8338241 www.iwa.ie

Independent Living Institute www.independentliving.org

National Council on Independent Living www.ncil.org

7.2. Personal Assistants

Centres for Independent Living

Ireland has an active independent living movement, with 26 centres for independent Living. The centres support people with disabilities to achieve independent living, choice and control over their lives. First established in Ireland in 1992, the centres may offer a valuable resource of experience to the ageing sector.

C.I.L provide personal assistants services and travel clubs

Belfast: 61 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast, BT152 Northern Ireland.
Tel: 048 90875001 Email: cilbelfast@nicva.org

Carlow: Room 8, St. Fiacc's Leisure Centre, Graiguecullen, Co. Carlow.
Tel: 059 9130014 / 059 9130233 Email: carlowcilc@eircom.net

Cavan: Clare, Crosserlough, Co. Cavan. Tel: 049 8544792

Clare: Unit 11, Cloanroad Business Park, Cloanroad, Ennis, Co. Clare.
Tel: 065 6843488 Email: dpoclare@eircom.net

Cork: 20 Commons Road, Blackpool, Cork. Tel: 021 4391570
Email: corkcil@iol.ie www.corkcil.ie

Clonmel: C/O Presentation Convent, Dungarvan Rd, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary. Tel: 052 28667 Email: southtippcil@eircom.net

Donegal: 22 Meadow Bank, Long Lane, Letterkenny.
Tel: 074 9128945 / 074 9120463 Email: dcil@eircom.net

Dublin: FADE CIL, Unit 3 Railway St. Balbriggan Co. Dublin.
Tel: 01 8417685 Email: fadecil@eircom.net www.fadecil.com

Dublin: Carmichael House, North Brunswick Street, Tel: 01-8730455 or 8730986 Email: info@dublincil.org www.dublincil.org

Dublin: 7a Plato Business Park, Damastown, Dublin 15. Tel: 01-8270609

Dublin: MACRO Building, 1 Green St, Dublin 7. Tel: 01-8737039
Email: dublin7@dublincil.org

Galway: Unit 10, Town Park Centre, Tuam Rd, Galway. Tel: 091 773910
Email: mail@gcil.ie

7.2. Personal Assistants

Kilkenny: 5A Upper New St, Kilkenny Tel: 056 7723966
Email: cilkilkenny@eircom.net

Leitrim: Credit Union Offices, Upper Main St. Mohill, Co. Leitrim.
Tel: 071 9631813 Email: info@lapwd.com www.lapwd.com

Limerick West: NCW Business Centre, Sheehans Road, Newcastlewest,
Co. Limerick. Tel: 069 77320 / 77952 Email: wlcil@eircom.net
www.independentliving.pro.ie

Longford: Unit 3a, Leader House, Dublin Rd, Longford. Tel: 043 31702
Email: longfordcil@yahoo.co.uk

Mayo: The Parish Centre, Chapel Street, Castlebar, Co. Mayo.
Tel: 094-9034908 Email: plillismayocil@eircom.net

Monaghan: The Access Office, Catholic Hall, Carickmacross.
Tel: 042 9664058

Offaly: Kilcrutten Business Park, Cormack Street, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.
Tel: 0506 22832 / 24144 Email: ocil@eircom.net

Roscommon: RSGPWD The Resource Centre, Derrane, Co. Roscommon.
Tel: 090 6625852 / 6625172 Email: rsgcil@eircom.net

Sligo: Unit 4, Sligo Business Centre, Market Yard, Sligo. Tel: 071 9141978
Email: sbsligocil@eircom.net

Tipperary: Unit 3c, Shannon Development, Stradavoher, Thurles,
Co. Tipperary. Tel: 0504 24236 Email: tippcil@eircom.net www.tippcil.tk

Waterford: Ballinavella, Dunmore East, Waterford. Tel: 051 383232
Email: wcil@eircom.net

Westmeath: Kinnegad Community Centre, Kinnegad, Co. Westmeath.
Tel: 044 75610 Email: wmeathcil@eircom.net

Wexford: Westlands Community Centre, St. John's Drive, Wexford.
Tel: 053 42123 Email: eddcil@hotmail.com

Wexford: 33 Esmonde Gardens, Gorey, Co. Wexford. Tel: 055 84828
Email: goreycil@hotmail.com

7.3. Housing Grants

Housing Grants are available for disabled people in situations where changes need to be made to a home to make it suitably accessible. Grant assistance may be available for changes such as making the home wheelchair-accessible, moving light switches, door handles, installation of a ground floor bathroom and toilet, widening doors, provision of ramps etc. Grants under the scheme are paid through your local authority. This scheme will assist in the provision/adaptation of accommodation to meet the needs of people with a disability.

If you need to add a structure such as an accessible bathroom to your house you may need planning permission. It is important to be sure of what planning permission you need before you commence building a structure. An occupational therapist can assess and advise you on your daily living needs. They can help you decide what changes you need to make to your home and on the grants available to help with the cost. You can contact an occupational therapist through the community care section of your Local Health Office.

Housing options

Housing for people in need may take the form of

- ① Local Authority Housing
- ② Shared Ownership
- ③ Affordable Housing or housing provided by a housing association
- ④ Tenant Purchase Scheme

Technical Advice and information on Grants can be obtained from:
The Citizens Information Board (formerly Comhairle), Hume House, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4. Tel: +353 1 605 9000 Email: information@ciboard.ie or www.ableaccess.org

'Buildings for Everyone'

Building for Everyone is a book on house specifications and dimensions for people with disabilities or organisations of people with disabilities and is available from: **The National Disability Authority (NDA)**, 25 Clyde Road, Dublin 4. Tel: (01) 608 0400
Website: www.nda.ie

7.3. Housing

Local authority housing

County Councils must allocate houses in accordance with a scheme of 'letting priorities' more usually known as the 'points system'. The local authority may award particular priority to groups such as people with disabilities. For more details contact the housing section, which is situated in your nearest public service centre.

Local authority house purchase loans

People with disabilities may buy a private house in the normal way. You may not be discriminated against in accessing a commercial mortgage. If you cannot afford to buy a house in this way, you may be eligible for a local authority loan to buy a house or to get a local authority house to rent.

Under certain conditions house purchase loans can be obtained through local authority. For more details contact the Housing section, this is situated in your nearest public service centre.

Shared ownership scheme

This scheme is intended for those who cannot afford to buy a house in the traditional way. Initially, ownership of the house is shared between the owner and the local authority. At the start you must buy 40% of the value of the house which you may fund by way of a local authority loan or a commercial mortgage. You pay rent to the local authority for its share of the house and then you gradually buyout its share over a number of years.

Under certain circumstances the local authority may give you a mortgage loan to pay for the share you are purchasing from it or you can contribute cash of your own. The house can be new or second hand. There is an income test.

Tenant purchase scheme

Tenants of a local authority house for at least one year may apply to the relevant local authority to purchase it either outright or by way of shared ownership. The price of the house will be its market value, as determined by the local authority, in its existing state of repair and condition, less discounts. The structural condition of the house is taken into account and any increase in the market value due to improvements made to the house by the tenant will be disregarded in calculating the price. The discount is 3% of the value of the house for each year of tenancy of a local authority house (up to a maximum of 10 years), plus 3,809 euro.

7.3. Housing

Housing Adaptation Grant

A special grant is available from Local Authorities to carry out necessary works to meet the needs of a household member with a disability. The grant can be used where an extra room or structural change is required for the accommodation of a person with a disability.

Work that qualifies can include:

- Widening doors.
- Provision of ramps.
- Lowering light switches, door handles and the modification of a bedroom or bathroom.

Work that does not qualify includes:

- Replacement of windows
- General house repairs
- Work which will benefit the house (the work must benefit the person)

The grant is worth up to 95% of the cost approved by the Local Authority (to a maximum of 30,000 euro) and grant-aided work must be carried out by contractors who have a current C2 Certificate or Tax Clearance Certificate from the Revenue Commissioners. Prioritisation of eligibility for the Housing Grant for People with a Disability will be on the basis of medical and financial need with 95% of the approved cost of work available to those with annual household incomes of less than 30,000 euro, tapering to 30% for those with annual household incomes of 54,001 to 65,000 euro.

NB Work must **not** commence until a decision is received from the local authority. Where the house is owned by the local authority, the local authority will meet the full cost of any work deemed necessary. Where the house is less than a year old, or where a new house is being built specifically to meet the needs of a person with a disability a grant of up to 14,500 euro is available. If you need advice about how to apply for this grant and to find out more about the requirements you can refer to:

- The community occupational therapists located in the community care services of your local health board.
- The housing section of your County Council or Corporation.

7.3. Housing

Other grants

Special home improvement grants are also available to adapt houses for people with disabilities from your local Area Health Board or Local Authority.

Mobility Aids Grant Scheme - People on low incomes needing equipment such as level access showers, grab rails etc can apply for the Mobility Aids Grant which means their application will move through system more quickly. The maximum grant available will be 6,000 euro. You can employ an OT privately and recoup expenses up to 200 euro

The capital assistance scheme Provides assistance to housing associations, through the local authorities towards capital costs for accommodation, generally for one or two bedroomed units, to meet special housing needs such as those of the elderly, disabled, homeless or smaller families.

Rent supplement A rent supplement is available from the Community Welfare Officer for people in receipt of a disability payment who wish to live in private rented accommodation. The allowance is means tested but the 120 euro which may be earned from rehabilitative employment is disregarded for rent supplement.

Essential repairs grant The Essential Repairs Grant scheme is administered by the local authorities. The scheme is directed primarily at providing grant aid to elderly people living in poor housing conditions. It is intended to facilitate having those conditions improved sufficiently to allow people to remain in their homes for their lifetime and to prevent them having to move to a different area or to be rehoused by the local authority. The grant may cover 100% of the cost of the works.

Central heating grants introduced for the installation of central heating in existing local authority rented dwellings, which lacked such facilities. The scheme is administered locally and the planning and execution of works is a matter for each local authority. Under the programme a grant of 5,600 euro or up to 80% of the cost, whichever is the lesser, is payable for each house. The balance of the cost is met by the housing authority. In addition to central heating facilities the work may also include related energy improvement and smoke detection measures.

7.3. Housing

Affordable housing scheme

The affordable housing scheme allows lower income house buyers to buy newly constructed homes and apartments in areas where property prices have created an affordability gap for lower income house buyers.

These properties are offered for sale to eligible first- time purchasers at prices significantly less than their actual market value. The houses are bought with a mortgage provided by the local authority.

Local Authority tenants and tenants of houses provided by voluntary bodies do not need to satisfy the income test. You are unlikely to be accepted for this scheme if your only income is a social welfare payment. Households may be entitled to a mortgage subsidy depending on their income in the previous tax year. If they are surrendering a tenant purchase house, a local authority house or a house provided by a voluntary body, they have the option of going for the mortgage subsidy or the Mortgage Allowance Scheme.

For further information contact your Local Authority.

Disabled person's new house grant

This is a grant available to people with disabilities or to the family of the person with disabilities who are having their own house built to cover the cost of making the new house accessible at construction stage to a maximum of 14,500 euro. If you are building or renovating a house you may be entitled to a refund of VAT on aids and appliances for use by a disabled person. This includes bathroom fittings, walk in baths, lifting seats, hoists etc. VAT refund is also available on aids and appliances designed to assist a disabled person to overcome his/her disability in performing daily functions or in exercise or education e.g a computer.

This grant is available to adapt a house to meet the accommodation needs of a person with a disability within the first year of the house's completion. Where the costs are being met by the state, or by any public or local authority, VAT relief will not be due.

For further information and the appropriate claim form VAT 61A contact: VAT Repayments Section, Government Buildings, Kilrush Road, Ennis, Co. Clare Tel: (065) 684 9000

7.4. Back to Work and Retraining

Workplace/Equipment Adaptation Grant

If you have a disability and think your workplace could be made more accessible or your work equipment could be easier to use, your employer may be able to get a grant from FÁS towards the cost of adapting premises or equipment.. Examples of adaptations for which a grant may be given are minor building modifications such as ramps or modified toilets, alarm systems with flashing lights, equipment adaptation such as voice synthesisers for computers or amplifiers for telephones.



Community Employment Scheme (CE)

This is an employment scheme funded by FÁS. It is designed to help people who are long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged people to get back to work by offering part-time and temporary placements in jobs based within local communities.

There are 2 options under this scheme

- ① Part time integration for those aged 21 to 35.
- ② Part time job option for those aged 35 and over.

Under both schemes you can work 19 hours a week and are paid an allowance by FÁS.

Back to Work Enterprise Allowance

The Back to Work Enterprise Allowance scheme encourages people receiving certain social welfare payments in Ireland to become self-employed. People taking part in the back to work enterprise allowance scheme, retain a percentage of their social welfare payment for four years.

7.4 Back to Work and Retraining

You can avail of the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance if you are:

- Setting up a self-employment business that has been approved in advance in writing by a job facilitator or partnership company
- Receiving jobseeker's benefit or jobseeker's allowance for at least 3 years.

From March 2006 you can qualify for the BTWEA after 2 years on the live register. Periods spent on the Back to Education scheme or FÁS course JII, CE, revenue assist qualify as periods of unemployment.

Back to Work Allowance

The Back to Work Allowance (BTWA) scheme operated by the Department of social and family affairs allows people to return to work and keep some of their social welfare payments, such as Disability Allowance, for up to four years. People who have been receiving unemployment benefit or assistance for at least 2 years (previously, this was at least 3 years) and are aged at 23 years or over can qualify for the scheme.

Who Qualifies?

- You can also qualify for the scheme if you have been receiving certain other social welfare payments including disability allowance and carer's allowance for at least 15 months (12 months if you are over 50).
- The work involved must be likely to develop into a lasting job, be for a minimum of 20 hours a week and last for at least 12 months.

Periods spent on the Back to Education Scheme, the job initiative or CE scheme will count as periods of unemployment. Under the scheme you are paid 75% of your social welfare payment for the first year, 50% for the second year, 25% in the third year, along with your earnings. While on the Back to Work Allowance, if your household income (including income of your spouse/partner) is less than 317.43 euro, you will retain any secondary benefits you already have such as free travel, fuel allowance, free electricity allowance, etc. You will also retain your medical card.

How to apply:

The Department of Social and Family Affairs, P.O. Box 3840, Dublin 2.

Tel: (0)1 874 8444 www.welfare.ie

There is a lot of useful information regarding disability and employment available from the Workway website www.workway.ie

7.4 Back to Work and Retraining

Back to Education Allowance

The BTEA encourages unemployed people to pursue approved second or third level courses of education. Participants receive a standard rate of payment which is not means tested. You can also get a cost of education Allowance of 400 euro at the start of the academic year in September. For current information on the schemes qualifying conditions, please contact your local Social Welfare Office or the Employment Support Services (Headquarters), Back to Education Schemes, Gandon House, Amiens Street, Dublin 1. Tel: (01) 7043756

Disability Allowance / Invalidity Pension

Disability Allowance is a weekly payment that you may get if:

- You have a disability that is expected to last for at least one year, and
- You are aged 16 to 66. If you are on disability allowance you may work in rehabilitative employment and have the first 120.00 euro of your earnings disregarded when calculating weekly means. You can do further educational courses while getting the disability allowance, without them affecting your payments.

Job Initiative Scheme

This scheme is designed to provide full-time employment experience for people who have been long-term unemployed. Jobs are advertised through FÁS, the Local Employment Service, Local Resource Centres etc.

FÁS Training Courses

FÁS is the state training and employment authority. In each office there is a placement officer whose job it is to provide you with training, education and course options. FÁS provides various financial supports in the form of allowances to assist participants of training courses, and grants or subventions to encourage employers to support training programmes as well as a supported employment programme for people with disabilities. For more information on jobs and training contact your local FÁS office, or access their web site at www.fas.ie. Tel: (01) 607 0500

Wage Subsidy Scheme

This scheme is operated by FÁS. It offers financial support for employers who employ certain people with disabilities on a full-time basis. Sometimes the nature of a disability can restrict an employee's productivity in comparison with other staff, irrespective of his or her ability to do a job.

7.4 Back to Work and Retraining

In situations where this restriction results in a loss of productivity for the employer, the wage subsidy scheme (WSS) allows the employer make up the shortfall through grant assistance. This scheme offers financial support to employers to encourage them to employ people with disabilities whose work productivity levels may be affected. This allowance can be up to 50% of salary.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

Vocational training opportunities scheme (**VTOS**) is an educational opportunities scheme for unemployed persons which is funded by the Department of Education and Science. If you are getting disability allowances you will get a payment equivalent to the maximum rate of your current social welfare payment. It is operated through the VEC's. More on this scheme under the education section.7.6

Revenue Job Assist

Revenue Job Assist is a three year tapered scheme of additional tax allowance for people returning to work after an absence of one year or more. Under this scheme you can receive an additional tax credit when you take on a job. Your employer will also receive additional tax-relief.

To Qualify:

- You must be claiming one parent family allowance (OPFA) / disability or other welfare allowances for 12 months.
- Time spent on CE, JI, and FÁS training course may count as qualifying time.
- The employment must be a minimum of 30 hrs a week and capable of lasting for 12 months.

Secondary Benefits Retained

- Medical Card / Fuel Allowance
- Back to School Clothing / Footware
- You can keep your secondary benefits if your household income does not exceed 317.43 euro per week, you may also be eligible for the family income supplement.

Contact your jobs facilitator in your local Social and Family Affairs Office, your local employment service centre.

7.4 Back to Work and Retraining

National Learning Network

National Learning Network (formerly called NTDI) is Ireland's largest non-government training organisation with more than 50 purpose built training and employment facilities catering for around 4,500 students each year. The organisation has centres throughout Ireland,

For general information about National Learning Network contact:

Tel (01) 2057268 www.rehab.ie

For information on Employment and Legislation visit www.equality.ie

The Aisling Foundation

The O2 Ability Awards are the first Irish business awards for best practice in the employment and inclusion of people with disabilities. The O2 Ability Awards were created and designed by The Aisling Foundation, in association with strategic partners Access Ability, who manage the assessment process. www.theaislingfoundation.org

Local Employment Service Network

The LESN is an innovative network of services for the unemployed. If you are long term unemployed (registered unemployed for 6 months or more) and looking for work, you can use the local employment service for advice and guidance. There are 27 local employment service networks in Ireland. Services include, employment support, career guidance, job search resources, information service and job club.

Other Schemes/Grants

- Employment Support Scheme (ESS).
- Personal Reader Grant.
- Job Interview Interpreter Grant (JIIG).
- Supported Employment Programme.
- Employee Retention Grant Scheme (ERGS).

The purpose of the retention grant is to encourage and assist employers in the private sector in retaining existing employees who develop a disability through sickness or injury while in employment.

You may also be able to benefit from other FÁS programmes and services. These include: FÁS training courses, apprenticeships, community employment, social economy, traineeships, job clubs, net college, supported employment programme for people with disabilities. For further information contact your local FÁS employment services office.

Useful websites for training courses

Able Access has an excellent website for information on Disability
www.ableaccess.org

AHEAD - Association of Higher Education Access and Disability
www.aheadweb.org

AONTAS National Association of Adult Education promotes the importance of adult and community education as a key part of lifelong learning. www.aontas.com

Assist Ireland Provides information on assistive technology and a directory of products available from Irish suppliers
www.assistireland.ie or www.enablemart.com

The Workway project which was an IBEC/ ICTU initiative set up under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness to increase awareness and promote the employment of people with disabilities in the private sector. www.workway.ie

FÁS Ireland's National Training and Employment Authority www.fas.ie

National Learning Network www.rehab.ie/nln

The National Courses Database www.qualifax.ie

Department of Education and Science www.education.ie

The National Adult Literacy Agency www.nala.ie

Roslyn Park College, Sandymount, Dublin 4
www.roslynpark-college.ie

Citizens Information (Online Access to Services, Information and Support) www.citizensinformation.ie

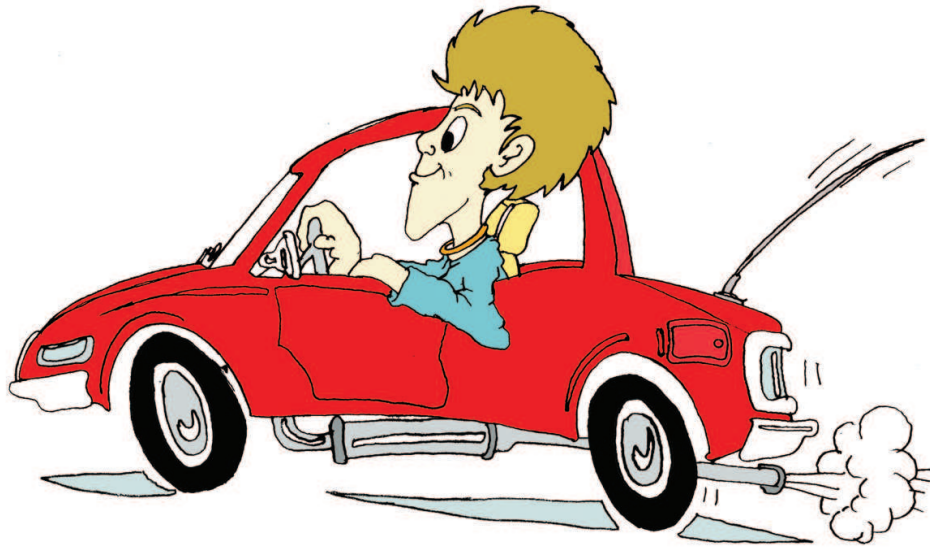
Evening Classes & Adult Education www.nightcourses.com

Irish Vocational Education Association (VEC) www.ivea.ie

www.disABILITY.ie click on employment

Further Education and Training Awards Council
www.fetac.ie/directory/dir_useful_webs.htm

7.5. Buying a Car



©

Disabled Drivers and Passengers Tax Relief

This scheme provides for the exemption from road tax, VRT and VAT for vehicles specially constructed or adapted for use by disabled drivers or passengers. The scheme also allows for the repayment of excise duty on fuel.

To avail of these reliefs certain medical and vehicle criteria must be met.

- 1 A primary Medical Certificate must be obtained from your local Health Board showing that you meet the medical criteria.
- 2 The vehicle on which the relief is claimed must be specially constructed or adapted to take account of the disability of the driver or passenger and purchased from a registered trader.

The maximum combined VRT and VAT relief for a disabled driver is 9,525 euro on a vehicle up to 2000cc. Vehicles over 2000cc do not qualify for relief for a disabled driver. The maximum combined VRT and VAT relief for a disabled passenger is 15,875 euro on a vehicle up to 4000cc.

Before the vehicle is registered, adaptations **MUST** be completed. The net adapted cost of a vehicle for a disabled passenger must be at least 10% of the cost of the vehicle. A car which qualifies for tax relief cannot be sold for at least two years.

7.5 Buying a Car

A person admitted to the scheme may also apply for a repayment of excise duty on fuel used in the vehicle, for the transport of the person with the disability, up to a maximum of 600 gallons or 2,728 litres per year.

What is involved in purchasing a car?

Before buying your car, contact: Disabled Driver Section, Revenue Commissioners, Freepost, Coolshanagh, Monaghan, Co Monaghan. Tel: (047) 38010, and ask for their booklet entitled '**Vehicles for People with Disabilities**' and an application form for tax relief. You can also learn more on www.revenue.ie or www.citizensinformation.ie click on Travel and Recreation then click on Transport and Disability

Where do you start?

- 1 First do a rough costing, allow 1/3 off the cash price when estimating the net cost of a car as the driver. On new cars most garages give a cash discount and allow an additional fleet discount for disabled drivers.
- 2 The VRT/VAT on a vehicle is based on the open market selling price, this would be the list price less cash/fleet discount, not trade-in allowance.

The net cost of the vehicle is equal to the open market selling price, less the relevant rate of VRT, less the VAT. You are required to keep the vehicle in your possession for at least two years.

- 3 It is worth remembering that there is a Motorised Transport Grant available from the Health Board, towards the purchase of a vehicle for returning to work. Also, participation on FÁS community employment schemes have been accepted as returning to work, when claiming this grant.
- 4 Submit the application complete with Primary Medical Certificate to the revenue, and if all is in order they will issue you with a letter of authorisation for remission of VRT, a DD1 Application and a Schedule Three Declaration Form. This may sound like a lot of form filling, but the forms are straightforward and the Disabled Driver Section in Monaghan are very helpful.

7.5 Buying a Car

- 5 Next, get your [Primary Medical Certificate](#) from your local Health Board and an [application for exemption of VRT](#) from:
Disabled Driver Section, Revenue Commissioners, Freepost, Coolshanagh, Monaghan, Co Monaghan. Tel: (047) 38010

When you have picked your car, get as many quotations as you can for insurance. There are obviously many variables taken into account when an insurance quote is sought, our advice is to submit the proposal forms well in advance of purchase, some insurance brokers have discounted deals with insurance companies so make sure you shop around.

Note: If you are a newly disabled driver, you must notify your insurance company of a new or worsening disability, or if there is a 'change in your health', otherwise they may not pay out on any claims in the future if you have withheld information from them.

When you are purchasing the car

Give the letter of authorisation for remission of VRT to the garage and complete the DD1 Form. This document complete with the original invoice for the purchase and adaptation costs, marked 'Paid in Full' must be sent to the Vehicle Registration Office. The garage usually does this. The VAT refund and the claim form for the refund of excise duty on fuel are usually sent out within eight weeks.

The Vehicle Registration Office will issue a Vehicle Registration Certificate, with disabled drivers exemption. This certificate, with completed road tax form, insurance certificate and drivers license should be sent to your local motor tax office for an exempted road tax disc.

Fleet Discounts to Disabled Drivers

Almost all the motor manufacturers offer discounts to disabled drivers, who are in receipt of the Primary Medical Certificate. This discount is typically 3%, but some companies, such as Ford, provide a blanket discount off a vehicle, and others, such as Fiat, offer a much larger discount of 6%. The best advice seems to be, check the discount available to you, establish if the discount is included in 'extras' such as power steering and automatic transmission. Establish if the discounts are included before or after the VAT/VRT rebates.

7.5 Buying a Car



Disabled Parking Permits

European Parking Cards are available to people living in Ireland with certain disabilities, whether they are drivers or passengers. The parking card can be used by a disabled person in any vehicle in which he or she is travelling. The parking card is valid for 2 years from date of issue. Generally, the card is not issued to anyone under 5 years of age. You will need 25euro on submission of application form, two passport photos and a copy of Vehicle Registration Certificate, with Disabled Drivers exemption.

Disabled Parking Permits, driving assessment and advice are available from

The Disabled Drivers Association, Ballindine, Co Mayo.

Tel: 094 64266/64054 www.iol.ie/~ability

The Irish Wheelchair Association, Blackheath Drive, Clontarf, Dublin 3.

Tel: 01 8338241. www.iwa.ie

For driving assessment and advice

Transport & Mobility Consultants-Ireland, (TMC-I) 'Ardtullagh Lodge',
19 Glenmaule Pines, Greenane, Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow. Tel: 0404 43854 /
087-2635025 www.dir.ie/index

Vehicle Conversions / Adaptions

A full list of companies who carry out vehicle adaptations for both disabled drivers and passengers including, Hand Controls, Servo Clutch Systems, Swivel Seats, Hoists, Lifts and Ramps. Suppliers & Fitters of Wheelchair Lifts and Ramps, and boot or roof-top stowage is available from the Spinal Injuries Ireland office, Tel: 01-2355317 or info@spinalinjuries.ie



7.5 Buying a Car

Motor Tax Exemption

A vehicle which has been admitted to the scheme will be entitled to an exemption from payment of annual motor tax, i.e. road tax, as follows.

- In the case of a new vehicle or vehicle which is being registered in the state for the first time the relief will be granted on application to your local motor taxation office on presentation of the vehicle registration certificate.
- If the vehicle had been previously registered in the state before you entered the scheme, the central repayments office will issue you with a certificate of approval which should be presented by you to your local motor taxation office.

The motor tax offices are listed in the telephone directory under local authorities.

Points to consider when buying a car

You should choose your car carefully and make sure it suits your needs, and the needs of other family members who might use it.

Things to bear in mind

- Door widths and size of door opening.
- Door and grab handles.
- Edge of seat to ground.
- Space between seat and steering wheel.
- Sill heights to ground and to floor of car.
- Headroom if remaining in wheelchair.
- Boot stowage space.
- Back seat stowage space for mobility aids.
- Height of the boot from the ground and is it possible for you to reach the boot to close it.

7.5 Buying a Car

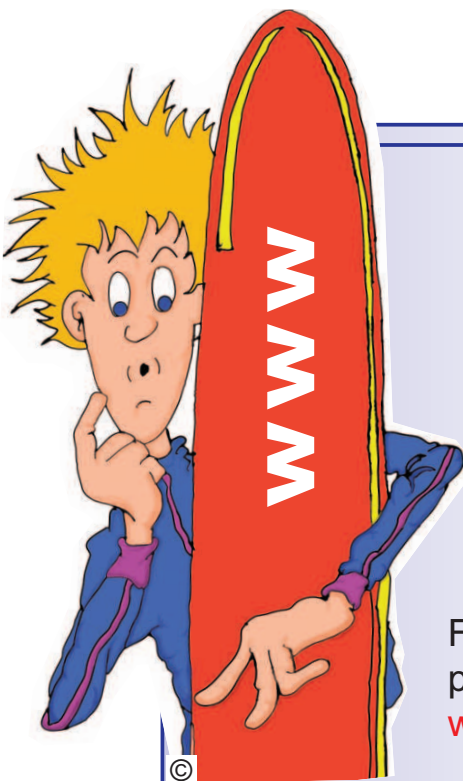
Car Insurance

The Insurance Federation of Ireland insists that disabled drivers are not charged extra based on their disability. If you have difficulty obtaining car insurance you should contact The Insurance Federation of Ireland, Insurance House, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2.

Motorised Transport Grant

The Motorised Transport Grant is a means tested Health Service Executive (HSE) payment for people in Ireland with disabilities who need to buy a car. This payment is also for disabled people who need to have a car or other vehicle adapted in order to enable them to drive and, as a result, earn a living.

Apply for a motorised transport grant to the disability services manager in your local health office.



Vehicles for people with disabilities.

*For more information log on to www.revenue.ie under 'Leaflets & Guides' then click on **Vehicle Registration Tax** - next look for VRT 7, Vehicles for people with disabilities.*

Further information and a list of wheelchair parking bays around Ireland can be found on www.disABILITY.ie click on Motoring

Also have a look at <http://dir.ie/index.php> and www.citizensinformation.ie click on **Travel Abroad** then click **Travel and Recreation** then click on **Transport and Disability**.

7.5 Buying a Car

Exemption from toll charges

Disabled drivers and disabled passengers with specially adapted vehicles in Ireland are exempt from toll charges on national roads throughout Ireland. Toll charges are currently in operation on the following four national roads in Ireland:

- East-Link Toll Bridge (Dublin)
- West-Link Toll Bridge (Dublin)
- North-Link M1 Toll (Drogheda By-Pass)
- M4 Toll (Kinnegad-Enfield-Kilcock)
- Dublin Port Tunnel

Rules for exemption

You will need to complete an application form, you will then be issued with a concessionary travel card. When you get your card it may state "West Link Toll Bridge" on it. Even so, this is the card you use for free passage through the East-Link, West-Link, M1 Toll and Port Tunnel. If you do not have your concessionary travel card with you, you must pay the normal toll at the barrier. The disabled person's parking card is not same as the concessionary travel card and they are not interchangeable.

More information go to www.drivinginfo.ie **Disabled Persons** section.

Where to apply

For an application form for a concessionary travel card contact:

Toll Administrator
Concessionary Travel Section,
Transroute Tunnel Operations,
East Wall Road,
Dublin 3

Application forms are also available from
Spinal Injuries Ireland offices
Tel: 01 2355317
E-mail: info@spinalinjuries.ie

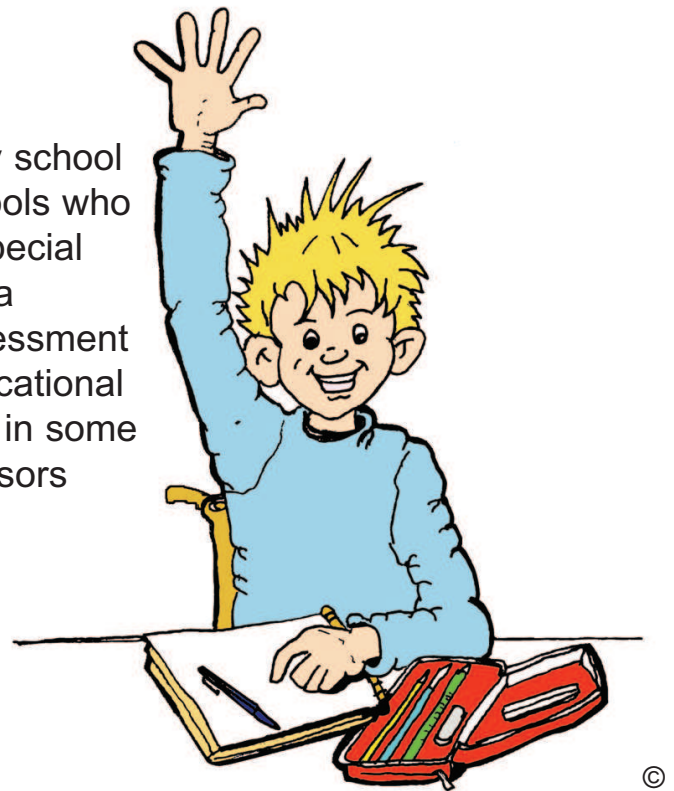


7.6. Education

Primary Education

The Department of Education and Science is responsible for primary school services. Children in primary schools who have been assessed as having special educational needs are entitled to a response to their needs. The assessment is carried out by the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) or, in some cases, by approved private assessors

Some main stream schools have made provisions for children with a disability e.g. ramps & accessible toilets. The policy is to have integrated education as far as possible.



Secondary Education

The Department of Education and Science gives a grant to schools to allow them to purchase equipment for use by students with a disability in second-level schools.

The scheme applies to a student with a physical disability or a student who has a communications disability that makes ordinary communication through speech and writing impossible.

The purpose of the scheme is to provide the student with equipment that will be of direct educational benefit to him/her. An example of such equipment would be a computer, tape recorder, word processor, drafting machine, induction loop, braille equipment and software. The school may apply to the national council for special education's local special education needs organiser for these funds.

The equipment is kept in the school. However, the Board of Management may give permission for a student to use the equipment at home. The equipment remains the property of the school and will usually be passed on to another student or to another school, when the school no longer needs it.

Third Level Education

Students with a disability may apply for admission to a third level institution through the normal process - you apply to the Central Admissions Office (CAO). Some institutions reserve a number of places for people with disabilities and you must apply directly to the individual institution for such a place.

The direct admission system varies from one institution to another and you need to find out what the closing date for such applications is and what the criteria for a place are. You may apply through both systems for the same academic year and if you get an offer in each system, you may choose whichever suits you best.

Specific provision for students with disabilities

Most third level institutions have disability liaison officers. The disability liaison officer may provide a number of services including assistance with applying for a reserved place, finding suitable accommodation and arranging any special access requirements and provisions for sitting examinations. Some institutions reserve a number of student accommodation places for students with disabilities.

A special fund to help third level students with a physical disability is administered by the Department of Education. Apply to the third level institutions before September. Contact the student counsellor or disabilities support office at the college. Not all schools and colleges are accessible so it is important to decide what course you wish to do and find a college that suits your needs.

AHEAD is an independent voluntary organisation working to promote improved access for persons with disabilities to Third Level Education in Ireland. www.aheadweb.org. Tel (01) 475 2386

Department of Education and Science for further information on all aspects of education for people with disabilities is available from Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Tel: (090) 648 3600
Website: www.education.ie or check out www.disABILITY.ie go to Education - Third Level Education

National Training Development

National Training Development Ireland (NTDI) is the largest non-government training organisation with over 40 centres throughout Ireland. No formal entry requirements needed for any NTDI courses and no fees.

Grants

Students with disabilities are eligible for third level grants on the same basis as other students (see below). There are some grants specifically for people with disabilities. A special fund to help third level students with disabilities is administered by the Department of Education and Science. You should apply directly to the third level institution at the beginning of the academic year (September/October). The National University of Ireland may award a special grant to a student with a disability attending their college.

Application forms are available from The Registrar, National University of Ireland, 49 Merrion Square, Dublin 2. Tel: (01) 439 2424 www.nui.ie

Higher Education Grants Scheme:

Provides means tested maintenance grants for students attending a full-time undergraduate course of at least two years at publicly funded third level institutions in Ireland and other EU member states. It also covers postgraduate courses in approved institutions in Ireland. Apply to your local authority.

Third Level Maintenance Grants Scheme for Trainees (TLT scheme):
For students attending two year national certificate and three year national diploma courses in Institutes of Technology.

VEC Scholarship scheme: Provides maintenance grants for students progressing from a diploma course to a degree course.

PLC Scheme: For students attending post leaving certificate courses of at least one year duration. Apply to your local vocational educational committee (VEC) for these schemes.

Trinity College assistive technology service www.tcd.ie/disability/services

Education

Additionally students receive a training allowance and retain statutory benefits e.g. free travel. There is a wide range of courses available including distant learning. Part-time courses can be tailored to suit the individual and there is also an equipment placing service.

For further information contact: www.Rehab.ie or

NTDI, Head Office, Roslyn Park, Beech Road, Sandymount, Dublin 4.
Tel: (01) 2057200. Serving Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Wexford, and Wicklow.

NTDI, Patrick's St., Tullamore, Co. Offaly. Tel: (0506) 41044
Serving Cavan, Laois, Longford, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly, and Westmeath.

NTDI, Dosco, Ind. Est., Cork. Tel: (021) 361283
Serving Cork, Clare, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, and Waterford.

NTDI, Parkmore Ind. Est., Galway. Tel: (091) 753096
Serving Donegal, Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo.

FÁS, CERT and TEAGASC

FÁS, CERT & TEAGASC are the main state agencies, which provide training for the unemployed and people with a disability.

Further information:

FÁS 27/33 Upper Baggot Street, Dublin 4. Tel: (01) 684181 or visit their website www.fas.ie

VTOS Scheme

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

If you are over 21, unemployed and on disability allowance, the dept of education has a scheme called the VTOS scheme, courses are provided free of charge.

Courses last up to 2 years and include a wide range of subjects. This scheme is aimed at providing education and training opportunities, which will develop peoples employability. To obtain a list of V.E.C. colleges around Ireland contact: The Adult Education Department of your Vocational Education Committee (VEC) or The Curriculum Development Unit (CDU), Sundrive Rd, Dublin 12. Tel: (01) 4535487 or visit their website www.ivea.ie

Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)

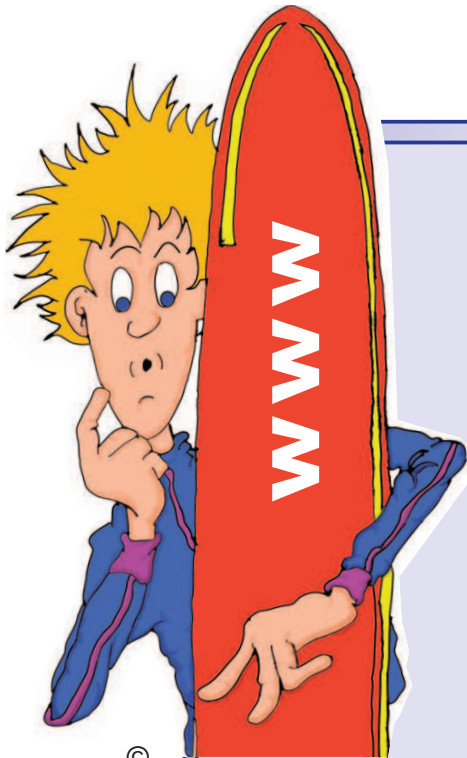
If you wish to pursue a full-time or third level course, you may qualify for a Back to Education Allowance (BTEA). There are a number of ways in which unemployed people, lone parents and people getting certain disability payments can return to full-time education (second and third level) and receive the Back to Education Allowance paid by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. You may also retain secondary benefits such as Rent/Mortgage Supplement.

The allowance is payable for the duration of the course including all holiday periods. It is not means tested so you can work without it effecting your payment. Any maintenance grant you may receive will not affect your payment, you will also keep any secondary benefits you already have.

For current information on the schemes eligibility conditions, please consult with your Social Welfare Local Office or Employment Support Service (Headquarters), Back to Education Schemes, Gandon House, Amiens Street, Dublin 1, (01) 7043759, (01) 7043912.

Recommended Reading (*Students Accessing Third Level Education in Ireland -A Handbook for Students with Disabilities.*)

Contact: **Ahead** (01) 4752386



For more information contact:

Back to Education Allowance, Local Social Welfare Office or the Department Information Services Tel: (01) 8748444.

Information on Social Welfare Services is also available on the Internet www.welfare.ie

The Dept. of Education and Science
Marlborough Street Dublin 1.
Tel: (01) 889 2388

The Special Education Support Service
c/o Laois Education Centre, Block Road,
Portlaoise, Co. Laois. Tel: (0502) 402/72409

7.7. Social Welfare Payments

Benefits and Allowances

In order to get any benefit, you must apply, nobody is going to come along and offer you services. If you think you may be entitled to any benefit you should apply unless you are absolutely sure that you don't qualify.

Husbands and wives may each apply separately for benefits as in some cases they may be individually entitled.

Most payments are made by the Department of Social and Family Affairs or the Health Service Executive (HSE). There is a statutory independent appeals system for social welfare payments. If you are refused a social welfare payment or get a lesser amount than you expected, you may appeal within 21 days to:

The Social Welfare Appeals Office, D'Olier House, D'Olier St, Dublin 2.
Tel: LoCall 1890 747 434. You should provide new additional information in order for your appeal to be considered.

Recommended Book:

'Entitlements for People with Disabilities' available from:
Comhairle, 7th Floor, Hume House, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.
Tel: 01- 605 90 00

What is Disability Benefit?

Disability Benefit is a payment made by the Department of Social and Family Affairs to those in Ireland who are aged under 66 and incapable of work because of illness and have enough social insurance contributions.

How to Qualify

- To qualify for Disability Benefit you must:
- Be incapable of work due to illness
- Satisfy the PRSI conditions and be under age 66

The application form for Disability Benefit is available from your family doctor (GP) or hospital doctor. Your completed application form should be returned to your local Social Welfare Local Office or send it to:

The Department of Social and Family Affairs, P.O. Box 1650, Dublin 1.
Tel: (01) 6797777

What are the PRSI Conditions?

260 paid PRSI contributions since first starting work, and either 39 paid or credited PRSI contributions in the relevant tax year on which your claim is based, or, 26 paid PRSI contributions in both the relevant tax year and the tax year immediately before the relevant tax year. The Relevant Tax Year for a claim is the second last complete tax year before the start of the Benefit Year. The Benefit Year starts on the first Monday in January.

What is Disability Allowance?

Disability Allowance is a weekly allowance paid to people with a disability who are aged 16 or over and under the age of 65. Your disability must be expected to last for at least one year and the allowance is subject to both a medical suitability and a means test.

Who can Qualify?

To qualify for Disability Allowance you must:

- Be medically suitable, that is, have an injury, disease or illness or have a physical or mental disability, which has continued or may be expected to continue for at least one year. As a result of this condition you are 'disabled' in undertaking work which would otherwise be suitable for a person of your age, experience and qualifications.
- Be aged between 16 and 65 and satisfy a means test.
- Satisfy a means test.
- Satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition

Persons for whom Domiciliary Care Allowance is being claimed will automatically be invited to claim Disability Allowance before reaching age 16.

What is Occupational Injuries Benefit Scheme?

If you are injured at work or on route to or from work or have contracted a disease due to the type of work you do, you may be entitled to benefits under the Occupational Injuries Scheme. This includes Disablement Benefit, Incapacity Supplement for those permanently incapable of work, Constant Attendance Allowance and medical care.

Social Welfare Payments

Disablement Benefit is a long term payment for those who sustain a loss of physical or mental faculty. You should apply for Disablement Benefit before payment of Injury Benefit stops. In order to qualify, you must be in employment which is insurable at PRSI Class A, B, D, J, or M.

Apply for Claim Form (OB21) from your Local Welfare Office or the Department of Social and Family Affairs www.welfare.ie

What is Invalidity Pension?

Invalidity Pension is a social insurance payment made to people in Ireland who have been incapable of work and receiving Disability Benefit for at least twelve months before the date of their claim.

(This applies to those who will continue to be incapable of work for at least a further twelve months). At age 65, the rate of payment increases to the same rate as Retirement Pension. Invalidity Pension is taxable. You are entitled to a Free Travel Pass if you are receiving an Invalidity Pension. You may also be entitled to the Household Benefits Package.

How do I Qualify?

To qualify, you must satisfy both medical and social insurance (PRSI) conditions.

What are the Medical Conditions?

- 1 To qualify, you must have been incapable of work for at least 12 months and be likely to be incapable of work for at least another 12 months. (you will probably have been getting Disability Benefit or Disability Allowance for that period.).
- 2 Be permanently incapable of work. (In certain cases of very serious incapacity, you can transfer directly from another social welfare payment or from your job to Invalidity Pension) or be over age 60 and have a serious illness or incapacity.

Invalidity Pension, Disability Allowance, Disablement Benefit

Social Welfare Services Office, Government Buildings, Ballinalee Road, Longford. Tel: (01) 704 3000 or (043) 45211.

Respite Care Grant

The respite care grant is a cash payment made to carers by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. In previous years it has been paid to those getting carer's allowance, carer's benefit, constant attendance allowance or prescribed relative's allowance. The Health Service Executive (HSE) is responsible for payment of the respite care grant to people getting domiciliary care allowance and no other payment.

With effect from June 2005, you don't have to be receiving a payment for caring in order to get the respite care grant. The only people excluded are those getting an unemployment payment (because you have to be available for work) or those who are working outside the home for more than 15 hours per week. The grant is paid in June each year.

What is Carer's Allowance?

The Carer's Allowance is a payment for carers who look after certain people in need of full-time care and attention and who satisfy a means test. Carers who are providing care to more than one person may be entitled to up to an extra 50% of the maximum rate of Carer's Allowance each week, depending on the weekly means assessed.

If you leave the workforce to care for a person(s) in need of full-time care and attention, you may qualify for Carer's Benefit based on your own PRSI contributions.

How to Qualify? You will qualify if YOU the Carer:

- Are aged 18 or over.
- Satisfy a means test.
- Live with the person(s) you are looking after.
- Are caring for the person(s) on a full-time basis.
- Are not employed or self-employed outside the home in excess of 10 hours per week.
- Are living in the State.
- Are not living in a hospital, convalescent home or other similar institution.

What is Carer's Benefit?

Carer's Benefit is a payment for insured people who have recently left the workforce and are looking after certain people in need of full-time care and attention. You can get Carer's Benefit for a total of 2 years for each person you are caring for. You can claim it for a continuous period of 2 years or in separate periods adding up to 2 years. If you provide care to more than one person, you may be entitled to an extra 50% of your personal payment.

If you leave the workforce to care for a person in need of full-time care and attention, you may be entitled to unpaid temporary leave from your employment. Note, you should apply for Carer's Benefit 10 weeks before you intend to leave employment so we have enough time to check if you qualify and deal with your claim.

How Do I Qualify?

You may be eligible for Carer's Benefit if:

- You have been employed for 8 weeks during the previous 26 weeks.
- You have enough PRSI contributions.
- You give up employment to care for somebody full-time (this employment must have been for at least 16 hours a week or 32 hours a fortnight).
- Are not living in a hospital, convalescent home or other similar institution.
- Are not self-employed or employed outside the home for more than 15 hours a week.

Note: If two or more people are sharing caring duties, only one carer can claim the benefit.

Where to apply for Carer's Benefit

Carer's Benefit Section, Social Welfare Services Office
Government Buildings, Ballinalee Road, Longford
Telephone: Longford (043) 45211, ext 48787
Dublin (01) 704 3000, ext 48787

Domiciliary Care Allowance

This is a monthly means tested payment made to the carer of a child under 16 with a severe disability who lives at home. In order to qualify, the child must have a severe disability that is likely to last for at least one year and:

- Must be aged under 16, (at 16, the child can apply for a disability allowance).
- Must live at home.
- Must need substantially more constant care and attention than a child of the same age who does not have a disability.

What is Mobility Allowance?

The Mobility Allowance is a means tested monthly payment payable by Social Welfare Local Offices to people aged between 16 and 65 who have a disability and are unable to walk or use public transport and who would benefit from a change in surroundings; (for example, by financing the occasional taxi journey). Apply to your Local Health Office.

Eligibility:

- You are unable to walk, even with the use of artificial limbs or other suitable aids, or your health is such that the exertion required to walk would be dangerous.
- The inability to walk must be likely to last for at least a year.
- You must not be medically forbidden to move.
- You must be in a position to benefit from a change in surroundings.
- You must be living at home or in a long-term institution.
- You must pass a means test.

Family Income Supplement (FIS)

Family Income Supplement is a weekly tax free payment to people on low pay. You can be married or unmarried but you must have at least one child to qualify. Family Income Supplement (FIS) is a weekly payment for families, including one parent families, at work on low pay. It is not subject to income tax and does not affect whether you can get a medical card.

7.8. Knowing Your Rights

Sound Legal Advice

By Jessica Goldrick, Associate Solicitor, Ralph McMahon Solicitors

If you or a person close to you has suffered a spinal injury, you may wish to seek sound legal advice. Cases involving spinal cord injuries are complex and require a solicitor's skill and understanding to guide you through the process of litigation. Here is some simple advice if you are thinking of consulting a solicitor.

Should I seek legal advice?

If you have suffered a spinal cord injury, you may be entitled to compensation. It is important to remember that often, compensation is available in situations where it would seem that there is no case for example, where a person is involved in a hit and run road traffic accident or the victim of a violent assault whether or not the assailant has been apprehended.

If you are unsure whether or not you can bring a claim for compensation, seeking advice from a solicitor will, at the very least, reassure you about your legal rights.

Can I claim compensation for my injuries?

In most cases, it is necessary to show that someone else was at least partly at fault for your injuries even if it could be argued that you were also partly responsible. The onus lies on a claimant to show that the person they say was at fault owed them a duty of care and that they were negligent in some way resulting in the claimant's injuries. It is worth taking legal advice before you decide whether or not to pursue a claim.

How long do I have to bring a claim?

The time limits for bringing claims have recently been changed. If you had an accident before the 31st of March 2005, you have three years from the date of the accident **or** until the 31st of March 2007 to bring a claim, whichever is the earliest.

Knowing Your Rights

If you had an accident after the 31st of March 2005, you have two years to bring a claim. Since the introduction of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board and other legislation, the time limits in making a claim have become complicated. This legislation has also brought in a requirement that a claimant must write a letter of claim to the person who is to be held responsible within a certain time or as soon as practicable thereafter.

Different time limits apply for those who are under 18 years of age when they suffer their injury or for those who can apply to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal because they were the victim of an assault.

If you are thinking of taking legal advice, you should do so immediately to make sure you are not running out of time to bring a claim.

What compensation can I claim?

If you bring a claim and are successful, you will be awarded compensation. Compensation is awarded under a number of different headings which include damages for your pain and suffering, for your financial losses from the date of the accident (e.g loss of earnings, medical expenses), and your ongoing expenses into the future.

Damages for future losses are the most complicated and require the input of various experts. Such losses can include loss of earnings into the future, ongoing nursing care, the cost of special aids and equipment including their maintenance and replacement in the future.

It is important that you keep a note of all expenses that you have incurred and keep the receipts if you intend to bring a claim.

What next?

If you have any concerns of a legal nature which you would like to discuss or if you require legal advice, you can call Ralph McMahon, Solicitor and he will arrange to meet with you.

Ralph McMahon Solicitors,
Suite 319 The Capel Building, Mary's Abbey, Dublin 7
Tel: 01 - 889 8580 Mobile: 087 285 4007
Email: ralph.mcmahon@rmcm.ie

7.9. Useful Addresses

AHEAD:

Association for Higher Education, Access and Disability, Newman House, 86 St Stephens Green, Dublin 2. Tel: (01) 4752386

BRI:

The Acquired Brain Injury Advocacy Association. NRH, Rochestown, Dun Laoghaire, Co.Dublin. Tel: (01) 2355501.

Carers Association:

National Office, 'Prior's Orchard', John's Quay, Kilkenny.
Tel: (056) 7721424 Helpline: 1800 240724, 24 hours 7 days a week
E-mail: carerskilkenny@eircom.net Web: www.carersireland.com

Caring For Carers Ireland:

Abbey Arcade, Abbey Street, Ennis, Co. Clare. Tel: (065) 6866515
Fax: (065) 6867710 E-mail: caringforcarers@eircom.net
Web: www.caringforcarers.org

Centre for Independent Living:

Carmichael House, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7. Tel: 01 8730455
E-mail: cildub@iol.ie Web: www.dublincil.org

Cheshire Ireland:

Central Office, Block 4 Bracken Business Park, Bracken Road,
Sandyford Industrial Estate, Dublin 18. Tel: (01) 2974100

Comhairle:

7th Floor, Hume House, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4. Tel: (01) 6059000
Citizens Information Centres Web: www.comhairle.ie

Disability Federation Of Ireland:

Fumbally Court, Fumbally Lane, Dublin 8. Tel: (01) 4547978
E-mail: info@disability-federation.ie Web: www.disability-federation.ie

Disabled Drivers Association:

Ballindine, Co Mayo. Tel (094) 9364266 / 9364054
& Carmichael House, North Burnswick St., Dublin 7. Tel: (01) 8721671
Web: www.iol.ie/ability

Department of Health and Children

House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2 Tel:(01) 6354000 Web: www.dohc.ie

Useful Addresses

Enable Ireland:

National Services, Sandymount Avenue, Dublin 4.
Tel: (01) 2695355 E-mail: info@enableireland.ie

FÁS: Website: www.fas.ie

Forum Of People With Disabilities:

1st Floor, 21 Hill Street, Dublin 1. Tel: (01) 8786077
E-mail: inforum@indigo.ie Web: www.inforum.ie

Irish Council of People with Disabilities:

4th Floor, Park House, North Circular Road, Dublin 7.
Tel: (01) 8683502.

Irish Wheelchair Association:

Aras Chuchulainn, Blackheath Drive, Clontarf, Dublin 3.
Tel: (01) 818 6400 E-mail: info@iwa.ie Web: www.iwa.ie

National Disability Authority:

25 Clyde Rd, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4. Tel: (01) 6080400
E-mail: nda@nda.ie Web: www.nda.ie

National Rehabilitation Hospital:

Rochestown Avenue, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.
Tel: (01) 2854777 / 2355500 Web: www.nrh.ie

People With Disabilities In Ireland:

PWDI: 4th Floor Jervis House, Jervis Street, Dublin 1
Tel: (01) 8721744 E-mail: info@pwdi.ie Web: www.pwdi.ie

REHAB: Gandan House, Roslyn Park, Sandymount, Dublin 4.
Tel: (01) 2698422

Revenue Commissioners:

Disabled Drivers Section, Freepost, Coolshanagh, Monaghan,
Co. Monaghan. Tel: Freephone 1890 606061.

Spinal Injuries Ireland:

NRH, Rochestown Ave., Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin.
Tel: (01) 2355317 E-mail: info@spinalinjuries.ie
Web: www.spinalinjuries.ie

Useful Websites

Useful Websites

Spinal Injuries Ireland	www.spinalinjuries.ie
Spinal Injury Association England	www.spinal.co.uk
American Spinal Injury Association	www.asia-spinalinjury.org
Canadian Paraplegic Assoc. - Sydney	www.canparaplegic.org

General information on living with spinal cord injury

	www.apparelyzed.com
	www.ableaccess.org
Spinal Net:	www.spinalnet.co.uk
	www.spinal-injury.net
Disability:	www.disABILITY.ie
Sports:	www.sportability.com or www.iwasport.com

Government web pages:

Comhairle:	www.comhairle.ie
Information on Public Services:	ww.citizensinformation.ie
Information on Social Welfare Services	www.dscfa.ie or www.welfare.ie
Department of Health and Children:	www.doh.ie
Department of Social & Family Affairs:	www.welfare.ie
Government and public services	www.reachservices.ie
Office of the Ombudsman:	www.gov.ie/ombudsman
Revenue Commissioners:	www.revenue.ie www.citizensinformation.ie

Travel:

For a list of good websites on travel go to section 6.4 under Travel Tips

For Information on products

www.accessdirectory.ie
www.assistireland.ie
www.enablesupplies.com
www.fanninmedcare.com
www.beechfieldhealthcare.com
www.disabilityneeds.com

Useful Websites

For up-to-date disability news

www.abilityinfo.com/ticker.html

www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/news

www.disabilityworld.org

www.sci-info-pages.com

www.paradoc.org

Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI)

29 Gardiner Place, Dublin 1. Tel: 01-878 0247

Email: info@aoti.ie Website: www.aoti.ie

Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists (ISCP)

Royal College of Surgeons, St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2.

Tel: 01-402 2148 Email: info@iscp.ie Website: www.iscp.ie

The Wheel

www.wheel.ie - The Wheel is a support and representative body connecting Community and Voluntary organisations across Ireland.

Recommended Books:

'The Access Directory'

A guide to products and services for people with physical disabilities. *also available on the web:* www.accessdirectory.ie

'Entitlements for People with Disabilities' Useful and practical guide to services and rights for people with disabilities, *available from Citizens Information Centres and Comhairle Offices*

'Building for Everyone' A guide to making buildings and the environment accessible. **Supplied by Comhairle:** 7th Floor, Hume House, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4. Tel: (01) 6059000

'Accessing Third Level Education in Ireland' - A Guide for Students with Disabilities & Learning Difficulties.

AHEAD, East Hall, UCD, Carysfort Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin.

Tel: 01-7164396. www.aheadweb.org/home