

Getting in and out of a car



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Rica is a charity that researches and publishes independent information on products and services for older and disabled people.

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Getting in and out of a car

A guide for older and disabled people

About this guide

If you find it difficult to get in and out of a car, this guide can help. It starts with advice on techniques you may find useful, and then covers aids for those who need more help. It also gives advice for wheelchair users about getting from a wheelchair into a car.

Many people just need to choose a car of a shape and size that is easier to get in and out of. If you need more than this, these are the options:

- **Simple accessories.** Transfer boards, additional hand holds and lifts.
- **Swivel seats.** The car seat swings out of the car to help you get in – some raise or lower the seat too.
- **Hoists.** You sit in a sling, and a hoist lifts you up so that a helper can move you into the car.
- **Wheelchair systems.** A specially designed wheelchair slides into the car while you are sitting in it, to become the car seat.
- **Wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV).** Another option for wheelchair users – you travel while in your wheelchair.

The options listed on page 4 should help you decide what will suit you best.

Equipment for loading a wheelchair into a car is covered in our companion guide *Getting a wheelchair into a car*.

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Find the right car

Try the **Car Search** feature on our website, www.rica.org.uk. You can search over 1,000 cars to find the ones that are easiest for you to get in and out of. Our factsheets have measurement details for features like door width and sill height, as well as photos.



Options

What to try if you are having difficulty getting in and out of a car – try a new technique, use simple accessories or get specialised equipment.

Many people don't get in and out of a car in the easiest way, so if you are having difficulty try changing your technique. Some techniques are shown on pages 5–8 and some simple accessories to help are included on pages 9–11.

If you are changing your car, look for high and wide door openings and convenient hand holds. Our guide *Choosing a car* gives more information. Our website has a *Car search* feature (at www.rica.org.uk/car-search) to help you find a car with the dimensions you need.

If this is not enough, you need to think about getting some equipment to help. Think carefully about what you might need now and in the future. Are you able to duck or bend if necessary? Will you have someone strong enough to help you always at hand, or do you aim for complete independence? Try out anything you are considering before you buy.

Here are the main options for equipment that can help – particularly if you use a wheelchair.

Swivel seats (pages 12–16)

Swivel seats will help if you have difficulty getting in or out of a car seat. Types that move up and down and in and out are particularly helpful.

If you use a wheelchair and can transfer, they are fairly easy to fit and cheaper (swivel seats cost from £1,250 – £6,000) than wheelchair systems.

You will need to be able to stow your wheelchair securely once you are in or have someone to help. Check that the swivel seat does not get in the way if you intend to pull your wheelchair in after you.

Hoists (pages 17–19)

A hoist can be used to lift you from a wheelchair into a car. When we tested them in the past nearly everyone was able to use them (with help), but they found them undignified and awkward. They cost £1,350 – £2,445.

Wheelchair systems (pages 20–21)

Wheelchair systems replace the original car seat. You stay on the seat and transfer from the car to a wheelchair base, which must be stowed separately while driving.

They may not be suitable if you need specialist support seating.

When we tested them, our testers preferred wheelchair systems to hoists, mainly because they found them more dignified. They cost £3,000 – £3,800.

Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs – page 22)

A more expensive option is a vehicle you can get into while sitting in an ordinary wheelchair. Passenger WAVs cost from about £12,000 to over £40,000. WAVs where you can drive from your wheelchair cost from about £25,000. You can get a WAV from Motability (see page 24).

Techniques

Getting in and out of a car easily can be a matter of technique – you may even find that you don't require adaptations or aids. This section has some examples.

FROM A STANDING POSITION



Getting in

Most people get into a car in a way which means stooping to move sideways into the door, putting in one leg, sitting down and then bringing in the other leg.

If you have difficulty with this, try sitting on the seat first and then bringing your legs in afterwards – mind your head on the door frame.

If your legs are long or stiff, it may help if you move back across the car until there is enough room to swing them into the footwell. Some people move right back and sit over the parking brake to do this – you may need a cushion.



Getting out

Many people find it easier to get out of the car by swivelling round in the seat and putting both legs out first. You don't have to balance on one leg, and you don't need to stoop as much. Because both feet are on the ground it is easier to stand.

FROM A WHEELCHAIR



If you cannot stand up you can:

- transfer your body sideways to the seat first and then bring your legs in
- put your legs in the footwell first and then move to the car seat. You need a safe grabbing point and some strength to do this.

Make sure that the car and chair are on reasonably level ground and that the wheelchair is in the right position and stable before starting to transfer. Parking by a kerb may make it easier to get the wheelchair in and out, but may make it more difficult to slide into the car, because the wheelchair seat is higher.

Some drivers get into the car from the passenger's side and slide across to the driver's seat. This can be difficult with a large transmission tunnel and because the gear stick or brake lever can get in the way. A cushion may help with this.

GETTING A WHEELCHAIR IN

Some wheelchair users can put their chair in the back of the car and walk the few steps round to the front. Some people who can't do this transfer into the car and pull their wheelchair in behind the front seats or lift their rigid wheelchair frame onto the front passenger seat.

For this you have to be:

- quite strong and flexible
- confident that you can do it even on a bad day, if your condition is variable.

It also involves putting your wheelchair in the car with you – you may get your clothes or upholstery muddy in wet weather.

The car needs to have:

- enough clearance around the seat and doorway
- low door sills and wide, square doors
- seats that are easy to adjust.

Some common techniques are described on the following pages. If these techniques aren't suitable for you, your car or your wheelchair, you may be able to develop your own. This will be easier (and safer) if you get some professional advice (eg from a Mobility Centre – see page 30).

Alternatively, you may need to get some equipment to help you. See our guide *Getting a wheelchair into a car*.

Get in through the rear hatch and stow the wheelchair in the back

This works only if you are small and agile and have a vehicle with a flat rear sill and a low floor. You get in through the back, drag the wheelchair after you, and clamber over to the driver's seat. On small cars this will be possible only if the rear seats fold flat.

Rigid wheelchairs

Get in on the driver's side, put the wheelchair on the passenger seat

Once in the car, remove the larger wheels from the wheelchair and stow them behind the seat or on the floor in front of the passenger seat.



Lift the wheelchair frame over your stomach on to the front passenger seat. You may have to recline the backrest to make more room between you and the steering wheel. If you have a steering ball, this may reduce the distance between your stomach and the steering wheel.

Safety:

- Secure the wheelchair with a strap or the front passenger seat belt. Otherwise it could cause an injury if you have to brake sharply.

Folding wheelchairs

Get in on the driver's side, put the wheelchair behind the seat

Once in the car seat, turn the wheelchair to face the car, and fold it. Lift the front castors over the sill behind your seat so that the wheelchair cannot roll away or topple over.

Then edge yourself and the car seat forwards to make enough space to get the wheelchair in between the back of the seat and the door pillar. It may be necessary to tilt the seat backrest forwards to give you more room. Now pull the wheelchair in so that the back wheels ride up and over the sill. Finally move the car seat to your driving position. A sliding swivel seat may make this easier (see pages 12–16).

Safety:

- Park facing the traffic so that you can get out on the kerb. If this is not possible leave something in sight to alert other drivers. A large luminous wheelchair sticker on the inside of the door may help.

Get in on the passenger's side and put the wheelchair behind the seat

This technique means you don't have to go out into the road. It also leaves you more room for getting the wheelchair in.

Transfer to the front passenger seat, fold the wheelchair and lift the front castors over the sill. Slide across to the driver's seat. Move the passenger seat forwards as far as it will go and tilt the backrest forwards. Lean across and pull the wheelchair in over the sill. A walking stick or piece of rope may help you do this. This is much easier if the whole car seat tilts forward.

You need to be able to reach the lever to tilt the seat forwards. Some cars have levers on both sides. Alternatively it may be possible to attach a cable to it or to swap the driver and passenger seats round so that the lever is in reach.

Getting over the sill

Some people put a small piece of carpet over the door sill to protect the car from damage and make it easier to slide the wheelchair over the sill. If the car footwell is deep it might help to make an internal ramp or build up the well. Adaptation firms may be able to help you with this.

SAFETY RESTRAINTS

Seat belts

Seat belts will protect you from injury and you have to use them by law. If you are unable to use a seat belt see your doctor about an exemption certificate. You should do this only if there is no alternative, and you must tell your insurance company.

Securing your wheelchair

You also need to secure your wheelchair when driving. Some common methods:

- Fit seat belts to the luggage compartment. Their plug-in ends may be easy to fasten. Don't use inertia reels (like standard seat belts) because the chair will be able to move and damage the car.
- Use webbing straps fixed to the floor.
- Use tracking bolted to the vehicle floor, with webbing to tie round the chair.
- Fit a 'boot roll' – a sheet of strong material which you throw over the wheelchair. It is secured to bolts with webbing straps.

The main specialist suppliers of restraint systems are Q'Straint (01227 773075, www.qstraint.com) and Unwin Safety Systems (01935 827740, www.unwin-safety.com).

Warning

- **Make sure anchoring points are strong. They need to be firmly fixed to the metal bodywork of the car with reinforcing plates underneath.**
- **Use strong ties. Don't use elasticated bungies or rope that can stretch. In a crash at 30mph the load is up to 20 times the weight of the wheelchair.**

Accessories

Simple equipment to help with getting in and out of a car.

ADDITIONAL HAND HOLDS

The Car Caddie (available from general aids suppliers) and the Handybar (available from Adaptacar as well as from general aids suppliers and motoring suppliers – see page 23) both provide additional hand holds to help with getting in and out.



The Car Caddie attaches to the top of the window frame



You just insert the Handybar in the door catch

LEG LIFTERS

Leg lifters help you lift your legs over the sill. General aid suppliers sell simple leg lifters for under £10. A simple DIY solution is to loop a stiff length of webbing over your foot. Or use a hooked walking stick or plastic bag – you step into it and use the handles to pull your leg up.



A simple leg lifter made of stiffened fabric

Images courtesy of Nottingham Rehab Supplies

TRANSFER BOARDS

If you don't have enough arm strength and dexterity to swing yourself in and out of the car you may be able to slide sideways from your wheelchair using a transfer board.



Using a transfer board

These bridge the gap between your wheelchair and the car seat. They are usually varnished or polished to make them easier to slide on. They can be used with a swivel seat (see pages 12–16). If you are very heavy, you may need to be fairly strong or have an assistant.

Most transfer boards cost £11-£30, from general aids suppliers. There are also more expensive versions that have a sliding section which you sit on. These cost from £270.

FOLDING TRANSFER BOARDS

Autoadapt UK supply two folding transfer boards, which are bolted to the car and are folded and stowed when not in use. They both also lower to help you transfer to and from a wheelchair.



Foldable sliding plate from Autoadapt UK - operated by hand

Price including fitting: £574
Weight capacity kg/stone: 140/22



Getting-up Lift from Autoadapt UK - has a power operated lift

Price including fitting: £1,902
Weight capacity kg/stone: 140/22

EQUIPMENT THAT HELPS YOU STAND UP

If you need help getting onto your feet, you can fit a lifting mechanism. Two models are available.

Electric Seat to Standing from Bristol Street Versa

Price including fitting: £1,900

The Electric Seat to Standing consists of a small folding platform that sits alongside the seat. To get out of the car, you turn to face out and move forwards onto the lifting platform, and it lifts you to a height of 405mm (16 ins) above the seat.



Up & Out Seat from Autochair

Price including fitting: from £2,500

Weight capacity kg/stone: 110/17.3

The Up & Out Seat replaces the original car seat. The whole seat cushion lifts to the side. You turn to face outward and the seat lifts you up and out of the door.

Swivel seats

Swivel seats can help with getting in and out. Some come right out of the car and lift or lower to help you to your feet or into a wheelchair. Some let you transfer from your wheelchair inside the car.

If getting into a car seat and turning to face forward is difficult, a device to help you swivel may help. The simplest is a cushion which you put on the car seat. Some have two layers joined with a swivel so they act as turntables; others are just made of slippery material. Some people just use a plastic bag. Specialist cushions cost from about £10 to £60.

If the cushion (or plastic bag) is slippery you must remove it before you drive off – it could be dangerous otherwise as you could slide off the seat in an accident.



A simple swivel cushion can help

More sophisticated are systems where the **whole seat** swivels to face sideways out of the car. Some are manual (you release a catch and swing the seat round yourself), while some are powered. They are available from adaptation firms, from £1,250.

If you have stiff legs make sure the seat slides back far enough for you to get in – some are designed to slide back as you turn through the door to help with this. You also need to make sure that you will have enough headroom – especially as you pass through the door.

Most swivel seats replace the original seat. This means you may not be able to have matching upholstery or features of the original seat like adjustable supports, heating, cooling etc. You will also have to find somewhere to store the original seat if you mean to refit it later.

All swivel seats use the existing seat mountings. This helps ensure that the seat is safe, and also means the original seats can be refitted if necessary. One or two need additional mountings to be attached to the car.

Swivel seats are more suitable for two- and three-door cars because the doors are wider. **Always check with the supplier that they will fit in your car.** The range of movement of some swivel seats may be limited in some vehicles, especially on the driver's side.

Types

BASIC SWIVEL SEATS

Basic swivel seats turn by hand or power through 90° to face out of the car.

LIFTING AND LOWERING SWIVEL SEATS

These seats come right out over the sill. They can raise you to your feet or lower you to help you get into a wheelchair or down from a high vehicle.

Some are programmed to manoeuvre you out of the car in the easiest way, avoiding the roof and door pillars and sliding back to help you get your legs out.

SWIVEL SEATS FOR TRANSFERRING INSIDE

Some people use a ramp or lift to go into the vehicle with their wheelchair and transfer to a swivelling seat to drive. This gives you full independence with a manual or power chair.

They are fully powered. Some have a lifting action that helps you get your feet round to the front.

Basic swivel seats

ELAP ROTATING CAR SEAT



Price including fitting:
manual: £1,250
powered: £1,995 2-way
 £2,527 4-way

Lifting capacity kg/stone:
 140/22

Distributed by:
 Elap Mobility

- manual swivel seat, operated by lever
- fitted with runners for forward and backward movement
- powered version available, including 4-way option (lifts you up and down as well)
- adjustable lumbar support
- optional memory foam cushion
- optional arm rests.

TURNOUT



Price including fitting:
manual: £1,250–£1,600
powered: £1,675–£2,150
Lifting capacity kg/stone:
 150/23.6

Distributed by:
 Autoadapt UK

- manual and powered versions
- option of powered sliding action, £700
- arm rests.



Lifting and lowering swivel seats

BELEK CAR SEAT SYSTEM



Price including fitting: £3,500–£5,500

Lifting capacity kg/stone: 150/23.6

Distributed by: Steering Developments

- swivels through 90° and lifts you to your feet or lowers you level with your wheelchair
- powered up and down movement; manual or powered swivel, manual or powered back and forward movement
- extended runners
- adjustable lumbar support
- optional arm rests.

ELAP DISCOVERY 2



Price including fitting: £4,458

Lifting capacity kg/stone: 140/22

Distributed by: Elap Mobility

- swivels through 90° and lowers you level with your wheelchair
- fully programmable powered action
- may use original seat in some vehicles
- adjustable lumbar support
- optional memory foam cushion and arm rests
- can be used with Elap Traveller (see page 21).

TURNY EVO



Price including fitting: £5,500-£6,000

Lifting capacity kg/stone: 150/23.6
Distributed by: Autoadapt UK

- fully programmable powered action lowers to preset height
- options: side supports, lumbar support, neck roll support, remote control
- fitted to passenger side or rear passenger seats
- can be used with the Carony (see page 21).

TURNY HD and ORBIT



Price including fitting: £4,000-£4,885

Lifting capacity kg/stone: 150/23.6
Distributed by: Autoadapt UK

- manual (HD) or powered (Orbit) swivel
- powered up and down movement lowers to preset height
- options: side supports, lumbar support, neck roll support, remote control
- fitted to passenger side or rear passenger seats
- three lifting heights: 300, 395, 480mm (12, 15, 19 inches)
- can be used with the Carony (see page 21).

Swivel seats for transferring inside

AUTOADAPT 6-WAY BASE



Price including fitting:
£1,400–£1,800

Lifting capacity kg/stone:
150/23.6

Distributed by:
Autoadapt UK

- swivels through 140°
- lifts 180mm (7 inches)
- 514mm (20.25 inches) forward/back movement
- optional extended runners – to 714mm (28 inches).

RICON 6-WAY SEAT TURNIN BASE



Price including fitting:
from £1,320

Lifting capacity kg/stone:
136/21.4

Distributed by:
Adaptacar

- swivels through 90°
- lifts 228mm (9 inches)
- 342mm (13.5 inches) forward/back movement
- extended runners £51.



Price including fitting:
£1,500

Lifting capacity kg/stone:
150/23.6

Distributed by:
Autoadapt UK

- swivels through 90°
- no lift – fixed at one height.

Hoists

Hoists are fairly simple devices which lift you up to a height where you can be swung into a vehicle. Some can be taken out of the car and used elsewhere.

A hoist can help you transfer from a wheelchair into a car. This section lists some things to think about when deciding whether a hoist is for you, and explains how to fit and use one.

HELP NEEDED?

Although hoists can in theory be used alone, in tests we carried out some years ago none of the disabled people who tried equipment out for us could use them without help. To use a hoist without help, you need:

- strength and dexterity
- to be able to bend your head to duck under the car door frame
- some upper body control for balance
- to be able to lift your feet over the car sill
- to be able to remove and stow the detachable arm safely
- to be able to pull the wheelchair in after you. Alternatively, get a rooftop or other hoist fitted to help you do this (see our guide *Getting a wheelchair into a car*).

Even with help it can be difficult to use a hoist if you are stiff, have limited control, or are very tall or big. Hoists may not be suitable if you have spasms: if your limbs jerk you could hit them against the car.

Using a hoist on a steep hill can be more difficult because you may hang at an angle which means more pushing is needed.

COMFORT

This is a personal matter, and mostly depends on the size and shape of the sling.

- You should sit upright or lean slightly backwards in the sling. Without enough support you may need to lean forward to balance, which can feel insecure.
- If the sling is too low or too high you risk bumping into the car.
- You may want to think about a sling that supports your neck and shoulders, or has extra fabric. You can buy a sling separately from the hoist, but it's best to speak to your OT or a specialist before you do this.

EASE OF USE

If you can, try before you buy – hoist suppliers can demonstrate their products. You need to be confident that you can use the hoist easily. You'll need to check both the hoist and the car you intend fitting it into to see if:

- there is enough space between the car seat and the top of the door for you to swing in without having to bend your head and neck too much
- the doors are wide enough
- door sills are low and narrow enough for you to swing in without hitting them with your feet
- protruding dashboards and winged car seats don't get in the way
- whoever helps you can manage the hoist.

Our previous test of hoists suggested that smaller people who have no difficulty bending their head or neck could probably use any of the hoists tested in all but the smallest cars. Larger people and people who are stiff needed more headroom and wider doors.

FITTING

To fit these hoists a small mounting bracket is bolted to the car. The main arm of the hoist then fits onto the bracket, and the spreader arm fits onto this. The sling is attached to the spreader arms. The arms can be removed when not being used, leaving just the bracket in place.

If you want to sell the car you can remove the bracket, and use grommets to fill the holes. The second-hand value of the car shouldn't be affected if you have had a hoist fitted.

Which cars?

Hoists can be fitted to most cars. MPVs and two- and three-door cars have more room for a hoist, but most four- and five-door cars can be fitted with one.

Passenger's or driver's side?

All of the hoists in this guide can be fitted to either side of the car. However, they are not often used by drivers. If you drive, check with a Mobility Centre (see page 30) to see if a hoist would be the best way for you to get into a car.

MILFORD PERSON LIFT



Price including fitting: £2,445
Lifting capacity kg/stone: 110/17.5
Distributed by: Autochair

- use in a vehicle and around the home
- optional mobile base (£795) or wall bracket (£295), battery and charger
- lift arm weighs 8kg (17.6 lbs)
- hoist motor can be upgraded to lift 127kg (20 stone) for £100.

TOPSLIDER



Price including fitting: £1,350
Lifting capacity kg/stone: 130/21.9
Distributed by: Autoadapt UK

- requires no modification of the car – attaches to standard roofbars
- transfers easily between vehicles
- manual lift (using ratchet) and slide into car.

Using a hoist



1. Getting into the sling

The sling is a canvas seat – you sit on it and it lifts you in. If transferring is difficult, it may be easier to sit on the sling on your wheelchair while still indoors. Some people find they can slip the sling underneath more easily if they put a sheet of plastic or bubble wrap on each side.



3. Getting into the car

This can be difficult – you may have to duck under the door frame as you swing into the car. Afterwards, the hoist's arms must be removed and secured safely.



2. Attaching the sling to the hoist

The sling needs to be attached to the 'spreader' arm of the hoist – you or a helper can do this.



4. Getting out

You need to get the wheelchair in the right position, and then use the hoist to lower you onto the wheelchair. Then detach and stow the arms.

Wheelchair systems

The idea behind wheelchair systems is that you use a special wheelchair where the seat part moves into the car to become a front car seat – all while you are sitting in it.

These systems allow you to transfer in and out of a car without getting up from your seat. For some people they offer a more dignified or an easier option. However, you will certainly need someone to help you.

The wheelchair replaces the car seat, so you can't have matching upholstery or features of the original seat like airbags, adjustable supports, heating, cooling, etc. You also have to use it as your wheelchair so these may not be suitable if you need specialist support.



This Elap Traveller swivels in and out by hand - make sure you can do this. Alternatively the Traveller and the Carony are available in powered versions

You may find that lifting the seat and sliding it in and out of the car and swivelling it in place need considerable strength and dexterity. Make sure you, or whoever is helping you, are able to do this. Some have the option of powered lifting and swivelling actions.

The wheelchair base has to be stowed separately, so you will always need someone to help. Some are light enough to lift into the boot; others (especially powered versions) will have to be hoisted unless you have a strong helper (see *Getting a wheelchair into a car* for more on wheelchair hoists).



Elap Traveller base stowed in boot

On the following pages we list all the wheelchair systems that are currently available. Always try before you buy any of these systems, and check with the supplier whether it will fit in your car.

CARONY



Carony paired with Turny Evo (not included in price)

Price including fitting: from £3,800
Lifting capacity kg/stone: 115/18
Distributed by: Autoadapt UK

- fitted to driver or passenger side
- uses original seat mountings
- manual lift – or use with Turny (see page 15) for powered lift and swivel.

Options and prices

- 24 inch (610mm) wheels for self propelling – £300
- powered swivel seat – £400
- powered wheelchair version (Carony Go) – from £6,500
- adjustable lumbar support
- optional side supports
- optional seat belt deflector (this lowers the upper part of the seatbelt and holds it in place).

ELAP TRAVELLER



Elap Traveller, with powered base

Price including fitting: £2,990
Lifting capacity kg/stone: 140/22
Distributed by: Elap Mobility

- fitted to passenger side only
- uses original seat mountings
- manual lift – or use with Elap Discovery 2 (see page 14) for powered lift and swivel.

Options

- adjustable arm rests
- adjustable lumbar support
- anti tipping device
- self propel wheels.

WAVs (WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES)



I Can from Sirius Automotive
from £33,295



InFront Doblo from Wilson Healy
from £19,995

Specialist firms convert MPVs, vans and other vehicles so that you can get in and travel in your wheelchair. If you travel as a passenger you usually sit behind the front row of seats, but some designs allow you to sit beside the driver.

Drive from WAVs are designed so that you drive from your wheelchair. They can be fitted with a wide range of hand and other controls – this will be done as part of the conversion, which will be tailored to suit you and your wheelchair. A few WAVs are designed so you transfer to the driver's seat once you are inside.

WAVs either have a ramp or a lift. All lifts are powered but some ramps are deployed by hand – you will need help with this. If you use a ramp, a winch can be fitted to help get you in (only suitable if someone helps you, as you won't be able to attach the winch yourself). All drive-from wheelchair WAVs are designed to be used without help so the doors open and the ramp unfolds at a touch of a button.

The number of passengers a WAV can carry depends on the base vehicle and the

conversion. Some carry just the driver and a passenger in a wheelchair, but some will carry five or more additional passengers. Some WAVs have folding or removable rear seats that can be used when a wheelchair is not being carried.

You go in at the rear or the side of the vehicle. Side-entry WAVs can be easier for on-street parking (because you don't need so much room behind, and you don't have to get your wheelchair into the road), but you may not be able to use them in all car parks. The InFront Doblo has a specially adapted front door that lets you enter directly into the front passenger space.

See our *Wheelchair accessible vehicles* guide (see page 35) for more information or contact converters (see our *Mobility address list*) for detailed information on the vehicles they supply. Always try out a WAV you are considering – converters will bring a demonstration vehicle to you. The Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles Converters' Association (see page 34) requires its members to provide this service and meet other service standards.

Suppliers

SPECIALIST SUPPLIERS

Here we list the suppliers who make or import the equipment listed in this guide. Some of them fit equipment themselves, and they all sell their equipment to adaptation companies, who may be more local to you.

Contact the supplier for more information about their products and to find a local installer. Our *Mobility address list* (see page 35) has a complete list of adaptation companies.

Adaptacar

Tel 01769 572785

Email info@adaptacar.co.uk

www.adaptacar.co.uk

Autoadapt UK

Tel 0121 333 5170

Email contact@autoadapt.co.uk

www.autoadapt.co.uk

Autochair

Tel 0800 214 045

Email demo@autochair.co.uk

www.autochair.co.uk

Bristol Street Versa

Tel 08443 081 814

Email sales@bristolstreetversa.com

www.bristolstreetversa.com

Elap Mobility

Tel 01254 871599

Email mail@elap.co.uk

www.elap.co.uk

Sirus Automotive

Tel 0121 505 7777

Email enquiries@sirusautomotive.co.uk

www.sirusautomotive.co.uk

Steering Developments

Tel 01442 212918

Email

enquiries@steeringdevelopments.co.uk

www.steeringdevelopments.co.uk

Wilson Healy Conversions

Tel 01704 512 437

Email hello@accessiblevehicles.co.uk

www.accessiblevehicles.co.uk

GENERAL AIDS SUPPLIERS

Less specialised equipment is available from local mobility shops (look in the phone book or online) or from mail-order companies.

Ability Answers

Tel 01792 412700

www.abilityanswers.com

Hearing and Mobility

Tel 0844 8881338

www.hearingandmobility.co.uk

Homecraft

Tel 0844 4124330

www.homecraft-rolyan.com

Nottingham Rehab Supplies

Tel 0845 805 2236

www.nrs-uk.co.uk

Finance

DISABILITY BENEFITS

The Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is an allowance paid to all disabled people to help with extra costs. It is made up of a daily living component and a mobility component. A lower or higher rate of each is paid, depending on how much help you need. PIP also works as a gateway to other services (eg Blue Badges and the Motability scheme).

PIP is a new allowance that is replacing the Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Since April 2013, new claimants aged 16 or over have been receiving PIP. If you currently get DLA, you will be reassessed to determine the level of payment you will receive under the PIP in a process starting in October 2013.

There are currently no plans to change the DLA for people under 16. You will need to be assessed for PIP when you turn 16.

MOTABILITY



Tel 0845 456 4566

Textphone 0845 675 0009

If you receive the Higher Rate Mobility Component of the DLA or the Enhanced Rate Mobility Component of PIP you are eligible for the Motability scheme. Your allowance goes towards the cost of a car, powered wheelchair or scooter.

You can use the mobility component to lease a new car from Motability for

three years (five years for a wheelchair accessible vehicle). Maintenance and servicing costs, insurance for two drivers (up to two additional drivers can be added for a fee) and RAC breakdown assistance are included. There is a mileage allowance of 20,000 miles per year (additional miles are charged at 5p per mile).

You can choose a model from any of the main manufacturers. If you choose one that is more expensive than is covered by the mobility allowance, you make an advance payment with your own money (the amount varies, depending on the car). Motability offers over 450 cars which require no advance payment.

Adaptations

The Motability Scheme will also cover, or contribute to, the cost of adaptations (such as hoists or swivel seats). Motability has a list of available adaptations, with costs attached (many are free). They operate a Managed Adaptations Programme which can make the process both easier and cheaper. You can only make use of this programme when you are ordering your new car.

If you want to fit your own adaptations during your lease, or fit something not available through the programme, you will have to fund this yourself. Motability administer a number of funds (see Grants) which may be able to help. Any adaptations must be supplied and fitted by a Motability Adaptations Partner.

Grants

Motability administer the government Specialised Vehicle Funds as well as having their own charitable fund.

If you are considering the Motability Scheme you can apply for a grant for things like adaptations, advance payments on more expensive vehicles and driving lessons (for people under 25). You have to provide details of your circumstances, which will be checked. Motability can only help towards the least expensive solution that meets your needs. They will assess your needs and make suitable recommendations.

OTHER SOURCES OF FINANCE

Charities

Some charities give grants to individuals.

- Your local library should be able to help you find sources, such as the Round Table, Rotary or Lions Club and other local charities.
- Try your appropriate disability group such as Scope, the MS Society or the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign, who may know of sources of help.
- If you are aged 50 or over, Charity Search provide a free service to help you find a grant-giving charity:
Freepost (BS 6610)
Avonmouth
Bristol BS11 9TW
Tel 0117 982 4060
(9:30 to 2:30 Mon–Thurs)
Email info@charitysearch.org.uk
www.charitysearch.org.uk

- Turn2us provides a free service to help you find financial support in the form of welfare benefits, grants and other help tailored to your circumstances.

Tel 0808 802 2000 (8–8 Mon–Fri)
www.turn2us.org.uk

- The Family Fund helps families who are raising a disabled or seriously ill child aged 17 and under. Families must have proof of entitlement to benefits or tax credit. They give grants for a range of essential items, and may be able to contribute to the cost of adapting a Motability car if Motability funding isn't available.

4 Alpha Court
Monks Cross Drive
Huntingdon
York YO32 9WN
Tel 08449 744 099
Fax 01904 652 625
Textphone 01904 658 085
Email info@familyfund.org.uk
www.familyfund.org.uk

Statutory sources

- Social services – may be worth trying, especially if you do not get PIP/DLA or if you have already used your mobility component to lease a vehicle.
- Access to Work – if you are in work or are applying for a job you may be able to get help from the Access to Work scheme. They may cover the cost of adaptations to a vehicle if this is the only or most cost effective way for you to get to work. Cases are assessed on an individual basis. Contact your local Jobcentre Plus or visit www.gov.uk/access-to-work

BUYING SECONDHAND

You can buy adapted vehicles and equipment secondhand. Anything you buy secondhand may be affected by safety and reliability issues. For secondhand vehicles, the seller may have had an inspection carried out and/or offer a warranty. If not, you may want to think about carrying out your own inspection.

Some suppliers will fit secondhand hoists for you. Remember to allow for any fitting costs.

Classified advertisements

The following websites carry listings for adapted vehicles and equipment.

The Disabled Living Foundation (see page 33) also has a list of sources of secondhand equipment.

Disability Now

www.disabilitynow.org.uk/listings/classifieds

Disability Equipment Register

www.disabilityequipment.org.uk

Disabled Gear

www.disabledgear.com

eBay

www.ebay.co.uk

Mobility Choice Motoring

www.mobilitychoicemotoring.co.uk

Preloved

www.preloved.co.uk



Mobility Choice Motoring



Disabled Gear

VAT

You do not pay VAT on products designed and sold specifically for disabled people. This means all adaptations, installation, repair and maintenance are zero-rated.

What kind of adaptations count?

- Those which make it possible for you to get in and out of the vehicle, such as a swivel seat.
- Those which make it possible for you to drive, such as hand controls for primary driving controls and infra red systems for secondary controls. Note that standard extras such as automatic transmission would not be enough to qualify.
- Those which enable a wheelchair to be carried in the vehicle, such as a hoist. Trailers, roof or rear racks would not count as they are not vehicle adaptations.

Adaptations have to be permanent – which means in practice that they have to be welded or bolted on. Repair and maintenance to the vehicle is also zero rated. The supplier of the vehicle has to be satisfied that you qualify, and you will have to sign a form declaring your disability.

Wheelchair and stretcher users

Additionally, if you use a wheelchair or stretcher you may not have to pay VAT on the price of the car or for its repair or maintenance.

To qualify you must:

- be a wheelchair user – temporary users do not count and nor do scooter users **or**
- need to be carried in a stretcher.

The car must:

- have been designed or substantially and permanently adapted for the person who normally uses a wheelchair or stretcher
- have a carrying capacity of no more than 12 people
- be for domestic or personal use.

Vehicles owned and run by businesses do not qualify. However you can use a qualifying adapted vehicle for work if this is incidental to its main private use.

VAT relief applies only to new cars, so if you are buying a car with the intention of having controls fitted, it may be worth your while to consider buying a new car rather than a secondhand one as you will not have to pay VAT on the car.

More information: see VAT notices 701/7 (adaptations) and 1615 (motor vehicles) from the HM Revenue and Customs national advice service:

Tel 0845 010 9000

www.hmrc.gov.uk

Important

- **You must buy and adapt the vehicle at the same time – you cannot get a VAT refund for adaptations made later.**
- **Alterations made to a car before it is registered in your name have to have *type approval*. In practice this means that it is only legal to fit these adaptations after registration. You have to register the car, have it adapted and then pay for it.**
- **Talk to the firm who is adapting your car – they will be able to make appropriate arrangements.**

The law

DRIVING LICENCE

Mobility Centres or disabled drivers' organisations (see page 33) will be able to help you find a driving instructor who specialises in teaching disabled drivers. They use cars with adapted controls or will teach you in your own car.

Drivers of adapted cars take the same test as everyone else. If you drive an adapted car and you have advised the Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency, details will appear in code form on your licence. The adaptations recorded are: modified transmission, modified clutch, modified braking and acceleration systems, modified control layouts, modified steering, modified rear view mirrors and modified driving seats. You can only drive cars with similar equipment.

There's no top age limit to driving. You have to renew your licence at 70 and every three years after that. A form will be sent to you by the DVLA.

You must tell them of any disability when applying for a licence for the first time. You must also tell them if you have a new medical condition or one which has got worse since passing your driving test or since your last licence was issued. Conditions you have to tell them about include fits or blackouts, seizures, diabetes, angina attacks which are provoked by driving, memory problems, stroke, brain injury, brain surgery, pacemaker, difficulty in using your arms or legs and any visual condition which affects both eyes.

You may be sent a questionnaire and will be asked to give permission for the Medical Advisor to contact your doctor or specialist. If your driving licence is for automatic cars only, you must make sure the clutch pedal is removed if you have adapted a manual gearbox. Read more at www.direct.gov.uk/driverhealth or in *What you need to know about driving licences* from a post office.

VEHICLE EXCISE DUTY (ROAD TAX)

You don't have to pay Road Tax if you get the Higher Rate Mobility Component of the DLA, the Enhanced Rate Mobility Component of PIP or the War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement.

If you are not the driver you have to provide the name of whoever will drive for you. The vehicle must be registered in your or your nominee's name. It must be used only by you or for your benefit – such as to do your shopping. Anyone can drive it as long as they are insured.

To claim, get an exemption certificate from the Disability Benefits Helpline (08457 123 456) or the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (0800 169 2277). You can then get your free tax disc at post offices which issue road tax, or by post. If the dealer is registering your new vehicle for you, you will need to let them have your certificate. Renewals can be made online.

Motability vehicles (see page 24) don't need a certificate – the tax disc is arranged by Motability.

INSURANCE

Under the Equality Act, insurers are not allowed to refuse disabled drivers insurance or charge extra without justifying evidence. Premiums must be based on a reasonable assessment of risk. Insurers will take account of any DVLA restrictions on your licence, but this is not in itself justification for a higher premium. However, you may have to pay more:

- while you are adjusting to a new disability if there is evidence that this will increase the risk
- to cover any extra cost of repairing an adapted vehicle.

As with all insurance, shop around to get the best deal. If you feel you are being charged more for your policy than other drivers in similar circumstances, ask the insurance company for details of why they consider you to be a greater risk. Mobility Centres and organisations of disabled drivers have lists of specialist insurance companies.

We know of the following companies which specialise in insurance services for disabled people:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| ■ Chartwell | 0800 0890146 |
| ■ En-route | 0800 7837245 |
| ■ First Senior | 01582 840067 |
| ■ Fish | 0800 0883050 |
| ■ Lockton | 0845 6028000 |
| ■ Premier Care | 01476 591104 |

BLUE BADGE SCHEME



The Blue Badge Scheme offers parking concessions for disabled people with severe walking difficulties who need to park close to their destinations. The scheme also applies to registered blind people, people with severe upper limb disabilities in both arms who regularly drive a car and children under three with specific medical conditions.

You can use designated disabled parking bays in car parks and on the street, park for up to three hours on single and double yellow lines and often park for free in local authority car parks and bays (check first, as some local authorities still charge). In Central London boroughs, parking is only in designated bays.

The scheme is administered by local authorities which deal with applications and issue badges.

For more information contact your local authority or go to www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge.

Useful organisations

MOBILITY CENTRES



There are 16 Mobility Centres in the UK. They give practical and independent advice and assessment to disabled drivers and passengers. They will assess your ability to drive, advise you about cars that might suit you and about any adaptations you may need. They are well informed on motoring and disability issues generally. Each centre has expert and friendly staff who are likely to have met and solved similar problems before. They are non commercial and impartial.

An assessment for a driver referring him or herself will cost from £50 to £130 (depending on the centre). In Scotland assessment is free if referred by a GP. Costs for assessment as a passenger are lower – generally around £20–£50. Motability customers may qualify for a free assessment under the Managed Adaptation Programme.

Mobility Centres are accredited by the Forum of Mobility Centres and have certain minimum standards. For more information on the centres contact:

The Forum of Mobility Centres
c/o Providence Chapel, Warehorne
Ashford, Kent TN26 2JX
Tel 0800 559 3636
Email enquiries@mobility-centres.org.uk
www.mobility-centres.org.uk

Key to services

The centres vary in the services they offer. This key shows what's available:

- I** free information service
- D** advice on choosing a vehicle, driving it, driving controls and learning to drive
- P** assessment and advice about getting in and out of vehicles, loading of wheelchairs and other equipment
- W** advice on selecting and using a wheelchair or scooter
- T** driving tuition for new drivers, people returning to driving and those who will be using different controls
- A** fitting adaptations for drivers or passengers

Bristol

Living Mobility & Driving Centre
The Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Fishponds
Bristol BS16 2QQ
Tel 0117 965 9353
Fax 0117 965 3652
Email mobserv@thisisliving.org.uk
www.thisisliving.org.uk
Services: **IDPWT**

Cornwall

Cornwall Mobility Centre, Tehidy House
Royal Cornwall Hospital, Truro TR1 3LJ
Satellite centres Exeter, Holsworthy, Liskeard, Plymouth
Tel 01872 254920
Fax 01872 254921
Email
enquiries@cornwallmobilitycentre.co.uk
www.cornwallmobilitycentre.co.uk
Services: **IDPWTA**

Derbyshire

Derby DriveAbility
Kingsway Hospital, Kingsway
Derby DE22 3LZ
Tel 01332 371929
Email dhft.driving@net
www.derbydriveability.com
Services: **IDPT**

Hampshire

Wessex DriveAbility
Leornain House, Kent Road, Portswood
Southampton SO17 2LJ
Tel 023 8051 2222
Email enquiries@wessexdriveability.org.uk
www.wessexdriveability.org.uk
Services: **IDP**

Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire Action on Disability (HAD)
The Woodside Centre, The Commons
Welwyn Garden City AL7 4DD
Satellite centre Dunstable
Tel 01707 324581
Fax 01707 371297
Email driving@hadnet.org.uk
www.hadnet.org.uk
Services: **IDPWT**

Kent

South East DriveAbility
Kent Community Health NHS Trust
St Lawrence Avenue, Allington
Kent ME16 0LL
Satellite centres Hailsham, Herne Bay,
Canterbury, Uckfield
Tel 01622 606900
Fax 01622 606901
Email kcht.sedriveability@nhs.net
www.kentcht.nhs.uk/home/our-
services/south-east-driveability
Services: **IDPWT**

Lancashire

North West Driving Assessment Service
Fleet House, Pye Close
Haydock WA11 9SJ
Satellite centre Tyldsley (Manchester)
Tel 01942 483713
Email mobility.centre@bridgewater.nhs.uk
Services: **IDPT**

Norfolk

East Anglian DriveAbility
2 Napier Place, Thetford IP24 3RL
Satellite centres Coggeshall, Spalding,
Wakes Colne
Tel 01842 753029
Fax 01842 755950
Email mail@eastangliandriveability.org.uk
www.eastangliandriveability.org.uk
Services: **IDPWT**

North East

North East Drive Mobility
Walkergate Park Centre for Neuro-
rehabilitation and Neuro-psychiatry
Benfield Road
Newcastle upon Tyne NE6 4QD
Satellite centre Penrith
Tel 0191 287 5090
Email northeast.drivemobility@ntw.nhs.uk
www.ntw.nhs.uk
Services: **IDPT**

Surrey

QEF Mobility Services
1 Metcalfe Avenue
Carshalton
Surrey SM5 4AW
Tel 020 8770 1151
Fax 020 8770 1211
Email mobility@qef.org.uk
www.qefd.org
Services: **IDPWT**

West Midlands

Regional Driving Assessment Centre
Unit 11, Network Park
Duddeston Mill Road
Birmingham B8 1AU

Satellite centres Cannock, Hull,
Northampton, Oxford, Worcester

Tel 0845 337 1540

Fax 0121 333 4568

Email info@rdac.co.uk

www.rdac.co.uk

Services: **IDPT**

West Yorkshire

The William Merritt Centre
Disabled Living Centre and Mobility
Service

St Mary's Hospital, Green Hill Road
Armley, Leeds LS12 3QE

Satellite centres Sheffield, York

Tel 0113 350 89 89

Fax 0113 350 86 81

Email info@wmdlc.org

www.williammerrittleeds.org

Services: **IDPW**

NORTHERN IRELAND

Disability Action, Portside Business Park
189 Airport Road West, Belfast BT3 9ED

Satellite centres Ballymena, Newry,
Carrickfergus, Omagh, Fermanagh

Tel 028 9029 7880

Fax 028 9029 7881

Email mobilitycentre@disabilityaction.org

www.disabilityaction.org

Services: **IDPT**

SCOTLAND

Scottish Driving Assessment Service
Astley Ainslie Hospital

133 Grange Loan
Edinburgh EH9 2HL

Satellite centre Mobile Driving
Assessment Service

Tel 0131 537 9192

Fax 0131 537 9193

Email

marlene.mackenzie@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

Services: **IDP**

WALES

North Wales Mobility and Driving
Assessment Service

Disability Resources Centre

Glan Clwyd Hospital

Bodelwyddan

Denbighshire LL18 5UJ

Satellite centre Newtown

Tel 01745 584 858

Fax 01745 535 042

Email mobilityinfo@btconnect.com

www.wmdas.co.uk

Services: **IDPWTA**

South Wales Mobility and Driving
Assessment Service

Rookwood Hospital

Fairwater Road

Llandaff

Cardiff CF5 2YN

Satellite centre Pembroke

Tel 029 2055 5130

Fax 029 2055 5130

Email sandra@wddac.co.uk

www.wmdas.co.uk

Services: **IDPT**

OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Assist UK



National network of centres offering advice on independent living equipment. Your local centre can advise

about wheelchairs and accessories.

Tel 0161 238 8776

Email general.info@assist-uk.org

www.assist-uk.org

Disability Now

A monthly online newspaper published by Scope with reviews by disabled people and classified advertisements.

www.disabilitynow.org.uk

Disabled Living Foundation



Advice and information on disability equipment. They have a database of products and suppliers.

Ground Floor, Landmark House
Hammersmith Bridge Road
London W6 9EJ

Tel 0845 130 9177

(weekdays 10am to 4pm)

Email info@dlf.org.uk

www.dlf.org.uk

www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk

Disabled Motoring UK



The campaigning charity for disabled motorists. They run the Baywatch campaign

against parking abuse and represent disabled people's needs at a national level. Membership, £20 per year (£30 for joint members), includes a monthly magazine, advice service and member benefits.

Ashwellthorpe, Norwich NR16 1EX

Tel 01508 489449

Email info@disabledmotoring.org

www.disabledmotoring.org

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Drivers Medical Group

DVLA

Swansea SA99 1TU

Tel 0300 790 6806

Fax 0845 850 0095

Email eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/driving-if-disabled

Northern Ireland

Driver and Vehicle Agency Drivers Medical
Section

County Hall, Castlerock Road

Coleraine BT51 3TB

Tel 0845 402 4000

Email dvlni@doeni.gov.uk

www.dvani.gov.uk

GOV.UK

A website providing information about public services. They have useful sections on motoring and on disability.

www.gov.uk/browse/disabilities

Motability One Big Day

Motability run these regional events for users or prospective users of the scheme – you can see and try cars and equipment. Contact Motability for information.

Tel 0800 456 4566

www.motability.co.uk

Remap



A voluntary organisation of engineers who invent, design and make devices or carry out adaptations to help disabled people to be more independent or to enjoy leisure activities.

England, Wales and NI

D9 Chaucer Business Park
Kemsing, Kent TN15 6YU

Tel 0845 130 0456

Fax 01732 760204

Email data@remap.org.uk

www.remap.org.uk

Remap Scotland

The website has a useful map showing the locations of local groups.

Forgue House, Forgue, Huntly AB54 6DA

Tel 01466 730 736

Email remap-scotland@btconnect.com

www.remap-scotland.org

Service Call



A service that allow disabled people to use petrol stations and other services that are

difficult to access. You carry an infrared transmitter (£14.95 inc p&p), which you use to signal that you need assistance at

participating outlets, which include thousands of petrol stations, banks, supermarkets, shops and others.

Tel 0800 458 3008

Email info@service-call.net

www.service-call.net

Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Converters' Association



The trade association for companies who make and sell WAVs. WAVCA aims to improve the quality and safety of WAVs and lobbies for legislation for wheelchair passenger vehicles.

Members must:

- have been trading for at least 2 years
- offer at least 3 years warranty
- have passed safety tests on restraints and seat belts
- demonstrate a commitment to customer service.

Email enquiries@wavca.co.uk

www.wavca.co.uk

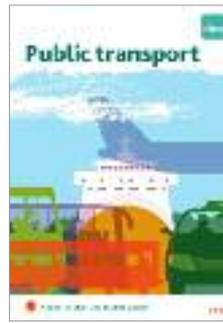
Rica guides

All these guides are available in print and online at www.rica.org.uk. We also have two online search tools: one for cars and one for scooters and powered wheelchairs.



FAMILY CARS

Issues affecting families of disabled children and information about cars and standard and specialist equipment.



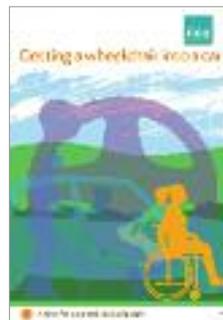
PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Overview of public transport with information about access, journey planning, concessions, assistance and how to complain.



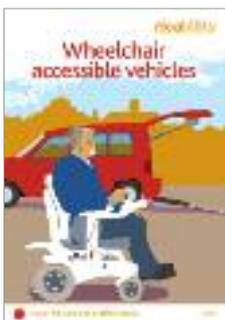
CAR CONTROLS

In depth information on types of adaptations and how to get them. It covers simple and more complex conversions.



GETTING A WHEELCHAIR INTO A CAR

Equipment to help you stow or carry a wheelchair in a car, including ramps, hoists, racks and trailers.



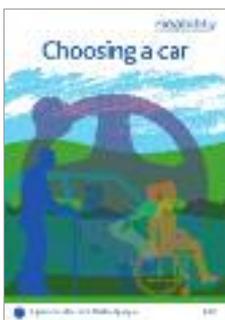
WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES

Information on vehicles converted to allow you to travel in your wheelchair, as a passenger or driver.



MOBILITY ADDRESS LIST

Addresses of all adaptation suppliers, fitters and converters in the UK and the services they offer.



CHOOSING A CAR

Things to think about if you have a disability, details of features that may help you and ways of adapting a car to suit your needs.

SEVEN SHORTER GUIDES

- Motoring after an amputation
- Motoring after a brain injury
- Motoring after a stroke
- Motoring with arthritis
- Motoring with cerebral palsy
- Motoring with multiple sclerosis
- Motoring with restricted growth

Motability has teamed up with leading home, pet and travel insurers

- For full details of the Motability Insurance range visit www.motability.co.uk or call direct:

Motability HOME Insurance

0800 783 0061

Motability PET Insurance

0800 369 9094

Motability TRAVEL Insurance

0800 519 9957

- For every policy sold, the insurance providers will pay a proportion of the premium in commission to Motability to help disabled people remain mobile.





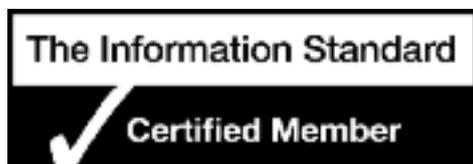
Consumer research for older and disabled people

Rica is an independent research charity that publishes practical consumer information

Rica
Unit G03 The Wenlock
50–52 Wharf Road
London N1 7EU
Tel 020 7427 2460
Fax 020 7427 2468
Textphone 020 7427 2469
Email mail@rica.org.uk
www.rica.org.uk

 @RicaUK

 facebook.com/RicaUK



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