

Transport & Travel

DEPT OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY AFFAIRS

Mobility Allowance is a means-tested monthly payment from the Health Service Executive (HSE) to people with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 66 who are “unable to walk or use public transport and would benefit from a change in surroundings eg. by financing the occasional taxi journey.” Your disability must be likely to persist for at least one year. If the allowance is awarded before you are 66, it will continue beyond that age. The decision on whether or not you meet the medical criteria is made by the HSE Senior Medical Officer in your area. If you are living in an institution, you are entitled to receive the allowance provided you meet the criteria.

The means test for Mobility Allowance is similar to the test for Disability Allowance outlined in the summer edition of Spokeout and the advice remains the same. If you think you may be entitled to any benefit, you should apply unless you are absolutely sure that you do not qualify. For detailed information on means testing, you should request Department of Family Social Affairs’ leaflet **SW29** or visit www.welfare.ie/EN/Publications/SW29

Mobility Allowance is currently paid at a high rate of €202 per month and a low rate of €101 per month. People who are availing of the Disabled Driver or Disabled Passenger Schemes to purchase or adapt a vehicle will only qualify for the lower rate. If you are in receipt of Mobility Allowance and you receive a Motorised Transport Grant towards the purchase or adaptation of a car, you will not be entitled to receive Mobility Allowance for a period of three years from the date of the grant.

To apply for Mobility Allowance, you should contact your HSE Local Health Office. The HSE information line is **1850 24 1850** or visit www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find_a_Service

FREE TRAVEL

The Free Travel Pass is issued automatically if you are resident in the State and receiving Invalidity Pension, Disability Allowance, Carer’s Allowance or Blind Person’s Pension. Other persons, including specified carers for a person getting Constant Attendant Allowance, also qualify. If you do not get the Free Travel Pass automatically, but think you may qualify, you should apply to the Free Travel Section, Department of Social and Family Affairs.

The pass allows you to travel free, at any time, on all public transport and on certain private bus and ferry services including mainline rail, DART, all Dublin Bus and Bus Eireann services, and the Aran Island Ferry (if you hold a Free Travel Pass and you live permanently on any of the Aran Islands, you may travel for free on 12 single journeys using Aer Arann services between the islands and Galway City, while visitors can avail of a reduced rate). The Free Travel Pass is also valid on all schemes operated by the

Rural Transport Initiative. Travel Pass holders can complete return trips to Northern Ireland free-of-charge. People with disabilities who are entitled to free travel are allowed to have their spouse or partner travel free with them. If you have been medically assessed as unable to travel alone, you are entitled to a Companion Free Travel Pass for one person. Your companion must be over the age of 16.

For full information on the Free Travel Pass or the Free Travel Companion Pass and application forms, you should request information leaflet **SW40** from the Department of Social and Family Affairs or your local Citizens Information Centre. Alternatively, visit www.welfare.ie/EN/Publications/SW40

USING PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Iarnród Éireann produces a guide for rail travellers, including DART users, titled 'Guide for Rail Passengers with Disabilities.' This is available free-of-charge at stations and can be downloaded from www.irishrail.ie. It offers advice and also provides information on facilities available at each station.

The Dublin Bus 'Guide to Accessibility' is available free from their offices at **59 Upper O'Connell St.** **Tel: 01 703 3204.** The Dublin Bus fleet is currently 88 percent low floor wheelchair accessible. By the end of 2009, 40 percent of bus stops will have integrated kerbing. The Dublin Bus website www.dublinbus.ie indicates which routes are fully accessible. The website also contains a section on accessibility.

The Dublin Bus Travel Assist Scheme helps people with disabilities build confidence to use the service by themselves. Trained Travel Assistants accompany you (you must be over the age of 18) for the first few times you use the service. The service is free. **Tel: 01 703 3204. Email travelassist@dublinbus.ie**

All Bus Éireann City Services are low floor wheelchair accessible. Bus Éireann also operates a number of accessible double deck vehicles, mainly on the Ashbourne/Dublin and Drogheda/Dublin routes. The company is currently trialing a number of accessible high line coaches on inter-city services. For further information see www.buseireann.ie

CASE STUDY

WITHOUT ACCESS TO TRANSPORT MY LIFE WOULD BE VERY LIMITED, SAYS DECLAN LEE

Declan Lee is a wheelchair user who currently lives in one of the Irish Wheelchair Association's Independent Living Units in Galway City. Declan is not a car owner and he qualifies for Mobility Allowance at the high rate which is an important source of income to help him meet his travel costs.

"I'm attending a computer course in Ballindine from Monday to Thursday. My Personal Assistant (PA) takes me there and back and I contribute towards the transport costs. Also on Fridays, I use the Galway Accessible Transport Service to attend a rehabilitative course in the city. Throw in the odd taxi and at the end of the month there is not much change out of €200," he says.

Declan also uses the Bus Éireann City Service which is "mostly" accessible he says. He qualifies for the Free Travel Pass and his PA qualifies for the Free Travel Companion Pass. "I use the bus to go into the city and to socialise. Transport is an important part of my life; Without access to transport my life would be very limited," said Declan.

