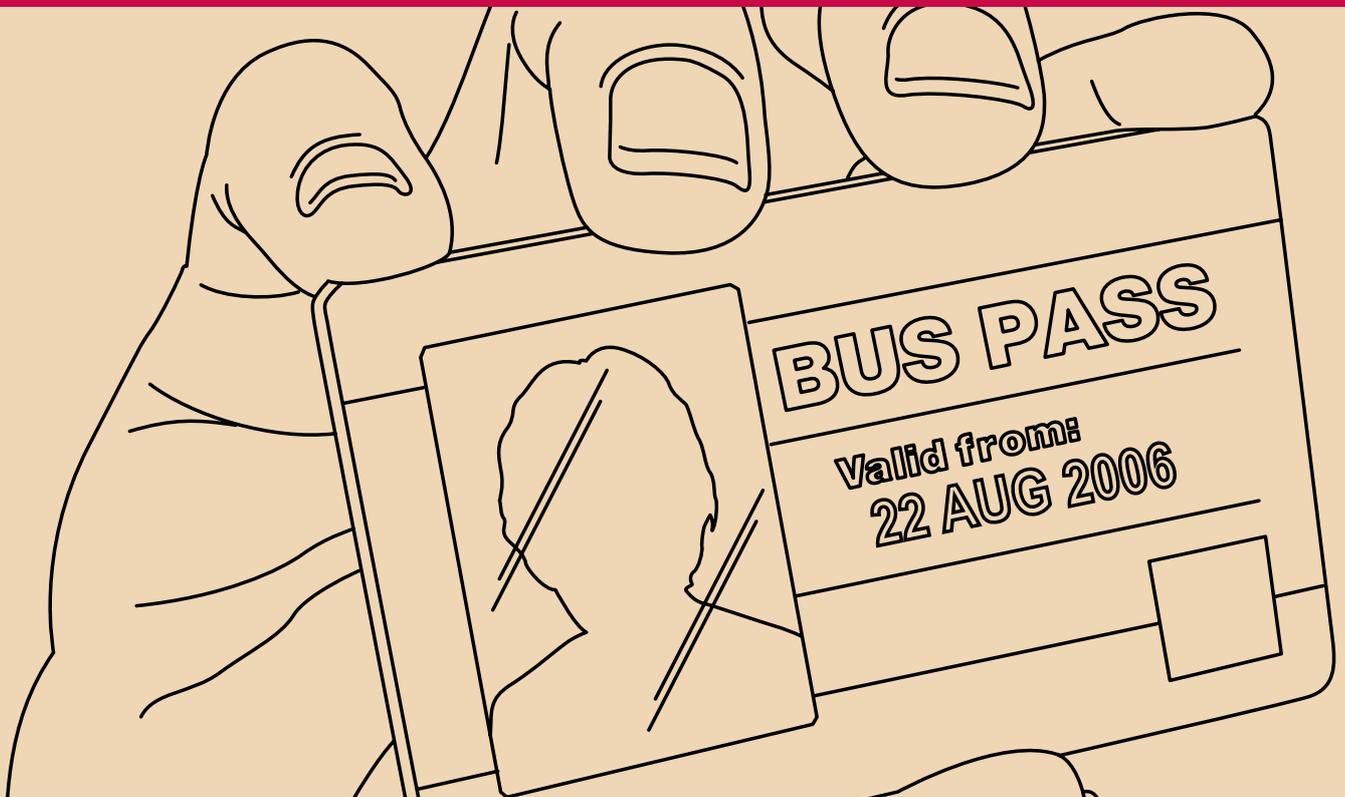


Keeping Mobile



**Staying active
and independent**

Advice for older people

Endorsed by



Help the Aged produces a range of free advice leaflets for older people

Financial leaflets

- Can You Claim It?
- Check Your Tax
- Claiming Disability Benefits
- Questions on Pensions
- Thinking About Money

Housing and home safety leaflets

- Care Homes
- Fire
- Help in Your Home
- Housing Matters
- Keep Out the Cold
- Your Safety
- Your Security

Health leaflets

- Bereavement
- Better Hearing
- Better Sight
- Bladder and Bowel Weakness
- Fight the Flu
- Fitter Feet
- Healthy Bones
- Healthy Eating
- Keeping Mobile
- Managing Your Medicines
- Shingles
- Staying Steady

Leaflets are free of charge and available from the Information Resources Team at the address on the back page, email adviceleaflets@helptheaged.org.uk or fax 0870 770 3282.

This leaflet is endorsed by RADAR, The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation.

If you would like this leaflet in another format, such as large print or audio tape, please contact the Information Resources Team on **020 7278 1114**.

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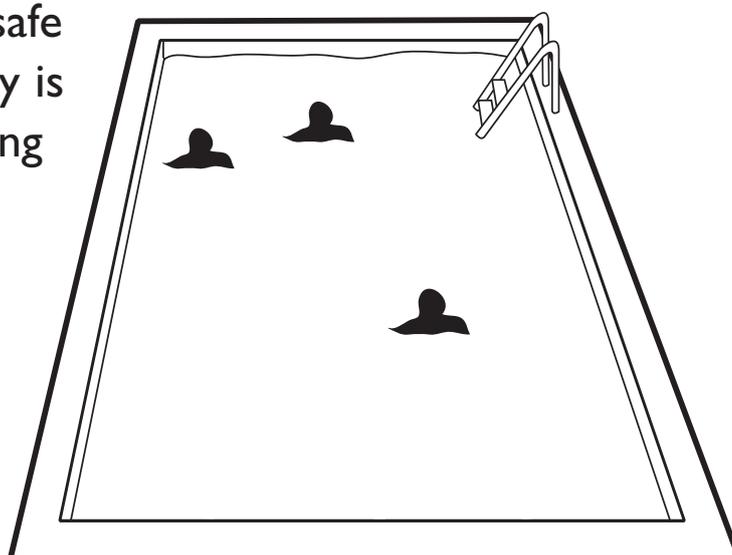
Keeping mobile is the key to an independent life. This leaflet offers advice on staying fit and active, and looks at sources of help if you do have problems getting around.

Health and fitness

Keeping fit and healthy helps you to stay mobile and independent. It is never too late to change your diet or take up some form of exercise to improve your suppleness, strength and staying power.

Staying active

Whatever your age, regular, safe and enjoyable physical activity is an essential part of maintaining a healthy way of life. There are many benefits, from strengthening bones to making sure that your heart and lungs stay in their best condition. You will feel better inside and out. As a bonus you may also meet new people and enjoy a new activity.



You don't have to try and become super-fit; it can just be a question of doing more of what you do already. Although if you do want to take up a new sport or activity, age should be no barrier.

There is something for everyone. If you enjoy doing things by yourself, you could try walking, cycling or swimming. If you like company, there are classes and clubs for many activities which are a good way of meeting like-minded people. Many local authorities

run classes for older people. Some have classes especially for people with medical conditions such as heart disease and arthritis. Contact your local sports centre or your council to find out what is available in your area. Or see our information sheet no. 25 *Leisure Ideas* for some more suggestions.

If you don't usually get much exercise it's a good idea to start gently and then build up. That way, your body will gradually get used to being more active, and you are far less likely to strain any muscles. If you are having medical treatment talk to your doctor before taking up a new activity or exercise.

If you have mobility problems ask your doctor or physiotherapist about finding a class which will meet your needs. An organisation called **EXTEND** trains teachers to give 'movement to music' classes to older or disabled people. If you would like to find out about teachers in your area, contact EXTEND, 2 Place Farm, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire AL4 8SB; tel: 01582 832760; web: www.extend.org.uk If you write to them please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

Help the Aged produces a book of graded exercises to improve muscle strength. This book, called *Exercise for Healthy Ageing*, is priced £4. Write to Help the Aged Publishing at the address on the back page. We produce a video called *Be Strong, Be Steady* and a video/DVD called *Step to the Future*. Both feature a range of aerobic endurance and strength exercises which were devised specifically for older people to keep strong and active in later life. Both the videos and the DVD cost £12. Contact Help the Aged Home Shopping by phone or online. Tel: 0870 770 0441; web: www.helptheaged.org.uk/homeshopping

Chair Based Movement 4 Fitness Improvement produces a DVD for older people or those with movement limitations who need to sit down to exercise. The DVD costs £16.99 and is

available from Chairbased Movement 4 Fitness Improvement;
tel: 07747 041 486; web: www.chairbasedmovement.com

RADAR publishes a range of leisure guides for disabled people who want to stay active or take up new activities. The range includes *Sport & Outdoor Activities* which is priced £7. See page 22 for contact details.

Watching your weight

Being overweight makes it harder to enjoy exercise. It may make any problems with arthritis worse, and can increase the risk of heart and chest troubles, diabetes, backache and varicose veins – all of which can make you less mobile. If your mobility is restricted because of your weight, then it is time to ask your doctor for help and advice.

If you need to lose some weight, try and cut back on sugary and fatty foods and eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. Don't skip meals, or restrict your diet unless your doctor advises it. It is very important to have a varied diet so you get all the nutrients you need for good health. Remember, it's not healthy to be underweight either. For further information on a healthy diet, see our free advice leaflet *Healthy Eating*.

Looking after your feet

It is difficult to keep mobile and active if you have tired, aching feet, or suffer from corns, ingrowing toenails or bunions. Without proper care and treatment minor foot problems may steadily grow worse, affecting your ability to walk.

If you feel you need chiropody treatment talk to your doctor; they may be able to arrange free treatment through the NHS. For straightforward advice on taking care of your feet, see our

free advice leaflet *Fitter Feet*.

Giving up smoking

It is never too late to give up smoking. No matter what your age, it is the single most effective thing you can do to improve your health. Your breathing will become easier, your circulation will improve and you will reduce the risk of developing diseases which can restrict your mobility.

For advice on giving up smoking, or cutting down the amount you smoke, call the free **QUIT helpline** on **0800 00 22 00** (open every day from 9am to 9pm), or talk to your doctor.

Problems with joints

Rheumatic diseases affect millions of people in the UK. Although painful and stiff joints and muscles can seriously affect your mobility, help is available. For example:

- your doctor may be able to prescribe drugs to relieve your symptoms;
- a physiotherapist can give help with special exercises; and
- an occupational therapist can give advice on mobility aids and on protecting your joints.

Your doctor should be able to refer you to a physiotherapist or an occupational therapist for this sort of help.

Complementary medicine

You may be interested in alternative forms of medicine – such as acupuncture or reflexology. However, consult your doctor first for a diagnosis of your condition. You can get details of registered practitioners in different forms of alternative medicine from

the Institute for Complementary Medicine. Write to the **Institute for Complementary Medicine**, PO Box 194, London SE16 7QZ, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. Or telephone the Institute on 020 7237 5165 – they are open on weekdays from 10am to 3.30pm.

Mobility aids and useful equipment

A mobility aid could help you if you have problems getting about. Finding one that suits you can help you to regain much of your independence. A walking stick is the simplest mobility aid – this can be helpful if just one of your legs needs extra support.

If both your legs need support, then you may need to use two walking sticks, a walking frame or a rollator. If you find it very difficult to walk at all, then you may need a wheelchair. If you are able to walk but find it difficult or tiring to get about as easily as you used to, then you may want to consider getting a ‘personal vehicle’.

Walking sticks, walking frames and rollators

It is important that your **walking stick** is the correct length. It should be level with the wrist crease when your arm is held by your side. If you use two walking sticks to help you balance, they need to be longer because they will be held in front of you. A walking stick should have a rubber end called a ‘ferrule’, which prevents it from slipping. Ferrules wear out quickly so they need to be checked regularly. You can buy replacements from large chemists.

Walking frames give more support than a walking stick, are more stable, and help increase confidence. **Rollators** are wheeled frames which are easier to manoeuvre and do not break up the pattern of walking. They are good for people with

moderate balance problems.

Walking sticks, walking frames and rollators can all be supplied free of charge by the NHS. Talk to your doctor if you think you need a walking aid. He or she may refer you to the local hospital's physiotherapy department. Your local social services department may also sometimes provide walking aids. Always get advice from your doctor or a physiotherapist on which walking aid is most suitable for you and on how to use it.

Wheelchairs

The NHS provides wheelchairs free to people who need them on a permanent basis. You don't have to need to use a wheelchair all the time; you may just need to use one a few times a week. However, the rules on who is entitled to a wheelchair do vary from area to area. If you think you need a wheelchair, talk to your doctor or hospital consultant. They can refer you to your local NHS wheelchair service.

There are many different types of wheelchair, so think carefully about your own particular needs. Will you be using the chair indoors, outdoors or both? How long will you use it each day? Will you need to pack it away in a car? Ask your doctor, physiotherapist or occupational therapist for advice on what will be best for you.

If you can't get a wheelchair through the NHS, you may wish to look at buying one privately. This can be an expensive option, so again it is vital to get advice on choosing the right wheelchair for your needs.

Seek advice, whether you are getting your wheelchair through the NHS or buying one yourself. The **Disabled Living Foundation**, the **Mobility Information Service** and the **Queen**

Elizabeth's Foundation Mobility Centre can all offer advice on choosing a wheelchair. Many **Disabled Living Centres** have a range of wheelchairs on display so you can try out different types. Contact **Assist UK** to find your nearest Centre. Contact details for all these organisations are listed on pages 18 to 22.

RADAR publish an independent guide to help you purchase a mobility scooter or powered wheelchair called *Get Mobile*. See page 22 for contact details.

If you only need a wheelchair on a temporary basis, you may be able to hire one or get one on loan from:

- your local social services department (social work department in Scotland or health and social services trust in Northern Ireland) or hospital
- your local British Red Cross (a small fee may be payable)
- your local Shopmobility scheme (see page 16).

Personal vehicles

Personal vehicles – often called scooters or buggies – can be either battery or petrol-operated, and come in two main types. Class 2 vehicles can be used only on pavements at a top speed of four miles per hour; some of them can be taken into shops and public buildings. Class 3 vehicles can be driven on the road at up to eight miles per hour. It is important to consider local traffic conditions and general road safety when thinking about buying a personal vehicle.



The **Mobility Information Service** and the **Disabled Living Foundation** can give you advice on choosing a scooter or buggy that meets your needs. The Mobility Information Service can also advise on insurance.

Equipment for daily living

Everyday activities such as getting out of the bath, doing the housework or climbing the stairs may become more difficult if you have mobility problems. However, there are lots of aids and adaptations which can make things easier. The **Disabled Living Foundation** and **Assist UK** can advise you on what is available. You may be able to get the aids you need following an assessment by an occupational therapist from your local social services department.

If your home needs to be adapted on a larger scale, you might like to contact the **Centre for Accessible Environments**. They can offer advice on how to improve the layout and usability of your home. A local Disabled Living Centre may display larger equipment for you to try out, such as stairlifts or special shower units.

You may be able to get a grant or other help from your council to help you with the cost of adapting your home. Your local social services department or Citizens Advice Bureau should be able to advise you. Or see our information sheet no. 4 *Home Repairs and Improvements* for more details.

Second-hand equipment

If you want to buy or sell second-hand equipment, you can subscribe to the **Disability Equipment Register**. Subscribers receive a monthly magazine with details of equipment for sale.

For more information contact Disability Equipment Register, 4 Chatterton Road, Yate, Bristol BS37 4BJ; tel: 01454 318818; web: www.disabilityequipment.org.uk

A local Disabled Living Centre or your local disability organisation may also know of second-hand equipment for sale in your area. Some companies buy and sell second-hand equipment, such as electric wheelchairs, and these may come with a limited guarantee.

Advice for drivers

If you have difficulty getting around, having your own car can make all the difference to your independence. Several organisations offer information and advice about buying and driving a car specially adapted for a disabled person. These include the **Mobility Information Service**, the **Mobility Advice and Vehicle Information Service (MAVIS)** and the **Queen Elizabeth's Foundation Mobility Centre**.

Motability

Motability is a charity that helps people to use the higher rate mobility component of their Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or their War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement to buy powered wheelchairs, personal vehicles and cars through a hire purchase scheme.

For cars, Motability covers:

- a new car every three years
- free tyres
- insurance
- road tax
- servicing, maintenance and repairs

- breakdown cover
- window or windscreen replacement.

However, your DLA or Mobility Supplement won't necessarily cover all the costs: you may also have to pay a deposit, the cost of necessary adaptations, running costs and so on. Do check exactly what you will need to pay before committing yourself.

Exemption from VAT and road tax

Disabled people do not have to pay VAT on equipment for daily living, wheelchairs, personal vehicles or on cars specially adapted to carry a disabled person in a wheelchair. See VAT Notice 701/7, *VAT reliefs for disabled people* for more information. You can get a copy from the HM Revenue and Customs helpline on 0845 010 9000 (you will need to give your postcode when you call).

People who receive the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance don't usually have to pay Vehicle Excise Duty (road tax) on their car. Call the **Disability Living Allowance helpline** on 0845 712 3456 for an exemption certificate (if you are in North Ireland call the Disability and Carer's Service on 028 9090 6182).

Blue Badge Scheme

The Blue Badge Scheme offers parking concessions to some disabled people. You may be entitled to a Blue Badge if you:

- have difficulty walking or are unable to walk at all;
- are registered blind; or
- have a disability which affects both your arms.

You can use the Blue Badge whether you are a driver or a passenger. Generally, it allows you to park on yellow lines, in

spaces marked for disabled people, and at parking meters with no charge or time limit. Blue Badges are specific to the person, not the vehicle so you can use your blue badge in any car, not just your own. Apply to your local social services department (or to the social work department or chief executive of your local council if you live in Scotland).

The scheme operates throughout England, Scotland and Wales, with the exception of some town centres and parts of central London. It also applies while you are travelling abroad within the European Union and in some other European countries. For further information, get a copy of *The Blue Badge Scheme* leaflet by calling 0870 122 6236.

The Disabled Persons Badge Scheme provides similar parking concessions in **Northern Ireland**. For more information or an application form contact the Disabled Persons Badge Scheme Central Office, Castle Barracks, Wellington Place, Enniskillen BT74 7HN; tel: 028 6634 3700.

Getting around without a car

If you don't have the use of a car, and you use public transport to get around, you may be able to get help with your travel costs. If you have difficulty using public transport, there may be a local transport scheme which can help.

Public transport

There are different rules about concessionary fares for older people in each of the four nations of the UK. Men and women qualify for these concessions at the same age.

- In **England** local councils must offer free passes giving people aged 60 and over at least 50 per cent off bus fares. Local off-peak bus travel is free for people aged 60 and over.

- In **Northern Ireland** people aged 65 and over can get a pass offering free travel on buses and trains.
- In **Scotland** people aged 60 and over are entitled to travel free on local buses at any time of day Scotland-wide.
- In **Wales** people aged 60 and over are entitled to free bus travel.

Wherever you live in the UK, contact your local council for more information about what is available in your area.

If you travel by train you can apply for either a Senior Railcard (for people aged 60 and over), or a Disabled Persons Railcard. Once you've bought a railcard you can then buy most rail tickets at a reduced rate. You can get an application form and further details from main railway stations.

Many coach companies also offer discounts to older people. Contact your local coach station to find out what is on offer.

Local transport schemes

Local transport schemes rely on volunteer drivers who use their own cars to provide a door-to-door service. These schemes are often run by voluntary organisations, such as **WRVS** and local **Volunteer Bureaux**. Your local council may also offer a similar service.



Dial-a-ride schemes use converted cars and minibuses to provide a door-to-door service for older and disabled people. They will take you wherever you wish within a local area. You will need to book in advance and you may have to pay a mileage cost.

To find out about transport schemes in your area, contact:

- the Community Transport Association on 0870 774 3586;
- a local disability organisation, or your local disability information and advice line (DIAL);
- your local social services department (social work department in Scotland, health and social services trust in Northern Ireland); or
- a local branch of WRVS.

Shopmobility schemes loan wheelchairs and scooters to help older and disabled people to shop independently. You can get information about schemes in your area from the National Federation of Shopmobility. Some WRVS groups also operate a special shopping service for disabled people. Contact your local WRVS group to find out what they can offer.

If you live in Greater London and you are a disabled person, you may be entitled to a **Taxicard**. This allows you to use taxis at a reduced rate. For more details, contact ALG TEC Taxicard, New Zealand House, 80 Haymarket, London SW1Y 4TZ; tel: 020 7484 2929 or Transport for All, 336 Brixton Road, London SW9 7AA; tel: 020 7737 2339.

Travel and holiday advice

There are several organisations which offer information and advice about travel and transport. **Holiday Care** can help people with mobility problems find an appropriate holiday. **RADAR** publishes an annual holiday guide for disabled people, *Holidays in Britain and Ireland*. This costs £13 including postage and packing. RADAR also publishes a *Days Out* guide priced £7.

Our information sheet no. 12 *Holidays* gives more advice on planning and choosing holidays.

Financial help

If you are under 65 and have difficulties getting around, you may be able to claim a benefit called **Disability Living Allowance** (DLA). There are two parts to DLA.

- **DLA care component** – for people who need help with personal care; and
- **DLA mobility component** – for people who have difficulty walking or getting around.

DLA mobility component is paid at two rates:

- **higher rate:** to qualify for this rate, you must be unable to walk, or have great difficulty walking, or be in serious danger if you do walk
- **lower rate:** you can qualify for this rate even if you can walk, but you must need guidance or supervision from someone else to make sure you are safe or to help you find your way around in a strange place

To claim DLA, your impairment must have started **before the age of 65** and you must **claim before your 65th birthday**.

The higher rate of DLA mobility component can be used to help you buy a powered wheelchair, a personal vehicle or a car through the organisation Motability (see page 12 of this leaflet for more details).

If you become disabled after your 65th birthday, you can't get extra money to help with the costs of getting around. However, you may be able to claim a benefit called **Attendance Allowance** to help with the costs of your personal care.

For more information on benefits for disabled people see our free advice leaflet *Claiming Disability Benefits*. For personal advice you can call our free advice line, **SeniorLine**, on **0808 800 6565**. If you are in **Northern Ireland**, contact SeniorLine on **0808 808 7575**.

Useful contacts

Arthritis Care

18 Stephenson Way

London NW1 2HD

Tel: 020 7380 6500

Helpline: 0808 800 4050 Web: www.arthritiscare.org.uk

Provides information and advice about arthritis and runs local support groups.

ASCS (Advice Service Capability Scotland)

11 Ellersly Road

Edinburgh EH12 6HY

Tel: 0131 313 5510

Minicom: 0131 346 2529 Web: www.capability-scotland.org.uk

Provides advice and information to disabled people in Scotland.

Assist UK

Redbank House

4 St Chad's Street

Manchester M8 8QA

Tel: 0870 770 2866 Web: www.assist-uk.org

Assist UK can help you find your local Disabled Living Centre. At your local Disabled Living Centre you can see and try out products and equipment to aid independent living.

The British Council of Disabled People

Litchurch Plaza

Litchurch Lane

Derby DE24 8AA

Tel: 01332 295551

Minicom: 01332 295581 Web: www.bcodp.org.uk

An organisation representing local disability organisations throughout Britain. Can help you find your local disability organisation.

British Red Cross

See your local telephone book, or contact:

44 Moorfields

London EC2Y 9AL

Tel: 0870 170 7000 Web: www.redcross.org.uk

Loans wheelchairs and other medical equipment.

Centre for Accessible Environments

70 South Lambeth Road

London SW8 1RL

Tel: 020 7840 0125 Web: www.cae.org.uk

Provides information on adapting and improving your home if you have a disability.

Dial UK

St Catherine's

Tickhill Road

Doncaster DN4 8QN

Tel: 01302 310123 Web: www.dialuk.org.uk

Provides information and advice on all aspects of living with a disability, including local transport schemes.

Disability Action Northern Ireland

Portside Business Park

189 Airport Road West

Belfast BT3 9ED

Tel: 028 9029 7880 Web: www.disabilityaction.org

Offers information and advice on getting out and about if you are disabled.

Disability Wales

Bridge House, Caerphilly Business Park

Van Road

Caerphilly CF83 3GW

Tel: 029 2088 7325 Web: www.disabilitywales.org

The national association of disability groups in Wales.

Disabled Living Foundation

380–384 Harrow Road

London W9 2HU

Tel: 020 7289 6111

Helpline: 0845 130 9177 Web: www.dlf.org.uk

Provides impartial advice on equipment and products to help with daily living.

Holiday Care

7th Floor, Sunley House

4 Bedford Park

Croydon CR0 2AP

Tel: 0845 124 9971 Web: www.holidaycare.org.uk

Provides information on holidays for disabled and older people.

Mobility Advice and Vehicle Information Service (MAVIS)

Crowthorne Business Estate

Old Wokingham Road

Crowthorne RG45 6XD

Tel: 01344 661000 Web: www.dft.gov.uk/access/mavis

Offers advice on driving and vehicle adaptations for people with a disability.

Mobility Information Service

20 Burton Close, Dawley

Telford TF4 2BX

Tel: 01743 340269 Web: www.mis.org.uk

Offers advice on buying and using disability equipment including information on insurance.

Motability

Goodman House, Station Approach

Harlow

Essex CM20 2ET

Tel: 0845 456 4566 Web: www.motability.co.uk

Helps people to use their DLA to buy powered wheelchairs, personal vehicles and cars through a hire purchase scheme.

National Federation of Shopmobility

The Hawkins Suite, Enham Place

Enham Alamein

Andover SP11 6JS

Tel: 0845 644 2446 Web: www.justmobility.co.uk/shop

Local Shopmobility schemes loan wheelchairs and scooters to help older and disabled people to shop independently.

The Queen Elizabeth's Foundation Mobility Centre

Damson Way

Fountain Drive

Carshalton SM5 4NR

Tel: 020 8770 1151 Web: www.qefd.org/mobilitycentre

Provides training and information for disabled drivers.

RADAR

12 City Forum

250 City Road

London EC1V 8AF

Tel: 020 7250 3222 Web: www.radar.org.uk

RADAR is a national organisation run by and working for disabled people. They publish a range of useful guides for disabled people.

RADAR's National Key Scheme offers disabled people independent access to over 6,500 locked public toilets around the UK. You can buy a key for £3.50. RADAR also publishes the National Key Scheme guide, priced £10.70. It lists all toilets fitted with the National Key Scheme lock and is updated every year.

Volunteer Bureau

Look in your telephone book.

WRVS

See your local telephone book or contact:

Garden House, Milton Hill

Steventon

Abingdon OX13 6AD

Tel: 01235 442900 Web: www.wrvs.org.uk

Provides a range of services, including local transport schemes, to help people in need who might otherwise feel lonely and isolated.

Contacting our services

Information and advice

Care fees Call 0500 76 74 76 (freephone) or use the form in www.helptheaged.org.uk

Benefits, care and housing options In Britain, call SeniorLine (0808 800 6565 or, in Northern Ireland, 0808 808 7575).

Equity release/home reversion/home income plans Call 0845 2300 820.

Wills and legacies Call 020 7239 1965 for our free will information pack or to arrange a visit from a specialist advisor.

Employment and job skills Call The Age and Employment Network on 020 7843 1590.

Home support

Home security and fire safety devices Call the HandyVan service on 01255 473999.

Immediate-response/monitoring service (24-hour) to help protect people living alone. Call SeniorLink, 01255 473999.

Gifted housing Support service to help people stay independent in their own homes. Call 01225 447800.

Quality of life

Transport Our SeniorMobility scheme helps voluntary groups provide transport in their communities. Call 020 7239 1825.

Home shopping Items to make everyday living easier, safer, more comfortable and more enjoyable. For a catalogue, call 0870 770 0441.

Insurance Travel and motor* insurance services with no age barriers; also home and pet insurance. Call 0800 41 31 80.

Help in a crisis

SeniorLink 24-hour immediate-response service (England, Scotland and Wales). Call 01255 473999.

CareLine (Northern Ireland). Call 02890 230 666.

*Motor insurance is not available to Northern Ireland residents

Help the Aged produces 24 free advice leaflets (see inside for full list). These are available from the Information Resources Team at the address below, email advicelaflets@helptheaged.org.uk or fax 0870 770 3282.

July 2006

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Fighting for disadvantaged older people in the UK and overseas,

WE WILL:

COMBAT POVERTY wherever older people's lives are blighted by lack of money, and cut the number of preventable deaths from hunger, cold and disease

REDUCE ISOLATION so that older people no longer feel confined to their own home, forgotten or cut off from society

CHALLENGE NEGLECT to ensure that older people do not suffer inadequate health and social care, or the threat of abuse

DEFEAT AGEISM to ensure that older people are not ignored or denied the dignity and equality that are theirs by right

PREVENT FUTURE DEPRIVATION by improving prospects for employment, health and well-being so that dependence in later life is reduced

Head Office, 207–221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ

T 020 7278 1114 F 020 7278 1116

E info@helptheaged.org.uk www.helptheaged.org.uk

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