



Citizens **Information** Board  
*information · advice · advocacy*

# Guide to entitlements for people with disabilities



# How to use this booklet

This booklet outlines entitlements for people with disabilities, so that you can quickly get to know the services and supports available. It is a summary and not a complete guide.

You can get more information on all the topics covered in this booklet and the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 supports from:

- Your local **Citizens Information Centre**
- The Citizens Information Phone Service on 0818 07 4000
- Online at **[citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie)**



We use QR codes to link this printed booklet with more detailed online information. You can scan the QR codes in the booklet with your phone to be brought to the relevant page on [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie).

You can get to the online version of this booklet by scanning the QR code below.



# Contents

Education and training	2
Health services	5
Disability payments	8
Caring for a person with a disability	10
Employment	11
Housing	13
Transport	15
Tax	17
Complaints and appeals	19
Further information	20
Notes	21

This guide is published by the Citizens Information Board. The information is intended as a general guide only and is not a legal interpretation.

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# Education and training

## Early years

The **Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme** provides free early childhood care and education for pre-school children. The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) supports children with disabilities to access the ECCE Scheme in mainstream pre-schools and to be fully included in the pre-school curriculum with their peers. For more information see [aim.gov.ie](http://aim.gov.ie).

Children with a disability have a right to an **assessment of need** (under the Disability Act, 2005) for the health and education supports and services they need.

A **Visiting Teacher Service** supports children and babies with hearing or visual impairment at home and in school.

## Going to school

**Special needs education** provides specific educational arrangements for children with disabilities. Students go to ordinary classes in mainstream schools where possible or may be in special classes in mainstream or special schools. In **primary** and **post-primary education**, students may get additional help from learning support and resource teachers and get care support from special needs assistants. Parents can contact the **Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO)** in their area to find out about arrangements and supports (see [ncse.ie](http://ncse.ie) for contact details).

**Additional supports in primary school** may include supports for children with hearing impairment, speech and language disorder, visual impairment, moderate general learning disabilities and autistic spectrum disorders. These supports can include assistive technology, a home tuition grant for children who are unable to go to school and a **summer education programme** which extends the school year into the summer. Children with special educational needs have the right to free primary education up to age 18.

**Post-primary school supports** include **grants for assistive technology**. Students with disabilities who are sitting **State examinations** can request special arrangements.

Many areas have **school transport for children with special needs**. In other areas a **Special Transport Grant** may be available.

## Further education

If you are **leaving school**, are unemployed or looking for your first job, there is a range of **vocational education and training supports** available.

Unlike vocational training, **rehabilitative training** is not directly linked to the labour market but focuses on core life skills, social skills and basic work skills. Trainees usually get a training allowance and keep their social welfare payment.

**Springboard+** provides free places on courses leading to awards at certificate, degree and post-graduate level to people who meet the eligibility requirements.

As part of their **CAO application**, students with a disability can use the **DARE admissions scheme** (Disability Access Route to Education) which offers places on a reduced-points basis to school-leavers with disabilities.

There are a number of **supports for third-level students with a disability**. The Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) promotes the participation of students with disabilities in third-level education. Most third-level institutions have a Disability Officer or Access Officer who can provide help and information. Your college can make a claim on your behalf to the **Fund for Students with Disabilities** to fund services and supports for you.

Students with disabilities are eligible for **third-level student grants** on the same basis as other students. If you have been getting a social welfare payment, you may qualify for a **Back to Education Allowance**.

Scan the QR code to find out more  
about childcare and education



# Health services

## Early years

GPs (family doctors) provide free development checks for babies after their birth. **Public health nurses** monitor how babies develop in their first months and can provide information and support to parents and guardians.

Children with a disability are entitled to an **assessment of need** (under the Disability Act, 2005) for health supports and services, an assessment report and a statement of the services they will get.

Health services for children with disabilities are organised and delivered differently in different areas. Your Local Health Office can tell you about the services that are available in your area.

## Help with the cost of treatment

A **medical card** entitles you to a range of health services free of charge, including GP services and public hospital services. You may get a medical card because of your income or your personal circumstances. If a **Domiciliary Care Allowance** is being paid for your child, your child can get a medical card without an income test.

If you are not eligible for a medical card, you may qualify for a **GP visit card**. GP visit cards entitle you to visit a participating GP for free. A GP visit card is available without an income test to all children under the age of 6 and to everyone over the age of 70. Everyone else must pass an income test. It is expected that free GP care for children aged 6 and 7 will be introduced in 2022.

Medical card holders are entitled to **prescribed medicines** but must pay a **prescription charge**. If you don't have a medical card, you can register for the **Drugs Payment Scheme** which covers prescription costs that are over a set monthly amount. Under the **Long-Term Illness Scheme**, people with certain medical conditions can get free medicines and appliances for those conditions.

**Dental, hearing and eye services** are provided to medical card holders and to children who are referred from **child health service** and **school health service** examinations. Medical card holders are entitled to a free annual dental examination, extractions, two fillings and emergency treatment. Other treatments, including dentures, need approval from the local Health Service Executive (HSE) dental surgeon.

The **Treatment Benefit Scheme** may cover you for dental, hearing and eye services if you have enough Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) contributions. Support with the cost of wigs, hairpieces or hair replacement systems due to illness will be introduced under the Scheme in June 2022.

There are **charges for public hospitals** but some people are exempt, including medical card holders, children up to 6 weeks of age and children referred from child health clinics or school health checks.

## Residential care

If you need long-term nursing home care, the **Nursing Homes Support Scheme**, also known as the Fair Deal Scheme, can provide financial support.

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) **regulates residential services and residential respite services** for children and adults with disabilities.

## Community care

**Community care services** include **public health nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, home help services, chiropody services, speech and language therapy services, respite care and day care.**

There are variations in the provision of community care services and not all services are available in all areas. Find out more about what is available locally by asking your Local Health Office, Citizens Information Centre or GP.

Scan the QR code to find out more  
about health services



# Disability payments

For some payments you must have enough **Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI)** contributions from work to qualify. Other payments have a **means test** and whether you qualify depends on your income.

## PRSI-based payments

**Illness Benefit** is a short-term payment to people who are unable to work due to illness and who have enough PRSI contributions. If you don't have enough PRSI contributions you can apply for the means-tested **Supplementary Welfare Allowance**.

The **Occupational Injuries Benefit Scheme** is for people who have been injured at work or while travelling to or from work or who have contracted a disease due to their work. The main benefits under this scheme are **Injury Benefit**, which is a short-term payment, and **Disablement Benefit**, which can be paid as a long-term pension or as a once-off payment.

**Invalidity Pension** is a long-term PRSI-based payment for people with a serious illness or disability.

## Means-tested payments

**Disability Allowance** is a long-term means-tested payment for people with a disability that substantially restricts their capacity to work. You can earn a certain amount from work while getting Disability Allowance.

**Blind Pension** is a long-term means-tested payment for people who are blind or have low vision. You can earn a certain amount from work and get a Blind Pension. **Blind Welfare Allowance** is a means-tested supplementary payment paid by the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The **Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme** helps people with little or no income. It includes a basic weekly payment for people who do not qualify for other payments and supplements for rent and for exceptional or urgent expenses.

## Extra benefits

**Household Benefits Package, Fuel Allowance, Free Travel** or a **Living Alone Increase** may be paid as well as your main disability payment.

Scan the QR code to find out more about disability and illness payments



# Caring for a person with a disability

If you are caring for someone with a disability, you may qualify for a carer's payment. The two main payments for people who provide full-time care are:

- **Carer's Benefit** (based on your PRSI contributions)
- **Carer's Allowance** (which is means tested).

You may be entitled to a **half-rate Carer's Allowance** if you are getting another social welfare payment and taking care of someone.

If you are caring for a child aged under 16 who has a severe disability, you may be able to get **Domiciliary Care Allowance** for them.

There is an annual **Carer's Support Grant** paid to carers (it was called the Respite Care Grant).

You can take unpaid **carer's leave** from work for up to two years to provide full-time care for a person who needs it. Parents who are working can take **parental leave** from employment before their child is 12 years of age. If your child has a disability, you can take parental leave before your child turns 16.

Scan the QR code to find out more  
about payments to carers



# Employment

If you have a disability, there are employment supports to help you get a job and stay in employment.

The **EmployAbility Service** provides support if you are disabled and looking for work or are already in a job. Supports include:

- Job sourcing and job matching
- On-the-job support and coaching
- Help with integrating into the workplace

The **Job Interview Interpreter Grant** can fund an interpreter, if you have an interview for a job and you are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment.

If you are starting a job or are already working with a disability, you or your employer can apply for the **Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant** to adapt the workplace or buy equipment.

If you are visually impaired or blind, you can apply for a **Personal Reader Grant** to employ someone to help with reading at work.

## Social welfare payments

If you are getting Disability Allowance or Blind Pension you may keep your payment and **do some work**. You must notify the Department of Social Protection when you start work.

If you are getting Illness Benefit or Invalidity Pension you cannot work (except for unpaid voluntary work). You must transfer to **Partial Capacity Benefit** if you want to work. If you qualify for Partial Capacity Benefit you can keep all or part of your payment, depending on how restricted your capacity for work is.

If you want to **start your own business** you may be eligible for the **Back to Work Enterprise Allowance** or the **Short-Term Enterprise Allowance**.

## Supports for employers

The **Wage Subsidy Scheme** gives financial support to employers of people with disabilities whose productivity levels are reduced by a certain amount and who work at least 21 hours a week.

The **Employee Retention Grant Scheme** helps employers to keep employees at work if they get an illness, condition or impairment that affects their ability to carry out their job.

The **Disability Awareness Support Scheme** funds employers for staff training to raise awareness of disability issues in the workplace.

## Employment support schemes

The **Community Employment scheme** is designed to help people who are disadvantaged or long-term unemployed to get back to work by offering placements in jobs based within local communities.

The **Rural Social Scheme** is aimed at low-income farmers and fishermen or fisherwomen who are getting certain social welfare payments, including Disability Allowance.

The **Community Services Programme** supports voluntary and community groups to provide local services and to create employment opportunities for disadvantaged people.

The new **Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP)** gives people who have never had a job or who have lost their job a chance to get work experience.

Scan the QR code to find out more  
about disability and work



# Housing

## Grants to adapt your home

If you have a disability, you may be able to get financial help to make changes to your home to make it more suitable for your needs.

The **Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability** funds changes that need to be made to a home to make it suitable for a person with a physical, sensory or intellectual disability or mental health difficulty.

If you only need minor work done, you can apply for the **Mobility Aids Grant Scheme** instead.

The **Housing Aid for Older People Grant** is aimed at people aged over 66 to improve the condition of their home, but may apply to people under 66 in cases of hardship.

As well as applying for one of these grants, you may be able to get a **VAT refund on aids and appliances purchased**. This also applies to the cost of installation work.

## Warmer and greener home

The **Better Energy Homes Scheme** provides grants to homeowners to upgrade their homes with energy-saving and renewable energy. If you are renting, your landlord may be able to get a grant under the scheme.

The **Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme** funds energy upgrades for homeowners on low incomes.

## Renting

If you are on a low income and you need somewhere to live, you can apply for **local authority housing**, which is allocated according to need. Local authorities take disability into account when assessing applications for housing.

Some local authorities and **voluntary organisations** provide specific housing for people with disabilities. There may also be other services available to tenants, such as social activities, meals and support staff. Rents are based on your ability to pay.

If you qualify for social housing support but there is no suitable social housing available in your area, you should apply for the **Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)**. Under HAP, you arrange to rent from a private landlord. The local authority pays your landlord directly and you pay a rent contribution to the local authority, based on your ability to pay.

**Rent Supplement** is a payment for people in private rented accommodation who cannot afford to pay the full rent. If you are getting Rent Supplement for a long period, you may be eligible for the **Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)**, which provides long-term housing under local authority agreements with landlords. Or, you may be asked to switch over to HAP.

## Mortgage arrears

If you are in mortgage arrears, you should talk to your lender. Your lender must follow the **Central Bank's Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears (CCMA)** and its **Consumer Protection Code 2012** when dealing with you and reviewing your case.

You can contact the **Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)** to help you deal with your debt. The **Abhaile** scheme, available through MABS, can offer many services including financial, legal and insolvency advice.

Scan the QR code to find out more about housing grants and schemes



# Transport

## Bus and train

The **Free Travel Scheme** is available to people aged 66 and over. If you are aged under 66 and have a disability, you may also qualify. It allows you to travel, free of charge, on public transport and some private bus and ferry services. If you can't travel alone for medical reasons, you may get free travel for a companion, which allows anyone aged over 16 to accompany you.

Your **Public Services Card (PSC)** will have FT (for Free Travel) in the top left hand corner, if you have free travel. The letter following it shows who you can take with you:

- FT-P - you can travel for free
- FT+S - your spouse, partner or cohabitant can travel with you for free
- FT+C - you can have a companion (over 16) travel with you for free

**Public transport services** provide supports for people with disabilities travelling by **bus, luas** or **rail**.

## Car

Disabled drivers may be eligible for **Disabled Drivers and Passengers Tax Relief** and the **Disabled Person's Parking Card**. If you qualify for this tax relief you can apply for a free pass for toll roads by contacting your nearest toll road operator.

## Air travel

Airlines and tour operators flying from EU airports cannot refuse to carry passengers or take bookings on the basis of reduced mobility. Airports and airlines must provide free assistance to **airline passengers with reduced mobility**.

## Guide dogs

**Guide dogs and mobility training** are available to help people with visual impairments safely navigate their environment.

Scan the QR code to find out more about transport



# Tax

Income from almost all sources is taxable. Some income from social welfare payments is not taxed, such as Disability Allowance, and some compensation payments are not taxed.

## Tax credits and reliefs

**Tax credits and reliefs** reduce the amount of tax you have to pay. There are some **tax reliefs for people with disabilities**. These include the **Blind Person's Tax Credit** and the **Guide Dog Allowance**.

You can claim **tax relief on the cost of employing a carer** for yourself or for another family member.

The **Incapacitated Child Tax Credit** can be claimed by the parents of a child with a permanent disability.

The **Home Carer Tax Credit** is available to married couples or civil partners if one of them works in the home caring for a person aged over 65, a child, or a person with a disability who needs care.

The **Dependent Relative Tax Credit** may apply if you provide the costs of everyday living for:

- A relative who is not able to provide for themselves due to old age or illness
- A son or daughter who lives with you and who you depend on because of your old age or ill health

You can claim **tax relief on medical expenses** that you pay for yourself or for someone else, including doctors' bills, medicines, appliances, and hospital and nursing home costs.

The **Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers Scheme** provides a range of tax reliefs linked to the purchase and use of vehicles by disabled drivers and disabled passengers.

You may be able to claim a **Value-Added Tax (VAT) refund on aids and appliances**, as well as on building work covered by a housing adaptation grant.

Other tax reliefs include the **Age Tax Credit** and **bereavement tax credits**.

**Deeds of covenant** may offer tax savings where you give money to a person who is aged over 65 or is permanently incapacitated.

If you are aged over 65 or permanently incapacitated and you have a low income, you may be exempt from **Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT)**, which is charged on interest earned on savings.

A **trust fund** that is set up for the benefit of someone who is totally and permanently incapacitated may be exempt from tax.

Scan the QR code to find out more about  
taxation for people with a disability



# Complaints and appeals

If you are unhappy about a service you have received, or if you feel that you have been unfairly treated when claiming your entitlements, you can make a complaint or an appeal. You can get help to make a complaint or an appeal from your **local Citizens Information Centre**.

## Social welfare

If you are refused a social welfare payment or get a lower payment than you expected, you can appeal the decision to the **Social Welfare Appeals Office**.

## Health and social care

**Healthcomplaints.ie** has information on how to make a complaint about health and social care services. For complaints about public health services you can use the **HSE complaints process**. There is a separate complaints process if you wish to make a complaint about an **assessment of need**.

## Public bodies and disability services

The **Ombudsman** can investigate complaints about public bodies. Under the Disability Act 2005, the Ombudsman also has a role in investigating complaints about accessibility to public services.

## Children

The **Ombudsman for Children** can investigate complaints about public bodies that relate to children.

# Further information

## Online

You can get more information on any of the topics covered in this booklet on **citizensinformation.ie**. You can also scan the QR codes in this booklet to be taken directly to more detail on the topic.

## Citizens Information Phone Service

If you have questions about any of the information covered in this booklet you can contact the Citizens Information Phone Service on 0818 07 4000, Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 8.00pm.

## Citizens Information Centres

You can visit your local Citizens Information Centre for information and advice. Find your nearest centre at **centres.citizensinformation.ie**.

## National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities

The National Advocacy Service (NAS) for people with disabilities is an independent, confidential and free advocacy service. It has a particular remit for people with disabilities who are isolated from their community and services, have communication differences, are inappropriately accommodated, live in residential services, attend day services and have limited supports.

You can contact NAS on 0818 07 3000 or you can visit **advocacy.ie**.



# January 2022

The Citizens Information Board provides independent information, advice and advocacy on public and social services through [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie), the Citizens Information Phone Service and the nationwide network of Citizens Information Centres (CICs). It is responsible for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) and the National Advocacy Service for people with disabilities.

## Citizens Information



**[citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie)**



**0818 07 4000**

**Mon to Fri, 9am – 8pm**



**Call or email**

**your local Citizens Information Centre**



Get more information about all the topics in this booklet on [citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie).

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