

Choosing a Car

One of a series of fact sheets produced by the Family Support Service

If you have never driven a car you may be apprehensive about your ability to drive and adaptations that you may need.

First of all you will need an assessment carried out at a Driving Assessment Centre and referral should be made through your GP.

Choosing your car

When choosing your vehicle, you should first consider your needs both now and for the next few years. The most important factors are safety and access. You should think about the door width and sill and boot height of the vehicle.

If you have a wheelchair or other equipment, make sure there is enough space for it in the vehicle. Check the driving position and make sure the hand and foot controls are suitable and easy to use.

You should test drive any of the vehicles that you are considering buying. If you are not going to be the driver of the vehicle, you should take a test drive as a passenger.

Tips on choosing the right vehicle:

Do you need:

- Three or five doors?
- Manual or automatic gears?
- Power assisted steering?

What about:

- Internal storage space?
- Door size?
- Seat height?

Will you be:

- The driver?
- The passenger?
- Both the driver and passenger?

Do you:

- Walk unaided?
- Sometimes walk or use a wheelchair?
- Always use a wheelchair?
- Think you may need a wheelchair within the next few years?

Paying for your car:

Many rely on Disability Living Allowance (DLA) Higher Rate Mobility Component to finance their mobility needs and details of this are available from the Family Support

Service. You can use this benefit to buy a car on hire purchase and many manufacturers allow discounts to disabled people when purchasing new cars. The advantage of this method of purchase is that you will own the car at the end of the agreement with no annual inspection and no compulsory excess payment for any damage that may occur.

Those with an award of the higher rate of the mobility component of the DLA for at least one year may hire a car, powered wheelchair or trike.

Although the agreement runs for three years you will be responsible for the other two years if DLA is not continued.

The Motability scheme is a straightforward exchange for the higher rate mobility component for a car which is insured, maintained then returned at the end of the three year lease period. The vehicle is inspected annually and must meet strict criteria on condition such as wear and tear. There is an insurance excess which varies according to your age – check with Motability, although this sum will be refunded if the customer is not at fault and once the appropriate information has been collated. There may also be an advanced payment on certain types of vehicles which is non-refundable. There is also a maximum mileage allowed of 45,000 over the three year period and any excess above this is charged to you.

The Schemes are:

- A three-year Contract Hire Scheme to lease a new car
- A five-year Contract Hire Scheme to lease a Quadricycle
- A four-or-five year, Hire Purchase Scheme to buy a new car
- A two-or-three year, Hire Purchase Scheme to buy a used car

Motability also has charitable funds that may provide financial help to those who have difficulty in paying for their cars, driving lessons or specialist vehicles.

The Family Support Service is a member of the Regional Motability Panel and can feedback directly to Motability any areas of difficulty users experience. If you would like to discuss problems you have encountered with the Scheme contact the Family Support Workers on 08459 11 11 12.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Family Support Workers at:

Scottish Spina Bifida Association - Family Support Service

Address: The Dan Young Building, 6 Craighalbert Way, Cumbernauld, G68 0LS • Tel: 01236 794516 • Fax: 01236 736435

Lo-Call Helpline: 08459 11 11 12 • E-mail: familysupport@ssba.org.uk • Web: www.ssba.org.uk

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