

# Entitlements for Blind, Visually Impaired and Disabled Persons

(Resident in the Republic of Ireland)

January 2019



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# Foreword

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to your “go to” booklet on rights and entitlements for your child/ young person with a visual impairment and/or other disabilities.

The information in this document has been compiled for you in large part from the **[citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie)** web site. We encourage you to reference their site periodically for updates and additional information that may be added.

Vision impairment is a term that covers many vision problems, as well as different kinds of vision loss including blindness.

By working with health professionals in your local area or with organisations such as ChildVision, National Educational Centre for Blind Children we can help your child with vision loss to adapt, learn and achieve his/her full potential on their individual journey to adulthood.

## What is vision impairment?

Vision impairment means lots of different things. It can range from no vision (blindness) or very low vision to not being able to see particular colours. Vision impairment can happen at any age in life. Many vision conditions in children or young people will stay the same through their life. Some conditions might result in vision problems for only a short time, but others might get worse over time, resulting in much poorer vision or blindness as the child gets older.

## What is low vision?

Low vision is when your child can't see all the things he or she should be able to see for their age. Your child might have low-to-no vision, blurred vision or loss of side vision. Alternatively, his/her eyes might not be able to see some colours – this is called colour blindness

## What is blindness?

A child is considered legally blind when they can't see at 6 metres what a person with normal vision can see at 60 metres, or if his/her field of vision is less than 20° in diameter (a person with normal vision can see 180°).

When parents/guardians find themselves in this situation, they are often at a loss as to where to turn to and what help is out there. This booklet seeks to answer some of the questions and source information on services and entitlements which can be of help.

# Blind Pension

The Blind Pension is a means-tested payment paid to blind and visually impaired people who are habitually resident in Ireland. The payment is made by the Department of Social Protection. To qualify for the Pension you must supply an eye test from an ophthalmic surgeon to verify your visual impairment.

The payment is made up of a personal rate for you and extra amounts for a qualified adult and any child dependants (see "Rates" below). If you are awarded a Blind Pension, you may also qualify for the **Blind Welfare Allowance** paid by the HSE.

You will automatically get a **Free Travel Pass** and a Companion Free Travel Pass. (A Free Travel Pass allows you to travel on State public transport in Ireland for free. A Companion Free Travel Pass allows your companion aged 16 or over to also travel for free). You may also qualify for other benefits such as the Living Alone Increase and the Household Benefits Package.

Blind Pension is a taxable source of income.

**Budget 2018:** the maximum weekly Blind Pension rate will increase by €5, with proportional increases for qualified adults and those on reduced rates of payment. In addition, the weekly rate for a qualified child will increase by €2 from €29.80 to €31.80. These increases will take effect from the week beginning 26 March 2018.

# One-Parent Family Payment and Blind Pension

Blind Pension is payable with One-Parent Family Payment (OFP). This means that a person who qualifies for OFP and Blind Pension can get both payments at the full rate. People who qualify for Blind Pension are exempted from the age conditions for OFP. This means that you can claim both Blind Pension and OFP (and any IQCs payable with both Blind Pension and OFP) together until your youngest child is 16 years of age. This provision is in effect from April 2015.

## Rules

If you are blind or have a serious visual impairment before reaching 18 years, you should make your claim 4 months before your 18th birthday. (If you are aged 16-18, you may qualify for Disability Allowance).

Blind Pension is not paid after you turn 66.

If you become blind or seriously visually impaired after your 18th birthday, you should apply as soon as possible. This is important as payment can only be made from the date your application is received. If you require full-time care, the person looking after you may qualify for a Carer's Allowance or Carer's Benefit.

## The Means Test

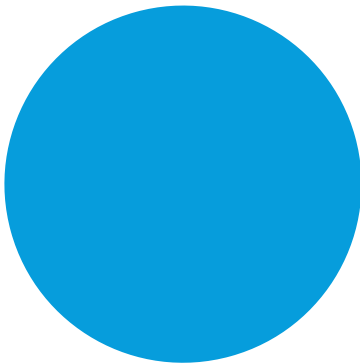
The main items that are counted as means include:

- ▶ Any cash income that you or your spouse, civil partner or cohabitant may have (including income from employment)
- ▶ The value of savings, investments, shares, land etc.
- ▶ Any property you may have
- ▶ Maintenance paid to you if you are deserted, separated or a civil partner not living with the other civil partner.

The following items are not counted as means for Blind Pension:

- ▶ Your own home
- ▶ Any payment made by the Department of Social Protection
- ▶ The value of the first €20,000 of capital assets (for example, savings)

- ▶ Money received from a recognised charitable organisation (excluding public or local authority)
- ▶ The maintenance part of a student grant from SUSI paid to you, a qualified adult or child dependant(s) for certain courses
- ▶ Income up to a certain limit from rehabilitative employment
- ▶ Income from rehabilitative training
- ▶ Domiciliary Care Allowance
- ▶ Child Benefit, Supplementary Welfare Allowance or foster care allowances
- ▶ Mobility Allowance from the Department of Health
- ▶ Blind Welfare Allowance paid by the HSE



# Work and Blind Pension

You can earn €120 per week from rehabilitative employment before these earnings affect your payment. If you earn more than €120 per week from rehabilitative work, 50% of your earnings between €120 and €350 are not taken into account in the Blind Pension means test. All your earnings over €350 are assessed as income and your entitlement to Blind Pension will be reduced in line with the appropriate reduced rates of payment for Blind Pension.

If you have income from work that is not rehabilitative the following disregards apply:

- ▶ €400 of your annual earnings
- ▶ €265 of your annual earning if your spouse/partner is living with you or is wholly or mainly maintained by you
- ▶ €133 of your annual earnings for each of your qualified children under age 18 (or under age 22 if in full time education).

There are no disregards for your spouse, civil partner or cohabitant's earnings.



# Blind Pension and other payments

If you are under age 66 and you satisfy the relevant conditions, you may also qualify for:

- ▶ Adoptive Benefit
- ▶ Half-rate Carer's Allowance
- ▶ Health and Safety Benefit
- ▶ Illness Benefit
- ▶ Injury Benefit
- ▶ Jobseeker's Benefit
- ▶ Maternity Benefit
- ▶ One-Parent Family Payment (until your youngest child is 16)
- ▶ Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's Contributory and Non-Contributory Pension

If an increase is payable for a qualified spouse, civil partner or cohabitant and/or qualified children with your Blind Pension, an increase is also payable on the schemes listed above.

Blind Pension is payable while you are getting Partial Capacity Benefit. Partial Capacity Benefit is not taken into account in the means test for Blind Pension but your earnings are taken into account and may affect the amount of Blind Pension paid.

## Rates

Blind Pension maximum weekly rates from 17 March 2017

Blind Pension	Weekly rate (maximum) €
Personal Rate	193.00
Increase for a Qualified Adult	128.10
Increase for a Qualified Child	29.80 (full rate) 14.90 (half rate)

## How to apply

The application form (BP1) is available from your Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office. Staff in your Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office will be happy to help you to complete the form and can answer any questions you may have.

When you apply for Blind Pension you may need to send the Department certificates if the birth(s), marriage, civil partnership or civil union took place outside the Republic of Ireland. If you are unhappy with a decision made about your claim for Blind Pension, you can appeal against it. Find out more about the social welfare appeals process.

You must always tell the Department of Social Protection if there are any changes to your circumstances while you are getting a Blind Pension. If your means or circumstances change you may no longer qualify for the payment or it may be reduced. This could mean that you have to repay an overpayment.

## Where to apply

Your completed application form should be returned to the Department of Social Protection at the following address:

Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

Social Welfare Services  
College Road  
Sligo  
Ireland

**Please Note:** This office does not offer a service to personal callers. All queries must be made using the online enquiry form, by telephone or in writing.

**Tel:** (071) 915 7100

**Local:** 1890 500 000

**Homepage:** [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)

*Information Correct as of January 2018*

# Blind Welfare Allowance

## Introduction

The Blind Welfare Allowance is a means-tested payment from the Health Service Executive (HSE) to people who are blind or visually impaired. The allowance is paid to eligible people from 18 years of age.

## Rules

You may qualify for Blind Welfare Allowance if you:

- ▶ Are getting **Blind Pension** from the Department of Social Protection  
**or**
- ▶ Are getting an income maintenance payment from the Department of Social Protection, or an equivalent type social security payment from another country, and have a certificate of visual impairment from an ophthalmologist  
**or**
- ▶ Have an income below the combined Blind Pension rate and Blind Welfare Allowance rate and have a certificate of visual impairment from an ophthalmic surgeon

To qualify for Blind Welfare Allowance, your vision must have “best vision equal to or less than 6/60 in the better eye or if the field of vision is limited, the widest diameter of vision subtending an angle of not greater than 20 degrees”.

This can be confirmed by a certificate of visual acuity from your ophthalmic surgeon or by a letter from the National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI), who can confirm whether you meet the criteria to register as blind.

## Residential Care

You cannot get Blind Welfare Allowance if you are in a long-term residential care facility. However, if you are admitted into a residential care facility you can keep your Blind Welfare Allowance for a maximum of eight continuous weeks in any 12 month period.

## Rates

The weekly rate for Blind Welfare Allowance is:

- ▶ €58.50 for a single person
- ▶ €117.00 for a blind couple
- ▶ €4.40 for each child dependant

The Blind Welfare Allowance rate for a couple is only applicable where both the applicant and partner/spouse are blind or visually impaired and qualify for the allowance.

## How to apply

Apply to your Local Health Office for the Blind Welfare Allowance. If you consider that you have been wrongly refused Blind Welfare Allowance you can appeal the decision using the HSE appeals process. **Please Note:** This office does not offer a service to personal callers. All queries must be made using the online enquiry form, by telephone or in writing.

**Tel:** (071) 915 7100

(if calling from outside the Republic of Ireland please call +353 71 915 7100).

**Lo-Call:** 1890 500 000 (Note: the rates charged for using 1890 (Lo-Call) numbers may vary.

**Homepage:** [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)

# Tax reliefs for people with a visual impairment

## Introduction

If you have certain visual impairments you may claim a reduction in the amount of tax that you pay.

Under the tax system, the amount of tax that you pay to the Revenue Commissioners may be reduced by a system of tax credits and reliefs. You can read about how your tax is calculated for an explanation of how they work.

If you have certain visual impairments you can claim the Blind Person's Tax Credit. If you have a guide dog, you can apply for the Guide Dog Allowance. In addition, refunds are available for Value Added Tax that is paid on certain aids and appliances.

## Blind Person's Tax Credit

The Blind Person's Tax Credit is €1,650 for 2017. For a married couple or civil partners (where both spouses or civil partners are blind), the credit is €3,300.

Parents cannot claim a Blind Person's Tax Credit in respect of any children who are blind, but you can claim the Incapacitated Child Tax Credit.

To apply for the Blind Person's Tax Credit, you must have a certificate from an ophthalmic surgeon (a physician who performs eye surgery). The certificate must state:

- ▶ That your best vision does not exceed 6/60 visual acuity in the better eye with corrective lenses or
- ▶ That the widest diameter of your visual field subtends an angle no greater than 20 degrees.

The certificate issued by your ophthalmic surgeon should state whether the visual impairment is permanent, or temporary. If it is temporary, you will need a certificate for each year for which the credit is claimed. Otherwise the tax credit remains indefinitely.

## Guide Dog Allowance

An additional allowance is available if you, or your spouse, have a trained guide dog. (Guide dogs are especially trained to lead blind or visually impaired people around obstacles). In 2018, the allowance is €825 and you claim it at the standard rate of 20%.

## Value Added Tax (VAT) Refunds

Refunds can be claimed from Revenue for VAT paid on certain aids and appliances designed to help a blind person cope with daily functions, for example, specially adapted computer equipment, Braille books, Braille writing equipment, etc.

See VAT refunds on aids and appliances used by people with disabilities for more information.

## How to apply

To apply, fill in a claim form for the Blind Person's Tax Credit and Guide Dog Allowance.

You can also claim tax credits online through PAYE Anytime which is available through Revenue's **myAccount** service.

## Where to apply

Completed application forms should be returned to your local tax office.

# Personal Reader Grants

## Introduction

If you have a visual impairment or are blind and need some extra assistance with reading at work, you may be eligible to apply for a Personal Reader Grant. This grant aid allows you to employ someone on a part-time or ad-hoc basis for a maximum of 640 hours a year to help you with reading at work. The grant is provided under the Department of Social Protection's Reasonable Accommodation Fund.

Public sector employers (for example: government departments, State agencies, Health Service Executive, local authorities) are obliged to facilitate the needs of their staff with disabilities. This means making assistive technology, adaptive equipment and facilities, aids and appliances available. Public sector employers and their disabled employees are therefore not entitled to claim the Personal Reader Grant as these employers should make these services available from their own annual budgetary resources.

You do not have to be a registered blind person or someone with a specified level of visual acuity to apply for a Personal Reader Grant. If you are experiencing difficulty with reading at work for reasons of visual impairment, then you are entitled to apply for this grant. In addition, there is no means test associated with a Personal Reader Grant and you do not need to have a certain level of income to apply.

If you are a student at college or university and are experiencing difficulty with reading as a result of a visual impairment, you should get in touch with the Disability Liaison Officer for your college/university.

## Personal readers

Personal readers are not required to have any special formal qualifications. They do not require a prescribed standard of education, expertise or ability to comprehend the information they are reading. All personal readers need is a good standard of reading ability and the ability to read aloud in a way that will allow someone else to understand what he or she is saying.

It will be useful to familiarise yourself with the reading material in advance of working as a personal reader. This will allow you to judge how simple, complex or technical the information will be and will also give you the opportunity to check pronunciations or vocabulary.

You may be required to read this information aloud to the other person or you may be required to read this information onto recording equipment (for example, a tape recorder). Before you commence working, you should find out which way you are required to read the material.

## Recruiting a personal reader

If you wish to employ a personal reader, you should begin by identifying exactly the type and volume of reading work you require assistance with. You should also try work out how much assistance you will need on a daily or weekly basis and how many hours per day or week you will need the reader. You should be aware that the Personal Reader Grant is paid for a maximum of 640 hours per annum and there is a set hourly rate of pay (see "Rates" on page 24).

There are a number of ways to advertise for the services of a personal reader. Some people place an advertisement in a local newspaper, or in a local shop window or on a community notice board (for example, in a local community or shopping centre).

## Rules

Anyone (with the exception of public sector employees) who has a visual impairment or is blind and would benefit from using the services of a personal reader for up to 640 hours per annum is entitled to apply for this grant.

## Rates

The grant aid is a fee per hour in line with the national minimum wage for a maximum of 640 hours per annum. The number of hours that personal reading services are needed per week will depend on the type of work involved and should be agreed between you and your reader in advance. You can read more about maximum working hours here.

## How to apply

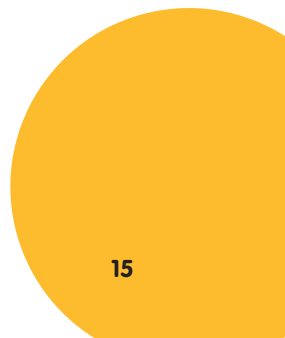
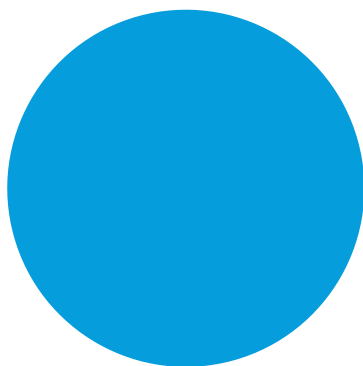
You can either apply yourself or if you are an employer, you can apply for a Personal Reader Grant on behalf of an employee. You will need to complete Part 1 and Part 2 of the Reasonable Accommodation Fund application form which is available online. It is also available from your local employment services office or Intreo centre.

If you have a visual impairment or are blind, staff in your local office will be pleased to help you complete the application form.



If you are a public sector employee and require assistance with reading at work as a result of an existing or progressive visual impairment, you should get in touch with the Disability Liaison Officer in your Human Resources Unit.

If you are a student in a college or university with a visual impairment and require further information on educational supports, contact the Disability Liaison Officer for your college.



# Benefits for people who are sick or have a disability

## Information

There are a number of social welfare payments for people who are sick or who have a disability. Payments are made either by the Department of Social Protection or the Health Service Executive (HSE). To qualify for a social welfare payment because you are sick or have a disability you must be certified as sick or disabled by a doctor.

You can qualify for certain payments if you are sick for just a short time. For other payments you need to show that you have an illness or disability that will last longer than one year. Some social welfare disability payments are based on your PRSI contributions. If you do not have enough PRSI contributions you may qualify for a similar social assistance payment, however, you must be habitually resident and pass a means test.

Illness Benefit is intended for those with a short-term illness. Invalidity Pension is a long-term payment.

Illness Benefit and Invalidity Pension are both social insurance payments based on your PRSI contributions.

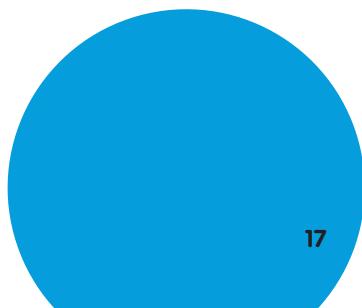
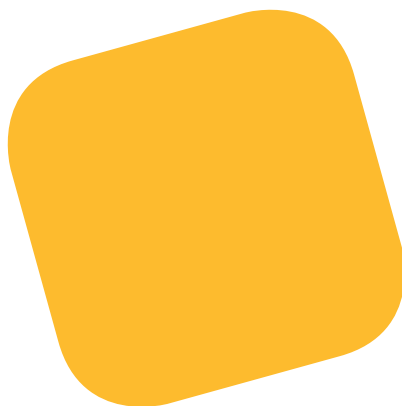
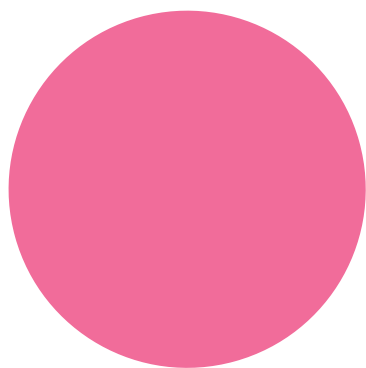
Partial Capacity Benefit is a scheme which allows you to return to work (if you have reduced capacity to work) and continue to receive a payment from the Department of Social Protection. To qualify for Partial Capacity Benefit you need to be in receipt of either Illness Benefit (for a minimum of 6 months) or Invalidity Pension.

Disability Allowance is a long-term social assistance payment for those aged 16-65 with a disability expected to last at least one year. Blind Pension is also a long-term social assistance payment. If you are blind or have low vision and you are getting Blind Pension or Disability Allowance you may also qualify for Blind Welfare Allowance.

The Occupational Injuries Benefit Scheme applies to work related injuries and diseases. If you are injured at work (or travelling directly to or from it) or have contracted a disease due to the type of work you do you may qualify for benefits under this scheme.

If you are sick and do not qualify for any payment you may be eligible for Supplementary Welfare Allowance.

Generally, social welfare payments are made up of a personal payment for yourself and extra amounts for your dependent spouse, civil partner or cohabitant and your dependent children.



# Other Payments

If you are getting a social welfare payment you may qualify for additional financial support because of your illness or disability, for example, under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme you can apply for a Heating Supplement, if you have exceptional heating expenses due to ill-health or infirmity.

You could be eligible for the Long Term Illness Scheme or a medical card or a GP Visit Card. Apply to your Local Health Office in the Health Service Executive. Find out more about health services for people with disabilities.

There are concessions for disabled drivers and passengers and local authority grants to adapt your home. There are also tax benefits available to people that are sick or have a disability.

If someone is providing you with full-time care they may qualify for a carer's payment.

# Recovery of personal injury-related benefits and assistance

From 1 August 2014, under the Recovery of Certain Benefits and Assistance (RBA) Scheme the Department of Social Protection can recover the value of certain illness-related social welfare payments from compensation awards made following non-fatal personal injuries claims. The value of the social welfare payments are recovered from the compensator and not from the injured person who is getting a social welfare payment.

The payments that can be recovered under the RBA Scheme are:

- ▶ Illness Benefit
- ▶ Partial Capacity Benefit
- ▶ Injury Benefit
- ▶ Incapacity Supplement
- ▶ Invalidity Pension
- ▶ Disability Allowance

Compensation payments may be made as a result of a court or Injuries Board order or as a result of an agreement between the two parties. In both cases a statement of recoverable benefits and assistance must be requested by a compensator or the Injuries Board from the RBA Section in the Department of Social Protection using the RBA01 form.

# The National Advocacy Service

The National Advocacy Service (NAS) provides independent, confidential and free advocacy for people with disabilities – in particular people who are isolated from their community and services, have communication differences, are inappropriately accommodated, live in residential services or attend day services and have limited supports. Advocates can help you to claim your entitlements and access services. The service is funded and supported by the Citizens Information Board. You can find contact details for advocates through the Citizens Information – ‘Find an Address’ service.

# Mobility training for people with visual impairments

## Information

Orientation and mobility training is of crucial importance to many people with visual impairments. Mobility training helps to develop skills required to move around safely in the environment. Some people with vision impairments have enough residual vision to move around independently. Other people may require a mobility aid such as a long cane which will help the person to find a safe way in front of them. Training may involve advising a person with low vision on how to use their residual vision to move around more safely. It may also involve more in-depth training in how to use a mobility aid such as a white cane or a guide dog.

Types of mobility aids are described below. Three organisations in Ireland provide orientation and mobility training for people with vision impairments which are: ChildVision, National Education Centre for Blind Children, National Council for the Blind in Ireland and Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind.

## White canes and walking sticks

There are three different types of white canes and also a white walking stick available, but only two of the white canes are classed as mobility aids:

- ▶ A **white walking stick** provides physical support for a person and indicates that the individual has sight loss. It is not a mobility aid.
- ▶ The **symbol cane** is used to indicate that a person holding it has impaired vision and may need assistance. It is not a mobility aid and does not provide physical support.
- ▶ The **long cane** is a mobility device which is used by sweeping the cane in an arc from side to side along the ground beyond the width of their body. This technique locates potential hazards and changes in the texture and level on the ground. Use of the long cane requires training.
- ▶ The **guide cane** is a mobility aid with more limited use than a long cane and, therefore, requires less training. It can be used in a diagonal position across the lower part of the body for protection or using a scanning technique to detect kerbs and steps. It does not provide physical support.

## Guide Dogs

In Ireland only certain breeds of dogs can become guide dogs. The main breeds are labradors and golden retrievers, and crosses of these breeds. Dogs that become guide dogs are only bred by Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind. Pups are fostered by families for twelve months and are then returned to the Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind to train for an eight month period. It is not possible to have a family pet or puppy trained to be a guide dog.

## Rules

ChildVision, National Education Centre for Blind Children and the National Council for the Blind in Ireland provide orientation and mobility training service which shows a person with a visual impairment how to move about safely indoors and outdoors. It may involve building up a person's confidence to walk down their garden, go to their local shop, travel on public transport or through crowded streets, traffic or country roads.

Trainers develop individual mobility programmes which may involve

- ▶ Teaching a person to maximise use of residual vision
- ▶ Body spatial and environmental awareness
- ▶ Use of sensory clues
- ▶ Orientation and mobility skills within the home, work, college or other everyday routes the person would like to become familiar with
- ▶ Road safety awareness and independent travel skills

Training is also available for sighted relatives and friends of people with vision impairments as to how to guide them effectively. ChildVision and NCBI also provide training in life skills for people with vision impairments.



## Where to Apply

### ChildVision, National Education Centre for Blind Children

Gracepark Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.

**Tel:** 01 8373635

**Email:** [info@childvision.ie](mailto:info@childvision.ie)

**Homepage:** [www.childvision.ie](http://www.childvision.ie)

### Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind

National Headquarters and Training Centre, Model Farm Road, Cork, Ireland

**Tel:** (021) 487 8200

**Locall:** 1850 506 300

**Homepage:** [www.guidedogs.ie](http://www.guidedogs.ie)

**Email:** [info@guidedogs.ie](mailto:info@guidedogs.ie)

### National Council for the Blind of Ireland

Whitworth Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9, Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 830 7033

**Locall:** 1850 33 43 53

**Fax:** (01) 830 7787

**Homepage:** [www.ncbi.ie](http://www.ncbi.ie)

**Email:** [info@ncbi.ie](mailto:info@ncbi.ie)

# Sport for blind and visually impaired people

## Information

### Vision Sports Ireland

Vision Sports Ireland (formerly Irish Blind Sports) is the national governing body in Ireland for sporting activities for blind and visually impaired people. The organisation was founded in 1989 to encourage the participation in sport by blind and visually impaired people at all levels. The organisation has an executive committee and a constitution that outlines the rules and guidelines under which the activities are undertaken. Funding for Vision Sports Ireland comes from the Sport Ireland.

Sports are conducted at all levels (including elite). Each sport undertaken by the organisation has its own principal co-ordinator who is responsible for promoting and organising activities within that sport. In recent years, the organisation has significantly expanded the range of sports it has become involved in.

Membership consists of people of all ages, backgrounds and sporting ability (including elite athletes). Sighted people can also become members of the organisation.

### Volunteers, coaches and guides

In addition to being participants in sport, sighted members frequently act as guides and volunteers. Volunteers, coaches and guides form an integral part of Vision Sports Ireland.

## Rules

While anyone can become a member of Vision Sports Ireland, the majority of participants range in age from teenagers upwards.

## Rates

Membership of Vision Sports Ireland for 1 year costs €10 for adults and €5 for children (payable on 1st January each year).

Membership is considered on an individual basis and fees may be waived in certain cases.

## How to apply

If you would like to become involved (as a participant, volunteer, coach, guide, etc.), contact the organisation at the address below. Further information about the sports involved and contact information for the coordinator of each sport is available on the Vision Sports Ireland website and from the following address:

## Where to apply

Vision Sports Ireland

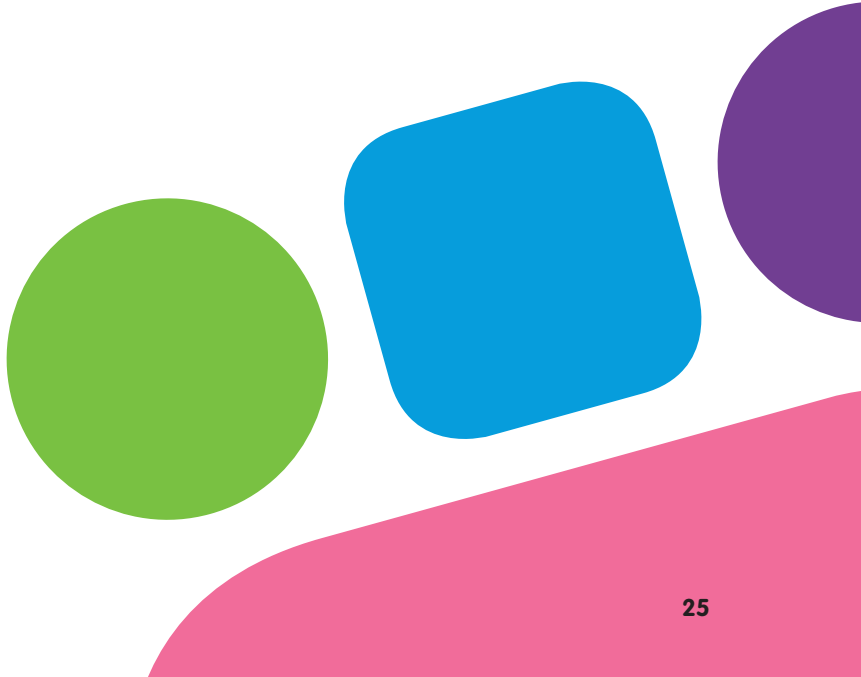
1 Christchurch Hall, High Street, Dublin 8, Ireland

**Tel:** +353 (0)1 454 7865

**Fax:** +353 (0)85 850 0193

**Homepage:** [www.visionsports.ie](http://www.visionsports.ie)

**Email:** [office@visionsports.ie](mailto:office@visionsports.ie)



# Support Organisations

ChildVision, National Education Centre for Blind Children  
[www.childvision.ie](http://www.childvision.ie)

Deafblind Ireland  
[www.deafblindireland.ie](http://www.deafblindireland.ie)

Disability Federation of Ireland  
[www.disability-federation.ie](http://www.disability-federation.ie)

Feach  
[www.feach.ie](http://www.feach.ie)  
(Feach is a support group for parents of children who are blind/visually impaired)

Fighting Blindness  
[www.fightingblindness.ie](http://www.fightingblindness.ie)

Fight for Sight  
[www.fightforsight.ie](http://www.fightforsight.ie)

Irish College of Ophthalmologists (ICO)  
[www.eyedoctors.ie](http://www.eyedoctors.ie)

Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind  
[www.guidedogs.ie](http://www.guidedogs.ie)

National Centre for Technology in Education  
[www.ncte.ie](http://www.ncte.ie)

National Council for the Blind of Ireland  
[www.ncbi.ie](http://www.ncbi.ie)

National Parents Council Primary  
[www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie)

National Parents Council Post-Primary  
[www.npcpp.ie](http://www.npcpp.ie)

Reading Services  
[www.childvision.ie](http://www.childvision.ie)

The Anne Sullivan Foundation for Deafblind People  
[www.annesullivan.ie](http://www.annesullivan.ie)

Vision Aware  
[www.visionaware.org](http://www.visionaware.org)

# Drivers and Passengers with Disabilities Organisations – Tax Relief Scheme

## Individuals

- ▶ Your Personal Public Service (PPS) Number is a unique identifier for use in any transactions you may have with public bodies or persons authorised by those bodies to act on their behalf.
- ▶ Your PPS Number can be found on tax documents or on correspondence from a Department of Social Protection or Revenue office. It may also be on your payslip.
- ▶ You should contact your local Department of Social Protection office if you cannot locate your own PPS Number. To find the address or contact number of your local office, consult the department's website [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie).

## Organisations Requirements

- ▶ Charity Number
- ▶ Tax Reference Number

Organisations must have a charity number. This is available from the Charities Regulatory Authority.

**Tel:** 01 633 1500 or

**Email:** [info@charitiesregulatoryauthority.ie](mailto:info@charitiesregulatoryauthority.ie)

When you have obtained your charity number, you must then obtain your tax reference number from your local Revenue District. Contact details available on [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie).

# Medical Qualification

## Primary Medical Certificate

1. To enter the tax relief scheme associated with this process the person with the disability must be in possession of a Primary Medical Certificate. Medical assessment and issue of the required certificate is carried out by the Senior Area Medical Officer (SAMO) attached to your local Health Service Executive office. Where the SAMO is satisfied that a person meets the medical criteria, a Primary Medical Certificate will be issued.
2. An applicant is normally only asked to present a Primary Medical Certificate at the time of first entry into the scheme. However, you may, occasionally, be asked to submit a fresh certificate in respect of any subsequent claim. The Revenue Commissioners also have the right to refer a person for assessment to the Board of Appeal where they have reason to believe that the medical criteria specified in the Primary Medical Certificate may not be met.

**It is important to note that possession of a Primary Medical Certificate is a fundamental requirement for relief under the scheme. Without this certificate an application for relief cannot be considered.**

## Medical Criteria

The medical criteria for entry to the scheme are that the person must be severely and permanently disabled and come within at least one of the following categories:

1. Be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both legs.
2. Be wholly without the use of one of their legs and almost wholly without the use of the other leg such that they are severely restricted as to movement of their lower limbs.
3. Be without both hands or without both arms.
4. Be without one or both legs.
5. Be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both hands or arms and wholly or almost wholly without the use of one leg.
6. Have the medical condition of dwarfism and have serious difficulties of movement of the lower limbs.

## Summary of Tax Relief Scheme

The scheme is open to persons who meet the specified medical criteria and have obtained a Primary Medical Certificate to that effect. They can apply for relief either as a driver with a disability or a passenger with a disability. Alternatively, there is provision for a family member of a passenger with a disability to apply.

Relief is available for the following applicant types, depending on the level of vehicle adaptation and is subject to a maximum amount of relief.

### Drivers with a Disability

- ▶ €10,000 for a driver with a disability where the vehicle has adaptations.
- ▶ €16,000 for a driver with a disability where the vehicle has more specific adaptations.
- ▶ €22,000 for a driver with a disability where the vehicle has extensive adaptations

### Passengers with a disability/family member of a passenger with a disability

- ▶ €16,000 for a passenger with a disability/family member of a passenger with a disability whose vehicle has adaptations.
- ▶ €22,000 for a passenger with a disability/family member of a passenger with a disability whose vehicle has more extensive adaptations.

### Organisations for People with Disabilities

- ▶ €16,000 for organisations in respect of the adaptation of a vehicle which is specially constructed or adapted for the transport of disabled persons and incorporates any of the relevant adaptations.
- ▶ €22,000 for organisations in respect of the adaptations of a vehicle which is extensively constructed or adapted for the transport of disabled persons and incorporates any of the relevant adaptations.
- ▶ No limit for organisations with a vehicle adapted to transport five or more people with disabilities, where the seating capacity for able-bodied passengers does not exceed twice the seating capacity for those who are disabled.
- ▶ €10,000, €16,000 or €22,000 for organisations who purchase and adapt a vehicle for a driver, depending on the level of vehicle adaptation.

## Engine Size Restriction

Relief is restricted to a vehicle which has an engine capacity up to 6,000c.c.

## Motor Tax Exemption

A vehicle which has been admitted to the scheme will also be entitled to an exemption from payment of Annual Motor Tax.

## Who can apply?

- ▶ **Drivers with Disabilities** who purchase a vehicle with the intention of driving it themselves must apply as a driver with a disability.
- ▶ **Passengers with Disabilities** who cannot drive themselves and purchase a vehicle for their use as a passenger.
- ▶ **Family Members** of a person with a disability who purchase a vehicle for the transport of that person as a passenger.

## Organisations must:

- ▶ have a "Charity Number", and
- ▶ be chiefly engaged in the care and transport of severely and permanently disabled persons

## Organisations may purchase and adapt a vehicle for a:

- ▶ driver with a disability, or
- ▶ passenger(s) with disabilities

As the terms and conditions for relief vary in each category, it is important that you read this information carefully before you make an application under the scheme and particularly before you enter into any financial commitment in respect of the purchase of a vehicle.



## Drivers with Disabilities

### Terms and Conditions

1. You must be in possession of a Primary Medical Certificate.
2. You must, due to the nature of your disability, be unable to drive a vehicle unless it is specially constructed or adapted for that purpose. A vehicle will not be regarded as meeting the adaptation requirement solely on the basis that it contains optional extras that are readily available from manufacturers or assemblers. For example, automatic transmission is not regarded as adaptation. If you can drive an unadapted vehicle you do not come within the scope of the scheme.
3. You are required to keep the vehicle in your possession for a minimum specified period. However, at the end of that period you will be entitled to make a further claim for relief if you purchase and adapt another vehicle. If you wish to change your vehicle before the end of the minimum specified period you will be required to make repayment to the Revenue Commissioners of all or part of the relief before relief on the replacement vehicle can be granted.
4. A vehicle acquired under a lease agreement does not qualify under the scheme. The vehicle must be purchased. However, a vehicle acquired under a hire-purchase agreement or a loan qualifies for the relief.
5. You may make an application for relief in respect of any of the following types of vehicle:
  - ▶ A new vehicle.
  - ▶ A used vehicle which has not been previously registered in the State (import).
  - ▶ A used vehicle which was previously registered in the State in which case the amount of the repayment will be the residual vehicle registration tax contained in the value of the vehicle, at the time of the application.
  - ▶ A vehicle already in your possession which is registered in your name.
6. The vehicle must be registered in the applicant's name.  
Where a vehicle has obtained full relief or the prescribed limits have been reached under the relevant provisions of the scheme and the vehicle is subsequently purchased by another applicant under the scheme, the vehicle may still qualify for the Fuel Grant and Annual Motor Tax exemption.

## Passengers with Disabilities

### Terms and Conditions

1. You must be in possession of a Primary Medical Certificate.
2. You must purchase the vehicle for your own use as a passenger and the vehicle must need to be specially constructed or adapted for you to travel in it. If you can travel in an unadapted vehicle you do not come within the scope of the scheme.
3. A vehicle will not be regarded as having been adapted solely on the basis that it contains optional extras that are readily available from manufacturers or assemblers.
4. You are required to keep the vehicle in your possession for a **minimum specified period**. However, at the end of that period you will be entitled to make a further claim for relief if you purchase and adapt another vehicle. If you wish to change your vehicle before the end of the minimum specified period you will be required to make repayment to the Revenue Commissioners of all or part of the relief before relief on the replacement vehicle can be granted.
5. A vehicle acquired under a lease agreement does not qualify under the scheme. The vehicle must be purchased. However, a vehicle acquired under a hire-purchase agreement or a loan qualifies for the relief.
6. You may make application for relief in respect of any of the following types of vehicle:
  - ▶ A new vehicle.
  - ▶ Registered in the State (import).
  - ▶ A used vehicle which was previously registered in the State in which case the amount of the repayment will be the residual vehicle registration tax contained in the value of the vehicle, at the time of the application.
  - ▶ A vehicle already in your possession which is registered in your name. Where a vehicle has obtained full relief or the prescribed limits have been reached under the relevant provisions of the scheme and the vehicle is subsequently purchased by another applicant under the scheme, the vehicle may still qualify for the Fuel Grant and Annual Motor Tax exemption.

## Family Members

### Terms and Conditions

1. You must be a family member of a person who is in possession of a Primary Medical Certificate. However, relief is confined to one family member only of the person with the disability.
2. You must reside with and be responsible for the transport of the person with the disability. Revenue may, in exceptional circumstances, waive the residency requirement.
3. The vehicle must be specially constructed or adapted for the passenger to travel in and must have been purchased primarily for the transportation of that person. If the passenger can travel in an unadapted vehicle, they do not come within the scope of the scheme.
4. A vehicle will not be regarded as having been adapted solely on the basis that it contains optional extras that are readily available from manufacturers or assemblers.
5. You are required to keep the vehicle in your possession for a **minimum specified period**. However, at the end of that period you will be entitled to make a further claim for relief if you purchase and adapt another vehicle. If you wish to change your vehicle before the end of the minimum specified period you will be required to make repayment to the Revenue Commissioners of all or part of the relief before relief on the replacement vehicle can be granted.
6. A vehicle acquired under a lease agreement does not qualify under the scheme. The vehicle must be purchased. However, a vehicle acquired under a hire-purchase agreement or a loan qualifies for the relief.
7. You may make application for relief in respect of any of the following types of vehicle:
  - ▶ A new vehicle.
  - ▶ A used vehicle which has not been previously registered in the State (import).
  - ▶ A used vehicle which was previously registered in the State in which case the amount of the repayment will be the residual vehicle registration tax contained in the value of the vehicle, at the time of the application.

- ▶ A vehicle already in your possession which is registered in your name. Where a vehicle has obtained full relief or the prescribed limits have been reached under the relevant provisions of the scheme and the vehicle is subsequently purchased
- ▶ by another applicant under the scheme, the vehicle may still qualify for the Fuel Grant and Annual Motor Tax exemption.

## How to apply for Relief

You will require your own PPS Number (Individuals) or Tax Reference Number (Organisations) to apply for this relief.

## Online Application (Individual)

Apply online using revenue's new online service **myAccount** on Revenue's website **www.revenue.ie**.

Once registered for **myAccount**, log into **myAccount** using your PPS Number and register your details including Bank Account IBAN and BIC.

When you log into **myAccount** you will get a range of options for services that you can undertake online:

- ▶ Select the Drivers & Passengers with Disabilities (DPD) option.
- ▶ By selecting Drivers & Passengers with Disabilities a range of options will be available depending on different criteria.
- ▶ Select the appropriate category that refers to your application.

**IMPORTANT: Please ensure that you have chosen the correct Exemption, and that you have the appropriate Vehicle Type Approval required for the Exemption that you are applying for.**

When you make your selection most of the form is already prepopulated with your personal details. (These relate to your unique PPSN.)

1. Check that all your details are correct.
2. You will be prompted to make your "application" claim from your details at hand.
3. Complete and submit.

If everything is in order and your application has been successful, the exemption notification will be available for you to download straightaway.

(A random number of applications will be selected for audit; this may delay the approval of some applications.)

Form DD1 is not currently available online for ROS customers but will be shortly.

## Paper Application

Paper forms can be completed and forwarded to the Central Repayments Office in Monaghan for processing.

## Application for Remission of VRT and VAT Repayment

### ▶ New Vehicle

Submit your claim for VAT/VRT relief with any required documents through **myAccount** at **www.revenue.ie**.

Note: Your vehicle must be adapted prior to Registration.

### ▶ Imported Vehicles

▶ When the vehicle is registered, a copy of the 'Vehicle Import Receipt' (available from NCTS centre) and paid invoice in respect of adaptations should be submitted through **myAccount** at **www.revenue.ie**. Where the vehicle is liable to VAT at registration, the Central Repayments Office will process a repayment of that VAT, if applicable.

### ▶ Used Vehicles – purchased from an Irish Motor Dealer

▶ Submit your application accompanied by your purchase invoices for vehicle and adaptations (marked paid in full in the applicants name) for repayment of VAT/residual VRT and a copy of your vehicle registration certificate (log book) through **myAccount** at **www.revenue.ie**.

▶ The majority of used/second hand vehicles purchased from a garage are purchased under the 'Margin Scheme'. This means that no VAT is payable when the vehicle is purchased and accordingly no VAT is refundable in these instances. The invoice for the purchase of the vehicle will normally state "Margin Scheme".

### ▶ Used Vehicles – purchased from a Private Individual

▶ In the case of a used vehicle purchased/acquired privately, your claim will be processed on receipt of a paid invoice for adaptations to the vehicle and a copy of the Vehicle Registration Certificate (Log Book) in the applicant's name.

## Motor Tax Exemption

A vehicle which has been admitted to the scheme will also be entitled to an exemption from payment of Annual Motor Tax as follows:

- ▶ In the case of a new vehicle or a vehicle which is being registered in the State for the first time, the relief will be granted on application to your local Motor Tax Office on presentation of the RF100 form (which is available from the garage or NCT centre if vehicle is imported). You do not need any documentation from the Central Repayments Office.
- ▶ If the vehicle had been previously registered in the State, the Central Repayments Office will issue you with a Certificate of Approval effective from the date of application or date of Primary Medical Certificate whichever is later.

When your claim is processed on **myAccount** at **www.revenue.ie** the Certificate of Approval will be available to download. This should be presented by you to your local Motor Tax Office.

Motor Tax Offices are listed in the telephone directory under Local Authorities or via their website [www.motortax.ie](http://www.motortax.ie).

## Fuel Grant

A new Fuel Grant was introduced under Section 81 of Finance Act 2015 to replace the excise relief payment on the fuel element of the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Scheme.

- ▶ The Revenue Commissioners administer this Grant on behalf of the Department of Finance who are funding this payment.
- ▶ The Grant relates to fuel used during the previous 12 months in the transportation of the person with the disability and is paid in arrears.
- ▶ The Grant can only be paid into the customer's personal Financial Institution Account (Bank, Building Society or Credit Union, etc.).

## Fuel Grant Rates

- ▶ Petrol €0.59 per litre
- ▶ Diesel €0.48 per litre
- ▶ LPG €0.10 per litre

## Maximum Claim

<b>Driver/ Passenger</b>	2,730 litres for a 12 month period commencing on or after 1 January 2015
<b>Organisation</b>	4,100 litres per Vehicle for a 12 month period commencing on or after 1 January 2015

## How to Claim this Fuel Grant

Log onto **myaccount** on the Revenue website **www.revenue.ie** and register your details including Bank Account IBAN and BIC. All persons/organisations that have a qualifying vehicle registered on the Disabled Drivers/Passengers/Organisations scheme may make an application for the Fuel Grant on or after 1 January 2016 for any 12 month period (in arrears) commencing on or after 1 January 2015.

An application in respect of any 12 month period can only be made within 48 months of the end of that period.

## For fuel used up to 31 December 2014

You may still claim the Excise Repayment by completing in full Form DD3/DD4 which is available on **www.revenue.ie/en/tax/vrt/forms/index.html** or by calling Revenue Commissioners, Forms & Leaflets Section on LoCall 1890 306 706. A four year time limit applies to these claims. Do not send in fuel receipts with your claim but retain for 48 months in the event of an audit being carried out.

## Maximum relief Available – Summary Table

Category	Max relief		
	Adaptations	Specific Adaptations	Extensive Adaptations
Drivers	€10,000	€16,000	€22,000
Passengers	€16,000	n/a	€22,000
Organisations (driver)	€10,000	€16,000	€22,000
Organisations	€16,000	n/a	€22,000
Organisations (five or more disabled persons)	No limit		
Vehicles must be held for	2 years	3 years	6 years

**Relief is restricted in all cases to vehicles which have an engine capacity up to 6,000c.c.**

## Specific Adaptations

The adaptations which qualify for this enhanced relief must be one of the following:

1. a modified rear or side entry incorporating an integrated ramp or lift and a modified floor to facilitate direct wheelchair access, and wheelchair restraints or a wheelchair docking station, or
2. a modified rear or side entry incorporating a lowered and modified floor to facilitate direct wheelchair access, and wheelchair restraints or a wheelchair docking station, or
3. extensive reconfiguration of primary controls necessary to enable the vehicle to be driven by the disabled person.

In the case of a new car, these adaptations must be certified under EU type-approval or by the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI). **This certificate must be in place prior to applying to Revenue for this relief.**

If a person wishes to adapt a used car to the specifications outlined above, the adaptations must be carried out by a Suitably Qualified Individual (SQI).



# Rent Supplement

## Introduction

Rent Supplement is a means-tested payment for certain people living in private rented accommodation who cannot provide for the cost of their accommodation from their own resources.

In the past, you could apply for Rent Supplement if you were qualified for social housing support and were on the local authorities housing list. However, people in this situation should now apply for the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). You will only qualify for Rent Supplement if you meet the eligibility criteria as specified.

# Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a form of social housing support for people who have a long-term housing need. It is available in all local authority areas throughout the State. **HAP will eventually replace long-term Rent Supplement.**

The HAP scheme aims to allow all social housing supports to be accessed through the local authorities and to enable people to take up full-time employment and keep their housing support. Read more on [www.hap.ie](http://www.hap.ie).

## Landlords

Tax relief is available for landlords who rent to tenants getting Rent Supplement or HAP.

Equality legislation specifies a number of grounds under which landlords cannot discriminate against potential tenants. These include the “housing assistance” ground.

## Rules

Eligibility criteria for Rent Supplement following the introduction of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)

As noted above, HAP is now available nationwide. If you qualify for social housing support and you need help with your rent, you should apply for HAP. You are only eligible for Rent Supplement if you are a genuine (bona fide) tenant and meet one of the following conditions:

- ▶ You were getting Rent Supplement in the 12 months before the date of your application.
- ▶ You were living in private rented accommodation for at least six months (183 days) of the last 12 months, you could afford the rent at the beginning of your tenancy and you are unable to continue to pay the rent because of a substantial change in your circumstances which occurred after you started renting. You can combine time living in more than one rented accommodation to satisfy the six months (183 days).

- ▶ You were living in accommodation for homeless people for at least six months (183 days) of the last 12 months. If you have already been assessed as qualified for social housing support you will be referred to your local authority to have your housing needs addressed (rather than being assessed for Rent Supplement).

If you need help with your rent but you don't meet these conditions, you must contact your local authority to have your housing needs assessed. If you are eligible for and in need of housing support you may be able to access housing under the HAP scheme or local authority housing.

If you are currently getting long-term Rent Supplement (18 months or more) you can be asked to apply for social housing support to your local authority. You must apply within six weeks of being asked to do so (if necessary an extra six weeks can be allowed). You may then be transferred to HAP or to another form of social housing support.

## Other rules for Rent Supplement

Rent Supplement will only be provided if the accommodation is suitable for your needs. Rent Supplement is not generally paid if the rent is above the maximum rent limit set for your county (see 'Rates' below for information about these limits and circumstances where they may be waived).

### You must also:

- ▶ Pass a habitual residence test
- ▶ Pass a means test

### You won't qualify for Rent Supplement if you:

- ▶ Are in full-time employment or self-employment (30 hours or more a week). However, if you are assessed as in need of housing under the Rental Accommodation Scheme and have been out of full-time employment for 12 months or more you may be entitled to the Supplement .
- ▶ Are leaving local authority housing without reasonable cause.
- ▶ Have been excluded from social housing by a local authority for reasons of good estate management or anti-social behaviour.
- ▶ Are attending full-time education. However, if you are getting a Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) or are participating in the Back to Education Programme you may be entitled to Rent Supplement.

**Renting from a parent:** You cannot get Rent Supplement to help you pay rent to your parent if you are living in the family home. If your parent owns a second property, you will generally not get Rent Supplement for this property unless you can prove that you are a genuine (bona fide) tenant.

**Sharing with your landlord:** You may be entitled to get Rent Supplement if you are living in your landlord's home. It must be a genuine landlord/tenant arrangement. Your landlord has to fill in part of the form and provide his or her PPS number .

## Employment and Rent Supplement

You will **not** qualify for Rent Supplement if you are in full-time employment – defined as 30 hours or more a week. (In the case of couples, if one of a couple is in full-time employment, both are excluded from claiming Rent Supplement.)

Claims from self-employed people are assessed on the individual circumstances of the case and you may be asked to show that you are working less than 30 hours a week.

If you are working over 30 hours a week in employment or self-employment, or if you are getting the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, you must be deemed eligible for the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) by your local authority to continue to get Rent Supplement.

However, you will be reassessed for Rent Supplement and some of your additional income including some of your income from employment will be taken into account. As a result of the reassessment you may or may not continue to qualify for Rent Supplement. If you do qualify for Rent Supplement you may get a different rate of Supplement.

## Income taken into account for Rent Supplement

- ▶ Net income from employment (this is gross income less PRSI and reasonable travel expenses. A child dependant in full-time education does not have their income from employment assessed as means for Rent Supplement)
- ▶ Social welfare payments
- ▶ Family Income Supplement (FIS)
- ▶ Cash income (for example, maintenance)
- ▶ All income and the value of all property of which the claimant deprived themselves in order to qualify for Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA)\*
- ▶ Capital (for example, property except your own home, savings and investments).

\*SWA is the scheme under which Rent Supplement is paid.

The capital value of property (except your own home), savings and investments is assessed as follows:

Capital value of property assessment	
Capital	Weekly means assessed as
First €5,000	Nil
Next €10,000	€1 per €1,000
Next €25,000	€2 per €1,000
Any capital over €40,000	€4 per €1,000.

## Income not taken into account when calculating Rent Supplement

Income from the following sources is *disregarded* – not taken into account – when calculating the amount of Rent Supplement you qualify for:

- ▶ An amount equal to the Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) rate for your household circumstances
- ▶ Child Benefit
- ▶ Mobility Allowance
- ▶ Foster care payments from the Health Service Executive (HSE)
- ▶ Payments for accommodating children under the Child Care Act
- ▶ Income from Gaeltacht students

- ▶ Grants or allowances from schemes promoting the welfare of blind people
- ▶ Money received from charitable organisations, for example, St Vincent de Paul
- ▶ Compensation awarded by the Compensation Tribunal in respect of Hepatitis C contracted from certain blood products, to those who have disabilities caused by Thalidomide and to those receiving compensation under the Residential Institutions Redress Board
- ▶ Student Grants
- ▶ Domiciliary Care Allowance
- ▶ Carer's Support Grant
- ▶ Guardian's Payment (Contributory) and Guardian's Payment (Non-Contributory)
- ▶ Fuel Allowance and the Living Alone Allowance
- ▶ **Pensioners:** If you are aged 65 or over (or where one of a couple is of pensionable age) and have a combined household income greater than the rate of SWA appropriate to your household circumstances, the difference between the maximum rate of State Pension (Contributory) appropriate to your circumstance and the rate of SWA appropriate to your circumstances is not taken into account.
- ▶ **Carers' payments:** The half-rate Carer's Allowance is not taken into account.
- ▶ If you are getting Carer's Allowance, the amount of Carer's Allowance above the appropriate SWA rate for your situation (either the qualified adult rate for a couple or the personal rate of SWA) is not taken into account. So if you are one of a **couple** and getting Carer's Allowance, the amount of Carer's Allowance being paid less the SWA qualified adult rate is not taken into account. If you are **single or a lone parent** the amount disregarded is the rate of Carer's Allowance being paid less the personal rate of SWA.
- ▶ Any amount of Carer's Benefit in excess of the basic SWA rate for your situation (either the qualified adult rate or the personal rate of SWA) is not taken into account.
- ▶ **Rehabilitative earnings disregard:** A certain amount of your income from rehabilitative work is not taken into account. If you are getting Disability Allowance or Blind Pension, €120 from rehabilitative training or employment is not taken into account in the assessment for Rent Supplement. Any earnings over €120 from rehabilitative training or employment will affect your Rent Supplement. If you are earning above €120 you can be assessed using whichever disregard is most in your interest – either the *Rehabilitative earnings disregard* or the *Additional income disregard* (but not both).

- ▶ **Additional income disregard:** A certain amount of your household income from certain sources is not taken into account. €75 of any *additional household income*\* above the SWA rate for your circumstances is not taken into account. Also, 25% of *additional household income* over €75 is not taken into account. There is no upper limit on the amount that can be disregarded.

**\*Additional household income** is income from part-time employment or part-time self-employment, Family Income Supplement (FIS), Community Employment (CE), the Tús scheme, the Rural Social Scheme, Part-time Job Incentive Scheme, Skillnets, Work Placement Scheme, Gateway, Back to Work Allowance, Back to Work Enterprise Allowance or a FET (formerly FÁS) course. Part of a maintenance payment is also assessed as additional household income

If you were getting Rent Supplement before 5 June 2007, you can continue to have your income assessed using the old income disregards, unless the current income disregards ensure a more favourable assessment. However, if you do not claim Rent Supplement for more than 13 weeks you will be assessed using the current income disregards. (See 'Further information' for more information on how income was assessed for Rent Supplement before 5 June 2007.)

## Maintenance and Rent Supplement

Maintenance is assessed as *additional household income* and maintenance payments up to €95.23 per week are assessed in full. The household income disregard applies to maintenance payments above this amount. The reason for this is that the first €95.23 per week of maintenance payments are considered to be a contribution towards your housing expenses.

**Example:** if your only additional household income is maintenance, all of your maintenance payment up to €95.23 per week is assessed in full. The household income disregard of €75 applies to sums above this, so that any maintenance between €95.23 and €170.23 is not taken into account. 25% of all maintenance over €170.23 is also not taken into account.

## Your contribution to rent (Household Contribution)

Once the amount of Rent Supplement you qualify for has been worked out, it will be reduced by a minimum of €30. This is because you must pay at least €30 a week towards your rent. You may pay more than €30 because you are also required to contribute any additional assessable means that you have above the appropriate basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance rate towards your rent. A couple claiming Rent Supplement must pay at least €40 a week towards their rent.

Any non-dependent household members who are solely dependent on a personal social welfare payment must also contribute €30. However, if benefit and privilege has been assessed against your social welfare payment you do not have to contribute €30. If the non-dependent household members are a couple their contribution is €40. A couple over 65 with an income equal to or less than the State Pension (Contributory) for their situation will contribute €40 a week towards their rent. A couple who both have State Pensions (Contributory) and no other income will also contribute €40 towards their weekly rent.

## Age-related contributions

Since January 2017, people aged 18-24 who are on age-related benefits pay a lower Household Contribution. The contribution is reduced from €30 to €10 per week for Rent Supplement recipients who are getting Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) or Supplementary Welfare Allowance of €100 per week and from €30 to €20 for those who are getting JA of €144.

For people who are getting BTEA, a Further Education and Training (FET) training allowance or on Youthreach, where the age-related rate of €160 applies, the Household Contribution is reduced from €30 to €20 a week.

## Calculating Rent Supplement

Calculating your Rent Supplement can be difficult. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection's (DEASP) representative (formerly known as the Community Welfare Officer) will decide if you are eligible for Rent Supplement and calculate the amount you will get. More information is available on how to calculate Rent Supplement.



## Discrimination when letting residential property

Equality legislation applies to lettings and accommodation. Landlords cannot discriminate against potential tenants on grounds of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community.

You cannot be discriminated against when renting because you are getting Rent Supplement, HAP or any other social welfare payment. (This is known as the “housing assistance” ground.) This means that landlords can no longer state when advertising accommodation that Rent Supplement (or HAP) is not accepted and they cannot refuse to rent you accommodation because you are getting a social welfare payment. If you feel you have been discriminated against by a landlord or their agent, you can find out more about making a complaint under the Equal Status Acts.

## Rates

Rent Supplement is paid to you weekly or monthly by cheque, Electronic Fund Transfer or post draft, usually in arrears.

The amount of Rent Supplement that is calculated will generally ensure that your income, after paying rent, does not fall below a minimum level. This level is the basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance rate for your circumstances minus the appropriate rate of Household Contribution (see above). However, you may pay more depending on your means – see ‘Rules’ above.

The rent paid to your landlord (that is, your contribution plus your Rent Supplement) should not be above the maximum rent limit set for your county or area (this provision can be waived in some circumstances). The maximum rent limit for your county is set by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP). However, the Community Welfare Office may set **lower rates** within these limits. There is a maximum rent limit for each area (see below). If your actual rent is higher than the local maximum, you may be refused Rent Supplement entirely.

## Cases where rent is over the relevant limit

In some cases Rent Supplement can be paid at the discretion of the DEASP staff administering the scheme where the rent is over the relevant limit:

- ▶ If you or a member of your household has special housing needs (for example, a disabled person in specially adapted accommodation).
- ▶ If you will be able to pay the rent yourself within a short period, if, for example, if you are taking up employment. In this case Rent Supplement at a higher rate can be paid for a short period of 6-8 weeks
- ▶ If you have additional income to pay the balance yourself. (Rent Supplement is still based on the maximum rent limit)
- ▶ If there are other exceptional circumstances. (Special provisions apply if you are at risk of becoming homeless)
- ▶ Note also that the Community Welfare Service has statutory discretionary power to award or increase a Rent Supplement payment, for example, when dealing with a person who is in danger of homelessness. This applies both to people getting Rent Supplement and to new applicants. Tenants living in Dublin, Kildare, Meath, Wicklow, Cork City and its environs, Galway, Mayo and Roscommon can access the Tenancy Protection Service (TPS) on Freephone 1800 454 454. If you live outside of these areas, the TPS can assist you with your Rent Supplement application.

## Rent Supplement and lease agreements

If, when your Rent Supplement claim is reviewed, the rent you pay is above the relevant limit and your lease is not due for renewal, you will be expected to renegotiate your rent with your landlord. If the landlord insists that the terms of the current lease are not negotiable, and does not reduce the rent to the new limits, the DEASP representative will discuss your options with you. These may include seeking other accommodation. If the rent is in line with local market rates the limits can be exceeded in some cases.

## Rent limits

You can find the rent limits for Rent Supplement on the Department's website. Note that the Community Welfare Office may set lower rates within these limits.

SI 221/07 sets down that the maximum amounts of Rent Supplement payable for tenants in voluntary housing developments (funded through the Capital Assistance Scheme) are €55 for a single person and €60 for a couple. The minimum Household Contribution set out above also applies.

If you are currently getting Rent Supplement, there is no automatic increase to a new rate if the rates increase (as you are currently signed up to a tenancy agreement with your landlord). The current rate limits will apply when your existing lease expires or when your claim is reviewed. You can request a review of your Rent Supplement claim by contacting the office dealing with your claim.

Tenants living in Dublin, Kildare, Meath, Wicklow, Cork City and its environs, Galway, Mayo and Roscommon can access the Tenancy Protection Service operated by Threshold on Freephone 1800 454 454.

## Changes to your circumstances

If your circumstances change, you may no longer qualify for Rent Supplement or the amount of your payment may change. Read more about Rent Supplement and changes to your circumstances. You can also read FAQs about Rent Supplement from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

## How to apply

To apply, fill in an application form for Rent Supplement (pdf). The DEASP's representative (formerly known as the Community Welfare Officer) or local Citizens Information Service can help you fill in this form.

Part of the form will need to be filled in by your landlord or their agent. Your landlord will need to provide their tax reference number (normally their PPS number) to the DEASP. If your landlord does not wish to fill in the form a separate form (SWA 3C) (pdf) is available. If your landlord does not have a tax reference number, they should state this in writing to the DEASP and explain why this is the case. Your Rent Supplement may not be paid if your landlord has not given their tax number to the DEASP or has not explained why they do not have one.

Another part of the form may need to be filled in by your local authority, to confirm you are on their housing list and have a housing need (if you are not exempt from this rule).

You also need to bring the following documents:

- ▶ Identity documents for you and your dependants, such as full birth certificates, passports, driving licence, work permit, immigration (GNIB) card, etc.
- ▶ Documents to show your income and financial situation, such as, pay slips, P45, P35, P60, bank statements, etc.

- ▶ Documents to prove where you live, such as electricity, gas or phone bills, etc.
- ▶ Documents relating to your tenancy, such as your rent book, lease or tenancy agreement.

The DEASP's representative (formerly known as the Community Welfare Officer) usually visits you to confirm your circumstances.

## Appealing a decision

If you are not satisfied with a decision made in relation to Rent Supplement, you should first find out why the decision was made by asking the DEASP's representative (formerly known as the Community Welfare Officer). You should provide any extra documentation to back up your case.

If the decision is not changed, then request an appeal form. Include as much detail as possible in your appeal and keep photocopies of everything.

If your appeal is unsuccessful, you can refer the appeal to the Social Welfare Appeals Office. You may request a personal hearing and you can bring along a representative to help argue your case.

## Where to apply

To apply for Rent Supplement you should contact the Department of Social Protection's representative (formerly known as the Community Welfare Officer) at your local Intreo or social welfare branch office. However, in some areas new Rent Supplement applications are processed by centralised Rent Units. To see if your area is dealt with by a central Rent Unit you can view the central Rent Unit list.

If you live in one of these areas you can get a rent pack from your local office. This pack contains detailed information (including a list of documentation you will need) and all the relevant application forms. You should read the information in the pack carefully. If you are satisfied that you have all the necessary documents ready you can forward your application to the relevant Rent Unit. The processing of your application may be delayed if you do not supply all the information requested in the pack. The Unit will contact you if they need any further information. If they do not need any more information they will tell you when your application will be processed.

## Further information

A certain amount of your income is not taken into account in the assessment for Rent Supplement. The income not taken into account is called an income disregard. The current income disregards came into effect on 5 June 2007.

All existing Rent Supplement claims in payment on 5 June 2007 were reviewed and assessed using both the current income disregards and the old income disregards. If you would get more Rent Supplement using the old *income disregards* (see below), you continued to be assessed using the old income disregards until:

- ▶ You no longer qualify for Rent Supplement or
- ▶ You have a break in your claim for more than 13 weeks or
- ▶ You have a change in your circumstances. For example, a change of address, household income, increase or decrease in rent or a change in your social welfare payment.

**ChildVision wishes to acknowledge the Citizen's Information Bureau in the provision of information for this booklet.**  
**[www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie)**

# ChildVision: Some Frequently Asked Questions

## ▶ **Who attends ChildVision?**

Blind or vision impaired children and young people from all across Ireland who are between the ages of birth and 23 attend ChildVision, including those with other additional, and often profound, disabilities.

## ▶ **What ages do you cater to?**

We cater to children and young people from birth to 23 years of age.

## ▶ **What if my child is not fully blind?**

Children and young people with low vision attend ChildVision as well. All have a diagnosis from an ophthalmologist or optometrist of a visual impairment that cannot be corrected by glasses or lenses, such as visual acuity of 6/18 or less.

## ▶ **What if my child has other disabilities in addition to sight loss?**

As long as your child meets the age and vision criteria, we can help. Many students in ChildVision have other disabilities in addition to sight loss that range from autism to cerebral palsy to rare genetic disorders. We work to help them make the most of what they can do, every day.

## ▶ **What if my child has medical issues that require nursing care?**

Many of our students couldn't attend ChildVision without medical support. Over the course of a day our on-site nursing team provides care that includes respiratory support, epilepsy management, peg (tube) feeding, and management of Hickman lines used in chemotherapy.

## ▶ **Do I need a GP referral?**

You don't need a GP referral for your child to attend ChildVision. But your child does need a vision-impaired diagnosis.

▶ **Will my child be able to attend school?**

ChildVision's Preschools on our Drumcondra campus and in Cork are open to children of all abilities. This includes vision impaired children who have additional disabilities. There is a primary school on our Dublin campus and an adjacent Secondary school.

▶ **What hours will my child need to attend? All five weekdays?**

Five days each week are not required. Children and young people attend ChildVision for one day each week, or all five, a schedule that changes and grows with your child or young person.

▶ **Must my child attend school there or live at ChildVision?**

No. While some students do choose to live in our residential houses, many of our children and young people still live at home and attend school here. Still others live at home, attend mainstream schools, and come to ChildVision for therapy.

▶ **We don't live near Dublin. Can my child still be helped?**

Yes. ChildVision looks after the national assessment of all children and young people with a visual impairment aged 0 to 23. It doesn't matter where in Ireland you are, we can organise a time and date that suits you.

▶ **How is ChildVision funded? Is there a fee?**

Roughly half of what we do is funded by the State. The rest comes from the kind donations of generous people across Ireland who care about helping blind children to have a brighter future.

▶ **Are your stables, riding arena and equine therapy horses on-site?**

Yes they are. All equine therapy takes place on our 21 acre Drumcondra campus. There is even a sensory trail! To see if your child would benefit from our equine therapy, which is open to both ChildVision students and non-students, please call us.

▶ **Could my family and I come and visit the campus?**

Of course! We'd be delighted to meet you. ChildVision follow an academic calendar, and you can ring us on 01 8373635 to arrange a visit.

▶ **Will you talk with my child's GPs? Teachers?**

Yes, of course, whatever makes sense for sharing and helping you child get the best help possible.

▶ **Do you provide support for parents, siblings and other family members?**

Yes. If your child attends ChildVision full time or even just comes for an assessment, your whole family is invited to avail of our Family resources.

▶ **Do you train educators and other professionals?**

Yes. ChildVision provides a number of professional courses and workshops including FETAC/QQI Level 5 'Learn Braille' course and a Certificate in Higher Education 'Working with people with a Visual Impairment'. Call us for details.

▶ **Could you teach me braille so I can help my child?**

Yes. Our 'Learn Braille' Course is FETAC/QQI certified and open to family members as well.

▶ **Where in Ireland can I borrow braille, tactile, and audio books for my child?**

The ChildVision Library is open to any child with a visual impairment in Ireland, and we loan books and materials to members from all across the country. This includes braille, tactile and audio books. We also stock an extensive list of books for parents and professionals living and working with a child with a visual impairment. Find our catalogues on [childvision.ie/site/resources/library](http://childvision.ie/site/resources/library). Membership is open to all.









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**ChildVision**

National Education Centre for Blind Children