

ADAPTING YOUR CAR FACTSHEET

Q How do I get my car adapted to suit my needs?

A There are hundreds of adaptations you can make to your car. Making it easier to get in and out, making space for your wheelchair or scooter, and putting the controls within easy reach are just some of the options available to make driving easier.

Adaptations can be expensive and thinking carefully about your needs will save you money and time later on. The most important questions you'll have to consider are:

- What car?
- What adaptations?
- Are they compatible with each other?
- Does anyone else need to drive my car?

When you're buying a new or used car you should always discuss any adaptations you need with an Adaptation Garage BEFORE you buy it. They will tell you if it's actually possible to make the changes you want on the car you've chosen, and give you an idea of how expensive they might be.

Q What is an Adaptation Garage?

A Adaptation garages specialise in adapting vehicles to make life easier for drivers with disabilities. They are also often referred to as 'Installers'. They have different areas of expertise and only a few will be able to make complex changes such as foot steering or lightened steering – so it pays to do your research.

Q How do I find an Adaptation Garage?

A The Thalidomide Trust can help you find a garage, but you can also find one yourself by:-

- Asking other beneficiaries who they have used in the past
- Downloading the "Mobility Address List" from the Ricability website:
<http://www.rica.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/pdfs/mobility/mobility-address-list.pdf>
to see if you qualify.
- Looking on the Motability website:
<http://www.motability.co.uk/cars-and-wavs/adaptations-and-adjustments/> Just enter your postcode in the red box close to the bottom of the web-page where it says 'Find an adaptations installer' then click on their details to see all the installations they have carried out and decide whether they have the right experience to work on your car.

The Motability list is regularly updated and installers are vetted to make sure they are safe to use.

Q How do I work out which adaptations I need?

A Getting the right adaptations to meet your current needs, and anticipating what you might need in the future, can be quite complex. If you're having trouble identifying exactly what you need you can:-

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- Ask the HealthLink team.
- Visit the Motability website at www.motability.co.uk/adaptations to find out about adaptations and see video clips.
- Download or ask for Ricability's useful guides, covering topics such as:-
 - o Choosing a Car (contains helpful information on transferring from wheelchair to seat)
 - o Car Controls (contains lists and pictures of different adaptations and the lists companies that supply them)
 - o Getting in and out of a car
 - o Getting a wheelchair into a car
 - o Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

If you are unsure about any issue affecting your current ability to drive, from minor seating discomfort to totally altering the way you currently drive, you can visit one of the Driving Mobility's assessment centres, for an independent assessment of your general health and its impact on your driving. The Mobility Team can really help with deciding what adaptations you need – and whether your existing adaptations need updating.

To find your local Assessment Centre visit the Driving Mobility website at www.drivingmobility.org.uk , or call them on 0800 559 3636. The Trust will pay for your assessment at a local centre but please contact Healthlink on 01480 226769 before booking an assessment. We are keen to collect feedback on the different Centres available so do let us know how you get on.

See our Driving: Legal and Medical issues fact sheet for more information.

Q How do I become confident in driving my adapted car?

A If you're getting your car adapted for the first time, or increasing/changing your car adaptations, it is important that you feel confident when driving. As many beneficiaries buy vehicles at great cost and travel a long distance to their chosen Adaptation Garage and it is expensive to have the car delivered, it can be tempting to simply drive yourself home. However this may not be advisable. We recommend that you consider taking a driving lesson.

Assessment Centres can put you in touch with a driving instructor so you can practice the new style of driving before you take the vehicle home.

If you lease an adapted Motability car they may pay for you to take lessons to give you time to adjust to the new way of driving.

If you want to find your own suitable instructor and take lessons in your new car contact The Association of Disability Driving Instructors (www.disabilityinstructors.com). DMUK is currently working with The Approved Driving Instructors National Joint Council (ADINJC) to build a database of driving instructors who are willing and able to teach disabled people to drive

Q Where can I get further information?

A To discuss car adaptations, ask questions, or raise concerns, call HealthLink on 01480 226769