



Bristol Autism Spectrum Service

Guide to Driving and the Disabled Persons Bus Pass

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Driving and autism

Many people with autism are able to drive very well. Many driving schools have experience of helping people with autism to drive so if you are considering lessons then talk to the driving instructors to be aware of any additional needs you have. For example if you need them to be aware you have autism and need clear communication. You are welcome to ask your instructor to contact the Bristol Autism Spectrum Service about how autism can affect you in relation to driving

Bristol Autism Spectrum Service - 01275 796 204.

Bristol Driving and Mobility Centre West of England

This organisation can help you consider your options if you have autism and may need help learning to drive.

If you are referred for an assessment by the DVLA or Motability there will be no charge. However there is a charge of £85 for assessments without a referral.

If you want to book an assessment, or just want to know more about how we might be able to help, you can call us on 0117 965 9353.

www.drivingandmobility.org

Bristol Driving and Mobility Centre West of England is based at the Vassall Centre on Gill Avenue at Fishponds, Bristol, BS16 2QQ

Further information

Book an appointment with Bristol Autism Spectrum Service 01275 796 204 / email awp.bass@nhs.net if you wish to discuss any issues about driving.

Important things to note if you are thinking of taking lessons or drive

The DVLA has produced '*Assessing Fitness to Drive – a guide for medical professionals*' (May 2016).

www.gov.uk/dvla/fitnesstodrive

Key points from this agency guidance:

- Having autism does not necessarily mean you cannot drive – the guidance states that the DVLA will take factors such as your ‘impulsivity’ and ‘awareness of impacts (sic) of behaviours on self and others’ into account in their assessment.
- If you have autism including Asperger syndrome (and or ADHD) you must notify the DVLA if you drive. If you do not you could be fined up to £1000. Also if you have autism and do not declare this and are then involved in an accident it is possible that your insurance may be invalid.
- If the DVLA make enquiries about your medical condition (autism and any other difficulties) and whether you are safe to drive they will often send you and your GP a questionnaire to complete.
- If a medical or related professional thinks you are unsafe to drive they are duty bound to discuss this with you. If they remain unconvinced of your safety and/or the safety of others on the road, they will encourage you to contact and discuss with the DVLA yourself. If you do not wish to the professional may have to contact the DVLA Medical Business Support directly on 01792 782337 if they consider your driving to be a risk to road safety (more detailed advice is in the Fitness to Drive guidance pp9-10). Any professional who does contact the DVLA on your behalf will put this in writing to you.

To contact the DVLA about autism if they have not already been told phone them on 0300 790 6806 (option 3) or use online email service – www.gov.uk/contact-the-dvla/driving-and-medical-issues

The DVLA will probably ask you to complete some paperwork stating how having autism may affect your driving and if they need more information after that they may contact your GP.

Talk to your GP or Bristol Autism Spectrum Service if you are unsure how to proceed.

Book an appointment with Bristol Autism Spectrum Service 01275 796 204 / email awp.bass@nhs.net if you wish to discuss any issues about driving.

The Disabled Persons Bus Pass/Travelcard

The Disabled Persons Bus Pass/Travelcard is for people (aged 5 and over) who are disabled and meet certain conditions. It means you can travel free off peak on public transport bus routes both locally and nationally.

The rules for the All England Concessionary Travelcard scheme (Bus pass) scheme come under the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007, and linked to the Transport Act 2000.

Have a look at the form you will need to fill in if you wish to apply. It can be found at www.bristol.gov.uk/streets-travel/disabled-persons-bus-pass

How to qualify for the Disabled Persons travelcard/bus pass automatically

There are several different categories of disability that mean you qualify for the Travelcard automatically.

Here are two grounds by which you may qualify *automatically*:

- if you receive high rate mobility part of DLA you qualify for the Travelcard automatically.
- if you receive PIP and scored at least 8 points on “moving around” you qualify for the Travelcard automatically.

If you do not qualify automatically you may qualify under one of the other criteria. Two of the more common criteria for people with autism to qualify are either being ‘learning disabled’ or being ‘unsafe or unable’ to drive.

Applying on the grounds of having a learning disability

If you have a 'learning disability' you may qualify.

The definition of learning disability includes the wording: *"significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning" "a person with a learning disability has a reduced ability to understand new or complex information, a difficulty in learning new skills and may be unable to cope independently"*

(If this category fits you then you will be filling in 2.E on the Bristol City Council Disabled Persons Bus Pass form)

Applying on the grounds of being unable to hold a full UK driving licence (being unable/unsafe to drive)

If you 'unable to hold a driving licence due to a medical condition' such as 'severe mental disorder' or 'neurological disorder' you may qualify.

This could include "disabilities which are likely to cause the driving of vehicles by them to be a source of danger to the public". It could be argued that this might be the case of someone with severe sensory, perceptual and/or co-ordination problems.

(If this category fits you then you will be filling in 2H – page 10 on the Bristol City Council Disabled Persons Bus Pass form)

You can use your bus pass anywhere within England.

Your journey on local bus transport can start:

- 9am to 4am Monday –Fridays and all weekends and bank holidays in Ex Avon area
- 9.30am – 11pm elsewhere in England and all weekends and bank holidays

There are some bus companies/journeys that the bus pass is not valid for eg in Bristol on the airport flyer service. You may be able to tell these companies that you have autism and ask if they offer concessions.

Checklist of reasons why you might qualify for a Disabled Persons bus pass (this is called 2H on the Bristol City Council Disabled Persons Bus Pass form - Unsafe/unable to drive)

Check which of these statements might apply to you and place a tick next to it:

1. I would have great difficulty judging distances eg how far away pedestrians are when they are crossing ahead of me, or judging how close other cars are to me.
2. I would not be able to cope when there are too many things to concentrate on eg a bus indicating to pull out and someone trying to cross the road and reading a traffic sign or responding to a traffic light change.
3. The medication I need to take for anxiety /depression make me drowsy and affect my ability to make real-time decisions necessary to drive safely.
4. I would panic when other drivers pressurise me and either under-react or become too emotional in my responses eg get very angry.
5. I don't always notice objects and find that they are then suddenly they are in front of me and I do not have time to react.
6. I cannot consistently process sights/sounds around me – sometimes I can hear and see clearly other times I cannot attend to any outside stimuli.
7. I have a poor sense of direction and am always getting lost even in familiar places. This causes me to get upset and panic which I believe would affect my ability to drive safely.
8. I would not notice someone walking out from behind a parked car and be able to react in time to stop – everything seems to be move too fast for me to respond to in time.
9. I cannot pass the theory test as I have very poor learning ability and memory problems.
10. I cannot cope with changes to routines so a closed lane or having to take a diversion causes me to panic and make me unsafe.
11. I have a short concentration span and get distracted very easily.
12. I have meltdowns when I am overcome with anxiety or sensory overload. This can include places where there are numerous road signs or noise of an ambulance or someone shouting on the pavement. I become paralysed and have to escape (but in a car I am unable to safely do this).
13. I find it hard to ignore irrelevant details like if I see a shop I like I will start staring at it and not at the road ahead.
14. I find it hard to process information from road signs especially at speed and when stressed or feeling pressured by other drivers.
15. I lack co-ordination and get muddled with left and right.
16. I have poor visual-spatial skills and cannot orientate very well in my environment.
17. I have a poor memory and 'drift off' or day-dream and this happens frequently because my thoughts are always intruding into my daily routines. This means I

- am easily distracted and then forget where I am supposed to be heading and would forget to concentrate on the road.
18. I am suffering from anxiety /depression /panic attacks and all these would affect my ability to drive safely.
 19. Anxiety affects my visual-spatial skills, and co-ordination abilities which presently render me unable to drive.
 20. I cannot judge speed and distances.
 21. I have co-ordination problems and have to look at what I am doing to perform a task such as putting on a handbrake or changing gears. I am then too slow to move my vision back to the road.
 22. I am impulsive and cannot think through consequences– likely to make incorrect decisions eg awareness of when to slow for traffic lights.
 23. I am not aware of other drivers' behaviour.
 24. I get so caught up monitoring myself and cannot multi task to check what other cars and pedestrians are doing.
 25. I am not aware of what's going on around me.
 26. Misconstrue other drivers' intentions.
 27. Misreads eg flashing lights not sure if this means I should go or not or if it means "thank you".
 28. I present a safety risk to self and others on the roads.
 29. I cannot process information when moving past signs or objects.
 30. I would often forget to use my mirrors.
 31. Lose visual information as I scan from left to right (across the midline)
 32. Feel pressured when driving.
 33. Don't notice objects until they are suddenly in front of me.
 34. I get lost easily and cannot follow road signs.
 35. I have had many accidents.
 36. I lose concentration on the road.
 37. Cannot judge how much space I have to use and how much to allow for other motorists.
 38. There are too many things to observe whilst driving – I cannot prioritise risky factors eg car pulling out or child crossing.
 39. I cannot work out what is important information and what I can disregard.
 40. I am unable to filter visual information and get sensory overload.
 41. I am unable to guess what other drivers are expecting me to do.
 42. I cannot sequence so I cannot get manage indicator lights, gears, changing lanes and mirrors in the right order.
 43. I have poor muscle tone and muscles get too tired to drive.
 44. I cannot co-ordinate movement of the gear stick and handbrake and steering wheel.

Further information

For more details see www.bristol.gov.uk/streets-travel/disabled-persons-bus-pass

Or contact 0117 922 2600 or email bus.passes@bristol.gov.uk

For more help on this read information on NAS website: www.autism.org.uk/buspass

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This is information given by the Bristol Autism Spectrum Service and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Avon and Wiltshire NHS Partnership Trust. If you find any information that is inaccurate or out of date, please email awp.bass@nhs.net so we can make this resource as helpful as possible.