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**CONSIDERING GETTING A MOBILITY SCOOTER?**

Using a mobility scooter has been shown to improve a person’s abilities, social participation and life satisfaction (Samuelsson and Wressle, 2014).

While we recognize the benefits of using a mobility scooter to participate in activities we might not otherwise be able to, we must consider a number of factors about ourselves and the scooter to ensure we make an informed decision.

**Before you start looking for a mobility scooter, consider your eyesight!**

Although there are no legal eyesight requirements, it is important that you can see well enough to be able to judge distances, recognize obstacles and hazards, and be able to see pedestrians and other road users. If poor eyesight were taken as a contributory factor in an incident, it could make you liable for a compensation claim. Vision can change with age and it is recommended that you have regular sight tests. You should have a minimum visual acuity of 6/24. This means you should be able to read a car’s registration number from a distance of 12.3 metres (40 feet).

If you are eligible to be registered as severely sight impaired (blind), you should not drive a mobility vehicle as this would put yourself and others at risk. If you are eligible to be registered as sight impaired (partially sighted), you should speak to your optometrist or doctor. (Adapted from Department of Transport 2015, p10).

As stated in the Macular Society leaflet on Driving -

Mobility Scooters – the laws regarding their use are not currently clearly defined. However, they are under review. Currently the DVLA strongly advises that users should – have a minimum visual acuity of 6/24, be physically able to control the vehicle, have third party insurance cover and receive basic mobility scooter training.

**What else should I consider before getting a mobility scooter?**

There are a number of factors about yourself to consider such as your mobility, your tolerance, your balance, your posture, your body weight and your perception, memory and cognitive ability. Consider how all these factors will be affected by, and will affect, your use of the scooter.

By law, users must not handle a mobility scooter if taking medication that makes them drowsy or if under the influence of alcohol or drugs. If you are in any doubt please consult your GP or optician.

**There are 3 types of mobility vehicles –**

Class 1 – manual wheelchairs, i.e. self-propelled or attendant-propelled, not electrically powered.

Class 2 – powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters, intended for footpath or pavement use only with a maximum speed limit of 4 mph.

Class 3 – powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters, for use on the road, with a maximum speed limit of 8 mph but with the facility to travel on a footpath or pavement.

**Where can I get a mobility scooter?**

The NHS and social services do not provide outdoor electric scooters or buggies. It is possible to buy scooters through retailers or rent them under a number of schemes. Some schemes and suppliers will offer an assessment of your needs. Some schemes include –

Motability – the Motability scheme provides a way for people with disabilities to lease a car, scooter or powered wheelchair in exchange for their mobility allowance. More information is available at: [www.motability.co.uk/about-the-scheme/who-can-join](http://www.motability.co.uk/about-the-scheme/who-can-join)

Shopmobility – Shopmobility is a service that helps all people who consider themselves to have a mobility problem to continue to get around the city and town centre’s independently. If offers a range of mobility and other equipment for hire. More information is available at: [www.shopmobility.org.uk](http://www.shopmobility.org.uk)

Access to Work – Access to Work provides grants for practical assistance if you have a disability, health or mental health condition, in order to help you gain employment, stay in employment or even become self-employed. Access to Work may provide funding for a mobility scooter if it is required for the purposes of your work and there is no more cost-effective alternative. You will need to contact your local Job Centre Plus. More information is available at: [www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview)

Charity funding – there are a number of trusts and charities that will consider funding scooters.

**Do I need to register my mobility vehicle?**

Most mobility vehicles are not legally defined as motor vehicles and, therefore, the user is not required to have a driving license or take a test. The vehicles themselves are not subject to road tax. However, class 3 vehicles have to be registered annually with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). To register a Class 3 vehicle you should fill in a form V55/4 (for new vehicles) or V55/5 (for used vehicles). These forms are available from main post offices or online. Guidance on filling in the forms is given in the DVLA’s leaflets INF210 and INF211. Once completed, take or send it to your nearest DVLA office, not to DVLA headquarters in Swansea. Contact the DVLA Contact Centre on 0300 790 6802 for more information.

**Should I have insurance?**

Although it is not a legal requirement, it is strongly recommended that people take out insurance to cover personal safety, other people’s safety and the value of the vehicle. It will be important to check whether household insurance provides cover to use the vehicle on the public highway, and whether your household insurance covers storage or parking for your vehicle at home.

**When you are on the move ….**

Remember to be seen! If you are using anything to protect you from the weather, make sure that it does not restrict your vision. Wear fluorescent and reflective materials and have fluorescent and reflective markings on your scooter, and put on your lights to help other road users see you.

Be careful when going up and down kerbs. Always approach at right angles and do not go up or down kerbs higher than recommended for the type and size of your wheels (look in the handbook for information). Wherever possible cross roads where there is a dropped kerb and use pedestrian crossings.

Take care when you cannot see ahead clearly, for example, where there is a hedge restricting your view. And take care going round corners, your scooter could topple if you go round too quickly. And remember – YOU MUST NOT USE YOUR SCOOTER ON MOTORWAYS.

Mobility Scooters may give you more independence but please consider your safety and the safety of others before buying a scooter. Seek advice from your GP, Ophthalmologist or other medical professional before making your purchase.