



Living with Dementia

Driving

Guernsey
Alzheimer's
Association

caring for carers

Living with dementia – Driving

Living with dementia is challenging but adapting to changes can help you live as well as possible.

You may still be able to drive safely for some time after you have been diagnosed. However, there will come a time when you will need to stop driving.

This will be for your own safety and for the safety of passengers and other road users.

If you are still working and drive as part of your job, you should talk to your employer. It may be possible to change to a role that does not require you to drive.

This booklet explains the legal issues around dementia and driving, and ways of coping if you can no longer drive.

What the law says

You **must** tell Guernsey Driver and Vehicle Licensing about your diagnosis promptly. Contact the medical section of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing (DVL), Bulwer Avenue, St. Sampson's, Guernsey, GY2 4LR.

Monday to Friday 9.00 – 4.00

Tel: 01481 223400

Email: dvlmedicals@gov.gg

It is a criminal offence if you don't inform them and you can be fined (Level 5 on the Uniform Scale of fines). The steps below show what you need to do and what usually happens next.

- Notify Driver and Vehicle Licensing (DVL) using the details above
- If you want to carry on driving, tell the DVL when you get in touch. They will advise you.

- You must also tell your insurance company that you have dementia. If you don't tell them, your insurance may not be valid and will not cover you if you have an accident. It is illegal to drive without valid insurance cover.
- DVL will usually request that you provide a medical report from your Doctor and/or Specialist providing details about your dementia and any other medical conditions that may affect your fitness to drive. The information the Doctor or Specialist provides and the results of your assessment will help the DVL decide if you can carry on driving. In some cases you may also be advised you need a driving re-assessment (see 'Assessment services').
- The DVL may decide that you are not safe to drive. You do have a right to appeal this decision.

If the DVL allows you to continue driving, they will issue a licence usually for one year. They require that your condition is reviewed regularly. If you are in the very early stages of dementia, a licence may be issued for up to three years.

The cost of the licence is pro rata, so you will not pay more for your licence. However, you will be liable for any doctor's costs to provide the medical reports for the Driving Assessment and for any other medical information required, e.g. an eyesight report.

If your Doctor advises you to stop driving at any time you must do so immediately. If you continue to do so, he or she is allowed to notify the DVL.

If a family member tells the DVL that they are concerned about your driving, you may be asked to provide further information on your condition. This may include asking for information from your Doctor or Specialist so that a decision can be made about whether you can continue to drive.

Assessment services

As mentioned on page 3, the DVL may ask you to undergo a driving assessment by an approved service. Locally this is Guernsey DriveAbility. However, you can also use services in Jersey and the UK.

An assessment is not like a driving test. It is an overall assessment of the impact your dementia has on your driving performance and safety. It also makes some allowances for the bad habits many of us may have developed.

You can ask to take a driving assessment voluntarily and this may be helpful when you are considering whether to renew your driving licence.

You should apply directly to the assessment service and will need to pay a fee. Guernsey Driveability or the off island assessment centre will then contact you to make a date for the assessment which is undertaken by a specially trained Occupational Therapist and local driving instructor.

Tips for driving safely

If you do carry on driving, there are ways to make driving easier and safer.

- Keep to familiar routes
- Avoid busy areas or driving during the busiest times of the day
- Don't drive at night
- Don't drive in bad weather
- Keep to short trips
- Leave plenty of time for your journey
- Have a passenger with you to offer route guidance (but not traffic management advice)
- Don't drive when you are stressed or upset

When should I stop driving?

When people with dementia decide to give up driving, often because their condition has progressed to a stage where they no longer feel safe on the road.

For example, they may find that they struggle to make driving decisions in time or can no longer judge distances or speeds accurately.

Many older people also find that their eyesight or mobility are not as good as they used to be. Sometimes it is clear that you should stop driving. This may be because you:

- feel less confident or get more irritated when you drive
- feel lost or confused on a familiar route
- hit the kerb or start to have minor bumps and scrapes

If you are still unsure whether you are driving safely:

- ask your family if they are concerned about your driving and listen to their views
- talk to your Doctor or Specialist and ask their opinion
- ask to be referred to an appropriate driving assessment service for an expert, unbiased opinion

If your partner relies upon you to drive, you may feel extra pressure to continue. But it's better to travel safely on a bus or other public transport rather than to have an accident in the car.

If you decide to give up driving, write to the DVL telling them your decision, and enclose your driving licence.

Living without a car

It can be difficult to get used to not driving. If you rely on your car for trips to the supermarket or to visit family for example, it can be daunting to think of life without it.

If you have to stop driving it is not a reflection on you as a person. It is solely because of the dementia. It doesn't change the person you are.

Try to think positively and plan ahead. See '**the benefits of not driving**' below.

Find out alternative ways of getting around. This will help you stay in control.

You might find it helpful to talk to others in the same situation by joining a support group. Tell your family how you feel so that they can understand. You may feel angry or frustrated but you may also feel relieved.

The benefits of not driving

Although it may feel inconvenient at first, you may find there are advantages to not driving. These include:

- you save money by not having to maintain a car and the costs of insurance, tax and fuel
- you don't need to remember to take the car for a service
- you don't have to worry about the car breaking down
- you won't feel anxious about driving somewhere new
- you don't have to worry about finding somewhere to park
- you can sit back and enjoy being a passenger
- you might enjoy walking a little more. This is a good way to take exercise
- Free bus service if over 65 years old

The alternatives

When you are not driving and no longer paying to keep a car, consider the following possible ways of getting around.

- Take a taxi to the supermarket once a month to stock up on groceries and essentials. Book the taxi in advance and set up an account with a taxi firm you trust and like. There are also a number of accessible taxis operating locally.
- Ask whether a friend or a family member can take you to the shops with them on a regular trip.
- Ask your hospital whether there is a transport service that can take you to your appointments. St John Ambulance Patient Transport Service only offers transport from a referral from a medical professional. Transport cannot be booked directly.
- Free bus travel for over 65 years old. Apply for your bus card (a one-off fee of £2.50) at the Bus Terminus Shop
- Volunteer driver service – Health Connections, <https://healthconnections.gg/transport>

You may also be able to do more from home without the need to travel. For example:

- If you have a computer, use the internet to order your shopping and have it delivered to your home. The Co-op offer this service amongst others. You can keep a shopping list saved on your computer so you don't forget regular items. If you don't feel confident ordering online, ask a friend or a family member if they can help you.
- Pay your bills by direct debit so you don't have to travel to the bank or post office too often. You could also think about setting up telephone banking.
- Have a mobile hairdresser visit your home.

Whether you stop driving or keep doing so for a while, try to keep positive. Focus on continuing the things you enjoy doing. This will help you to live well with dementia.

Other useful information

Driver and Vehicle Licensing

Bulwer Avenue Office
St. Sampson
Guernsey, GY2 4LR

Tel: **223400**

Email: dvlmedicals@gov.gg

Web: <https://gov.gg/dvl>

Monday to Friday – 9.00 am – 4.00 pm

Guernsey DriveAbility

Mobile: **07781 155895**

Or please contact Driver and Vehicle Licensing who can provide further information

UK Mobility Centres

<https://www.drivingmobility.org.uk/find-a-centre/>

This booklet was published by the Guernsey Alzheimer's Association in conjunction with Guernsey Driver and Vehicle Licensing 2021

11/2021