



DISABILITY FEDERATION OF IRELAND

Disability Federation of Ireland

Submission on the proposed Vehicle Adaptation Scheme

Submission date: 30th October 2026

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About DFI

The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) is a national federation of disability organisations. DFI works with its members, disabled people, allies and the State to advance full inclusion and equity. This submission draws on feedback and written contributions from member organisations to DFI's Transport and Mobility Member Consultation. It focuses on cross-cutting policy principles while reflecting members' practical and specialist experience.

DFI's central recommendation is that the Vehicle Adaptation Scheme (VAS) should combine accessible, needs-based support with proportionate safety safeguards, affordability, choice and clear public accountability.

Written contributions from DFI's member organisations also emphasised accessible application support, functional mobility needs, continued independence and protection of existing mobility supports.

Executive Summary and Priority Recommendations

DFI welcomes the proposal to introduce a separate, needs-based vehicle adaptation grant scheme for disabled people. A well-designed scheme has the potential to improve independence, mobility and participation by enabling disabled people to access vehicles that meet their individual needs.

However, the scheme must be accessible, equitable, transparent and responsive to the diverse needs of disabled drivers and passengers. It must also provide appropriate safeguards to ensure that vehicle adaptations are safe, suitable and affordable.

DFI makes the following ten priority recommendations:

1. Introduce a separate, needs-based vehicle adaptation grant scheme while protecting existing entitlements.



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DFI supports the establishment of a dedicated vehicle adaptation grant scheme that assesses eligibility on the basis of a person's disability-related mobility and functional needs, rather than requiring applicants to hold a Primary Medical Certificate. This would allow disabled people who require vehicle adaptations, but who do not meet the restrictive medical criteria of the existing Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers Scheme (DDS), to access financial support. The introduction of the new scheme must not result in the removal, reduction or weakening of any existing entitlements available under the DDS. The two schemes should operate in a complementary manner, ensuring that disabled people can access the supports most appropriate to their circumstances.

2. Ensure applicants have access to timely, independent and appropriately qualified assessments.

The scheme should provide publicly funded assessments to determine which vehicle adaptations are necessary and suitable for an individual's functional needs. Assessments should be carried out by appropriately qualified professionals who are independent of companies selling or installing vehicle adaptations. The assessment process should be proportionate to the complexity and safety risks of the proposed adaptation, avoiding unnecessary medical appointments, delays or administrative burdens. Where adaptations affect driving controls or a person's ability to operate a vehicle safely, specialist driving assessments and appropriate medical fitness-to-drive advice should be available. The Road Safety Authority and Office of Traffic Medicine should contribute to the development of a consistent national assessment framework to ensure that assessments are safe, appropriate and applied fairly.

3. Establish clear national safety and quality standards for vehicle adaptations.

DFI recommends that all vehicle adaptations funded through the scheme are supplied and installed by providers with the appropriate technical qualifications, experience and competence. Adaptations should comply with relevant National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) requirements, vehicle type-approval rules and other applicable safety standards. Adaptations involving safety-critical systems, such as steering, braking or accelerator controls, should be subject to independent technical verification where appropriate. Following installation, the disabled person should have an opportunity to test the adaptation and receive practical training in its safe and effective use. These measures are necessary to protect users, ensure adaptations are fit for purpose and reduce the risk of unsuitable or unsafe installations.



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4. Prevent conflicts of interest and ensure transparent, fair pricing.

DFI recommends that independent advice and assessment are clearly separated from the commercial sale and installation of vehicle adaptations. A company that stands to benefit financially from supplying an adaptation should not be solely responsible for deciding what equipment an applicant requires. The Department should establish transparent procurement and pricing arrangements, including competitive quotations where appropriate, to ensure value for money and prevent unnecessary or inflated costs. Clear, itemised invoices and proportionate audit arrangements should also be required. These safeguards would protect disabled applicants from inappropriate recommendations while ensuring that public funding is used effectively.

5. Publish clear eligibility rules, funding arrangements and accessible appeals procedures.

The Department should provide comprehensive, accessible information explaining who can apply for the scheme, which vehicle adaptations are eligible for funding, the maximum grant available and how applications will be assessed. The scheme should include arrangements for exceptional cases where an individual's disability-related needs cannot be met within standard grant limits. Clear rules should also address repairs, maintenance, replacement of adaptations and the transfer of equipment when a vehicle is changed. Applicants should have access to an independent appeals process where funding is refused or an award is disputed. Importantly, the scheme should not require disabled people to pay the full cost of approved adaptations upfront and subsequently seek reimbursement, as this could exclude those unable to afford the initial expense. Any costs not covered by the grant should be clearly explained and agreed before installation begins.

6. Ensure the scheme recognises the full diversity of disability-related mobility needs, including the needs of disabled passengers.

Eligibility should not be restricted to people with visible physical disabilities or those who drive themselves. The scheme must recognise that people with hidden disabilities, neurological conditions and fluctuating or episodic disabilities may also require vehicle adaptations to travel safely and independently. Assessments should consider how a person's condition affects their ability to access, enter, exit or travel in a vehicle, including where those needs vary over time. The scheme must also explicitly include adaptations required by disabled passengers, including children and adults who cannot drive or who rely on family



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members, carers or others for transport. This could include wheelchair access equipment, transfer aids, specialist seating, restraint systems and other adaptations necessary for safe and accessible passenger travel. Eligibility should be based on demonstrated functional need rather than diagnosis alone or whether the disabled person is the driver.

7. Address the specific transport needs of rural residents and ensure compatibility with electric vehicles.

The scheme should recognise that disabled people living in rural areas may have limited or no access to accessible public transport and may therefore depend heavily on private vehicles to access employment, education, healthcare and community life. Funding and eligibility arrangements should reflect this dependence and avoid disadvantaging applicants because of where they live. The Department should also consider the availability of specialist assessment and installation services across the country so that rural applicants are not required to undertake unreasonable journeys or incur additional costs. In addition, the scheme should support suitable adaptations to electric and hybrid vehicles, recognising the transition towards lower-emission transport. Disabled people should not be excluded from using newer vehicle technologies because adaptations are unavailable, incompatible or subject to additional costs that are not adequately addressed by the scheme.

8. Involve disabled people and their representative organisations in the design, implementation and oversight of the scheme.

DFI recommends that disabled people, including disabled drivers and passengers, are meaningfully involved throughout the development, implementation and ongoing review of the scheme. Engagement should extend beyond one-off consultation and provide opportunities to influence eligibility criteria, assessment processes, application procedures and service standards. The Department should establish clear standards for application processing times, assessment waiting periods, decision-making and installation arrangements. It should also publish regular information on the scheme's performance, including the number of applications received, grants approved and refused, processing times and applicant experiences. This would support transparency, accountability and continuous improvement.

9. Monitor unmet demand and ensure equitable access to the scheme across all regions.



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The Department should establish arrangements to identify and monitor the number of disabled people who require vehicle adaptations but are unable to access them, including those who do not meet eligibility criteria, cannot afford additional costs or experience delays in assessment or installation. Information should be collected on regional differences in application rates, waiting times, service availability and funding outcomes. This would help identify whether disabled people in particular parts of the country, especially rural or underserved areas, face greater barriers to accessing the scheme. The findings should inform future funding decisions, service planning and changes to eligibility or delivery arrangements to ensure equitable access nationally.

10. Establish a clear process for resolving problems and improving the scheme following its introduction.

The Department should put in place an accessible and transparent mechanism through which applicants, grant recipients, disability organisations and service providers can raise concerns about how the scheme operates. This should include clear procedures for addressing delays, assessment disputes, unsuitable adaptations, installation problems and difficulties accessing approved funding. Applicants should know who is responsible for resolving issues and the timeframe within which they can expect a response. The Department should also commit to a formal review of the scheme after an initial implementation period, drawing on feedback from disabled people, DPOs and service providers. This review should identify any unintended barriers or gaps in provision and lead to practical improvements in how the scheme is delivered.



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Section 1 — About you / your organisation

1.1 Who are you making this submission on behalf of?

An organisation — Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI).

1.2 Individual respondent

Not applicable — organisational submission.

1.3 Capacity in which you are seeking VAS funding

Other: national representative / umbrella organisation providing policy feedback on behalf of the disability sector; DFI is not applying for a grant in this submission.

Organisation name and Disabled Persons Organisation status

Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI)

Section 2.1 — Application process

What would make it easy for you to apply for the Scheme?

DFI recommends a single, accessible **application pathway** with clear responsibilities, funded support and published timeframes for each stage.

A **range of formats** are required where provision of online, paper, telephone and assisted application channels are available. To support meaningful and comprehensive engagement plain-language and Easy Read guidance is needed with

- accessible formats,
- clear eligibility and cost information;
- a named contact point;
- support through disability organisations and local services.
- publishing a step-by-step process will support people to apply.
- an evidence checklist,
- written decisions explaining the criteria applied and
- an information on an independent appeal route.

DFI member feedback proposes a **local pathway for application** through a designated health authority or primary care centre, where a local team could review evidence, arrange a proportionate interview or needs assessment, and report against the published eligibility matrix to the responsible decision-making



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body. This proposal requires consideration rather than representing a confirmed delivery arrangement. To enable this responsibilities, capacity and funding would need to be agreed, without requiring applicants to navigate multiple agencies.

Any specialist rehabilitation service's role in appeals must also be explicitly agreed and published, and the **appeal body must be independent** of the original decision.

Feedback from DFI member organisations highlights the importance of **dedicated assistance** throughout the application process. Applicants should be able to receive support from their chosen disability organisation or trusted person, while retaining control of their application and decisions.

What might stop you from applying?

Barriers to applying were identified as:

- unclear scope (including the reference to “more minor adaptations”);
- difficulty obtaining evidence or assessments;
- inaccessible forms;
- long delays;
- uncertainty about upfront or uncovered costs;
- limited local suppliers;
- inaccessible transport to assessments or fitters;
- the cost of being without a car during works; and
- fear that existing DDS support may be affected.

In addition, hidden and fluctuating conditions must not be dismissed because a person appears well at one appointment.

How can we keep the application process simple while collecting necessary information?

A key consideration is keeping administration proportionate. Using a short core application with verified supporting information and requesting additional evidence only where safety or complexity requires it.

In addition, the scheme should accept existing relevant medical and functional evidence and avoid repeated proof of permanent disability.

Publish a functional-needs decision framework with discretion for atypical cases. Distinguish medical fitness to drive from adaptation suitability where critically passengers should not be subject to driver fitness requirements.



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Any required assessment should be funded, timely, geographically accessible and independent of commercial supply. Specialist driver assessment is used, where indicated for safety-critical controls.

To aid communication and transparency, provide written reasons, accessible review and an independent appeals process.

DFI member feedback proposes proportionate five-year reviews of continuing needs. If adopted, these should complement earlier reassessment when needs change, not delay access to reassessment, automatically end support, or require repeated proof of permanent disability.

In addition, the process should collect only information necessary to administer the scheme – respecting individual privacy and autonomy. As well as explaining how sensitive information will be used, stored and shared. The system should provide a secure way to submit evidence.

Section 2.2 — Eligibility

How can we make sure the Scheme is fair and accessible to everyone who is eligible?

Member feedback emphasised that eligibility should reflect long-term functional impact and transport barriers, including neurological, hidden, episodic and fluctuating symptoms. Rather than depend on how someone presents at a single point in time assessment.

Our suggested transparent eligibility matrix, would consider:

- relevant verified diagnostic information,
- continuing needs,
- daily-life impact,
- symptom fluctuation,
- safety and the expected benefits of support.

Thus ensuring that diagnosis alone is not a gatekeeper to eligibility.

Applicants who will drive must be medically fit and able to drive safely with appropriate adaptations, taking account of fluctuating symptoms. Inability to drive safely should not in itself exclude a person: passenger adaptations should support travel with another appropriately licensed driver.

The scheme should also recognise access to appropriate exercise as a health and self-management need, supporting mobility and mental wellbeing, alongside employment, education, healthcare, rehabilitation, social participation and family life.



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Ultimately the scheme should protect and support dignity, reduce stigma and support independence and quality of life. This is the ethos and core principle, clearly stated and a driving factor for the scheme.

The scheme should not further marginalise people based on where they live. Therefore, ensure rural applicants are not disadvantaged by supplier geography.

Clear guidance should be published explaining how the proposed Vehicle Adaptation Scheme (VAS) will operate alongside the existing Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers Scheme (DDS), including the eligibility criteria and types of adaptations covered under each scheme. In particular, clarity is needed on how more complex adaptations, such as specialist driving controls, wheelchair-accessible vehicles and significant vehicle modifications, will be assessed and funded. This is important to ensure that disabled people do not experience confusion, delays or gaps in support, particularly where their needs may fall between the two schemes. Existing DDS entitlements must also be protected.

What factors should the Department consider when allocating funding?

Funding should prioritise assessed need, safety, independence, inclusion, quality-of-life benefits and the full reasonable cost of the appropriate solution.

To achieve the the scheme requires an adequate budget allocation based on estimated the applicant numbers, and adaptation costs.

Costs will include assessment, equipment, fitting, certification, user training, testing, removal, transfer, restoration and refitting where justified. As well as appeals process and follow-up review.

Other considerations include vehicle condition, remaining useful life, vehicle suitability, and the person's future needs assessed on a case-by-case basis. This is counter to relying solely on arbitrary vehicle age thresholds.

We also recommend publishing grant ceilings, any applicant contributions and exceptional-needs arrangements in advance.

The scheme should not place any additional financial burden on the individual. Direct supplier payment would mean that applicants do not have to finance approved works upfront. Any uncovered cost should be explained and agreed before work begins.



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In the instance where demand for the scheme exceeds available funding, the department should publish fair prioritisation and waiting-list arrangements, including a route for urgent needs.

The Department is required to monitor unmet demand and regional equity to support development of the scheme and to ensure transparency of provisions

Protect value for money through independent recommendations, transparent procurement and technical invoice audit, including monitoring effects on DDS adaptation prices. As explained above in the reassessment response, funding decisions should not assume that adaptation costs will be recovered through a vehicle's trade-in price.

When allocating funding under the proposed Vehicle Adaptation Scheme, the Department should consider the wider impact that access to an adapted vehicle can have on a disabled person's independence, wellbeing and participation in everyday life. Feedback from DFI member organisations highlights the importance of considering whether applicants have access to suitable alternative transport, particularly in rural areas, as well as their volunteering, family and caring responsibilities. Funding decisions should also recognise the long-term benefits of enabling social participation and preventing isolation. These factors should be considered alongside access to employment, education and healthcare, ensuring that funding is based on individual mobility needs and the benefits of the adaptation, rather than prioritising those in paid employment. Paid employment should not be a condition of receiving support.

Other DFI member feedback recommends considering direct contracts with adaptation manufacturers or main suppliers. This to be achieved through a formal tendering process. Procurement has the potential to benchmark equipment prices and manufacturers' recommended fitting times, supported by independent technical expertise and invoice audits. Funding should follow assessed need rather than encourage packages priced to exhaust the grant ceiling.

Monitor price effects on people outside VAS, including DDS participants, so that the new Scheme does not make essential adaptations less affordable elsewhere.

In addition, DFI member feedback requests clear guidance on VAT and VRT treatment and how VAS will interact with existing tax concessions and other mobility supports. This should explain the position for electric and hybrid vehicles as well as petrol and diesel vehicles, including any costs that remain payable by the applicant.



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Guidance must distinguish the adaptation grant from vehicle-purchase support and existing DDS tax reliefs, without implying that the schemes offer the same entitlements.

Section 2.3 — Vehicle adaptations

What vehicle adaptations should be covered by the Scheme?

The consultation describes VAS as supporting more minor adaptations, rather than vehicle purchase. Within that scope, a non-exhaustive list is required. One which is based on functional suitability, safety and applicable technical standards.

Relevant categories for consideration include:

- hand controls,
- left-foot accelerators,
- steering aids and secondary controls;
- reduced-effort steering
- transmission modifications;
- swivel or transfer seats,
- grab handles,
- boards,
- ramps
- lifts;
- specialist seating and positioning;
- wheelchair spaces,
- occupant restraints and tie-downs;
- wheelchair/scooter hoists and loading equipment;
- passenger access adaptations.

This is a proposed list, not a statement of confirmed eligibility. To further develop this list, a definition of “minor adaptations” is required. And to specify which categories and costs are covered. Furthermore clarify whether complex alterations such as lowered floors fall within VAS, an exceptional-needs arrangement or another support route.

It will be important to provide a clear referral pathway for people whose assessed needs fall outside VAS and who cannot access DDS. As well as to provide clarification on eligibility for adaptations to electric and hybrid vehicles.



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If you currently use an adapted vehicle, who helped determine the most suitable adaptations?

DFI responds as a representative organisation rather than an individual vehicle user. Member contributions emphasise that appropriate input should centre on the disabled person and, where relevant, include occupational therapists, specialist driving assessors/instructors, qualified adaptation engineers and suppliers. Expertise in fitting equipment should not be assumed to substitute for independent identification of the safest and most suitable adaptation.

Member feedback highlights that identifying the most suitable adaptation may require more than one assessment or trial. Medical clearance to drive should be established before specialist driving tuition, rather than after adaptations have already been fitted.

Where assessment or tuition identifies unsuitable equipment, the Scheme should provide a clear route to resolve the issue before the person uses the vehicle. Applicants who cannot obtain medical clearance to drive should remain eligible for consideration of passenger adaptations. Training should address the practical transition to unfamiliar controls, including hand controls and left-foot accelerators.

How would you like to be involved in deciding what adaptations are made?

The disabled person must lead decisions. To ensure this individuals will require accessible information about options and costs, and have a genuine opportunity to trial controls or equipment before purchase where practicable.

An independent professional should assess suitability, and the supplier should advise on technical feasibility.

Recording informed agreement before fitting is essential, with a clear right to query or appeal unsuitable recommendations.

Where the applicant wants assistance, their chosen supporter should be included.

Is there anyone you would like to help you make these decisions?

Offer access to an independent occupational therapist for transfer and functional needs, and a specialist driving assessor/instructor for driver controls, with appropriate medical fitness-to-drive advice consistent with RSA/Office of Traffic Medicine guidance.

Include the person's chosen family member, carer or advocate where requested.



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Vehicle dealerships may advise on vehicle design, warranties and resale, but should not replace independent disability assessments. The level of assessment should be proportionate to the risk and complexity of the adaptation.

Independent assessment should also consider whether transfer difficulties arise from the design of the vehicle itself, rather than assuming that fitting an adaptation is always the most suitable solution. Where a different vehicle model would better meet the person's needs, applicants should receive independent advice and clear information about the limits of VAS funding and any alternative support routes, without implying that vehicle purchase is covered by the Scheme.

What is the best way to assess whether an adaptation should be changed, updated or replaced?

Provide an accessible reassessment route triggered by changes in function, safety, equipment failure, vehicle replacement or user preference. Rather than imposing inflexible time limits. This review is to consider the vehicle's condition, remaining useful life, compatibility, repairability, the person's future needs and whether safe transfer/reuse is feasible. Assess the whole cost of retaining or transferring adaptations, including removal, restoration, refitting, recertification and user familiarisation. Funding these costs where justified so that responsible vehicle replacement does not create avoidable financial penalties.

For the individual they should be provided with explanations in advance on what is covered, any applicant contribution and the expected period without transport. Adaptations may increase a vehicle's value to some buyers and reduce it to others. It should not be assumed that a dealership can recover their cost in the trade-in price.

Specify repair response times and temporary mobility arrangements where a person loses access to essential transport.

Member feedback adds technological advances as a reason to review an adaptation where newer equipment could better meet current functional needs. This complements the needs-based reassessment route above, including cases where an existing adaptation is no longer fit for purpose; it does not introduce a fixed replacement interval.

What proof should be provided that the changes have been completed?

In response to this question proof would include:

- itemised invoices;
- evidence of supplier competence and applicable approvals;
- installation and technical declarations;



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- relevant vehicle approval/NSAI documentation where required;
- checks of wheelchair/occupant restraint compatibility where relevant;
- an appropriate post-installation safety and functional check.
- for driving controls, document familiarisation/training and any specialist reassessment indicated.
- confirmation obtained from the applicant that they have received the adaptation, operating instructions and warranty information in an accessible format. Applicant sign-off should not transfer technical liability away from professionals.

In addition, a single accessible route for reporting unsuitable or defective adaptations should be published. With clear responsibility for investigation, remedial work and its cost, dispute resolution between applicants, assessors and suppliers, and temporary mobility support where essential transport is unavailable.

Specialist member feedback calls for adaptations funded through VAS to be supplied and fitted only by NSAI-approved companies, with consistent quality standards for equivalent adaptations under VAS and DDS. This is a member recommendation, not a statement of confirmed VAS rules. The Department should publish the supplier approval and certification requirements before applications open.

The Department should also obtain and publish clarification from NSAI on certification requirements for adaptations to new vehicles and vehicles registered for less than six months.

This guidance should distinguish existing legal obligations from any additional approval conditions proposed for VAS and explain which vehicles and adaptations are covered.

Section 2.4 — Information sharing

What measures could be introduced to improve awareness of the Scheme?

Publish and disseminate accessible information through:

- www.gov.ie.
- disability organisations,
- healthcare services
- rehabilitation professionals and their representative organisations e.g. occupational therapists,
- specialist driving services,
- local authorities,



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- community groups,
- vehicle adaptation suppliers and dealerships.

In addition, offer Easy Read, screen-reader compatible and other accessible formats, plain-language examples, a telephone service and a searchable national supplier directory.

- Clearly explain VAS versus DDS, what is and is not funded, electric vehicle eligibility, expected waiting times, appeals and complaints.

Outreach should also use social media, traditional media and public service campaigns, alongside trusted local and disability networks, to reach people who may not already be connected to services.

Section 2.5 — General feedback

What aspects of the proposed Scheme would work particularly well?

DFI welcomes a distinct needs-based adaptation grant. Which includes the removal of the Primary Medical Certificate requirement for VAS. A scheme that recognised both drivers and passengers, and direct payment to approved suppliers.

These features would reduce exclusion and financial barriers if paired with appropriate independent assessment and safety oversight.

Are there aspects that could be improved?

DFI recommends that the Department publish:

- clear arrangements for independent assessment,
- the scope of minor and complex adaptations,
- supplier selection and certification,
- medical fitness-to-drive pathways,
- training,
- procurement and pricing,
- post-installation checks,
- repair and transfer funding,
- exceptional cases,
- appeals and
- integration with DDS.

In particular, the Department should confirm whether independent assessments will be mandatory and what NSAI certification requirements, if any, will apply to VAS suppliers. DFI member contributions raise concerns that these safeguards



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may not be required; these remain member-reported concerns requiring direct confirmation, not settled facts established by the consultation form.

Member feedback raises concern also about any pilot approach that could defer essential safeguards. The Department should clarify whether a pilot is proposed – the scale and scope of the pilot and a timeframe for review, development and further rollout.

Whether introduced through a pilot or a full launch, independent assessment arrangements, supplier standards, training and procurement controls should be established from the outset, with transparent monitoring and a clear process for addressing problems.

What is the most important feature of a Vehicle Adaptation Scheme?

The Scheme's most important feature is a safe, person-centred adaptation that meets assessed functional needs and that the disabled person can use effectively, without unnecessary financial barriers or loss of choice and control. The scheme should be informed by an outcome focused approach that centres on independence, autonomy, agency, inclusion and participation.

Independent assessment should be proportionate to functional need and adaptation risk, consistent with the assessment recommendations above.

Affordability and administrative simplicity must not be achieved by weakening safety-critical safeguards.

If the VAS worked well for you, what difference would it make to your life?

DFI responds on behalf of its members rather than as an individual applicant. Drawing on feedback from member organisations, an effective VAS would support greater independence and access to healthcare, employment, education, volunteering, social activities and community life. It would help reduce isolation, particularly where accessible public transport is not a realistic alternative.

Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

DFI recommends that disabled people and their representative organisations are meaningfully involved in the ongoing development, implementation and review of the Vehicle Adaptation Scheme.

The Scheme must be transparent, accessible and accountable, with clear information on eligibility, assessment, funding, decision-making and appeals.

Appropriate independent assessments and consistent safety standards should be central to its operation, ensuring that vehicle adaptations are both safe and suited to the individual's needs.



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DFI also highlights the importance of ensuring that funding is used effectively and that disabled people are not disadvantaged by unnecessary costs, limited supplier choice or difficulties accessing services, particularly in rural areas.

Further clarity is needed on how the Scheme will operate alongside existing supports, including the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers Scheme, and how it will accommodate electric and hybrid vehicles.

Feedback from DFI member organisations emphasises that VAS must complement, rather than replace or weaken, existing mobility supports. It is also important to recognise that not every disabled person is in a position to purchase or maintain a private vehicle, while many continue to face significant barriers to accessing suitable public transport. The closure of the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant schemes has left a significant gap in financial support for disabled people's transport needs, which the introduction of VAS alone will not address. Member feedback also highlights concerns that any reduction or withdrawal of existing financial assistance could leave disabled people unable to afford to remain on the road or under pressure to continue using vehicles that do not adequately meet their mobility and safety needs. Existing supports must therefore be protected and strengthened, ensuring that the new scheme expands access to appropriate transport rather than displacing essential assistance.

While the introduction of the Scheme is a welcome development, DFI emphasises that access to a private vehicle remains essential for many disabled people due to ongoing gaps in accessible public transport. The Scheme should therefore form part of a wider commitment to improving accessible, affordable and integrated transport options.

DFI encourages the Department to continue engaging with disability organisations as the Scheme develops. This engagement should translate the experiences of disabled people into clear implementation arrangements and inform the Scheme's future review.

Closing statement

DFI welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Vehicle Adaptation Scheme. We would be pleased to engage further with the Department and to support continued consultation with disabled people, Disabled Persons Organisations and disability organisations as the Scheme is designed, implemented and reviewed.



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