

Phones and Broadband -

a guide for people with disabilities
and older people



Acknowledgement

The following guide is the product of considerable work by the NDA, ComReg, the telecommunications sector including both fixed-line and mobile operators, and representative disability organisations including:

BT Communications Ireland
eircom Ltd
3 Mobile
Meteor
Vodafone Ireland
O2 Communications Ireland
People with Disabilities in Ireland
Disability Federation of Ireland
National Council for the Blind
National Association for Deaf People

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Equipment and services that make it easier to communicate using the phone or broadband

This guide has been designed to inform you about the various phone features and services available from Service Providers in this country. Information is provided on:

- Useful telephone features and services;
- Useful broadband internet services;
- Billing and customer support information; and
- The contact details for the various agencies and service providers.

If you find any services that appeal to you, you can contact any of the Service Providers listed in the 'Contact Information' section at the end of the guide.

All listed services are offered by at least one provider, sometimes more.

Useful phone services

Phone service providers offer a number of services that enable people with disabilities to communicate more easily. To find out whether these are available, contact the individual service providers. Contact details are provided at the end of this brochure.

SMS to speech: This is a service that converts any text messages (also called SMS) that are sent to you into speech so you can listen to them. This can be very useful if you have difficulty reading the display and do not have a phone that can convert text to speech itself.

Text relay service: This service allows you to receive voice messages on a text-phone by translating them into text. You can then send that text to the text-phone of customers of any operator.

Video calling: This enables communication between two handsets using live video. Currently, this service is available only on mobile handsets which are equipped to access the 3G network (3G stands for 'Third Generation' and enables you to use services such as the Internet, or Instant Messaging on your 3G enabled mobile phone).

Free Directory Enquiries: For those who are unable to use a phone book because of a disability, some operators provide special directory enquiries services free of charge.

Delivery Reports: This feature, which is quite common on mobile phones, lets you receive a free text message stating whether the text message you have sent has been received by the recipient.

Useful features of fixed-line phones and mobile phones

You may find some of the following features helpful. These are available on some fixed-line phone handsets (sometimes called your landline or home phone) and mobile phones. Contact your service provider (the telephone company which provides you with a phone service) to find out whether they can provide equipment with these features. Contact details for all service providers are included at the end of this brochure.

Large keys: Some phones have keys that are larger than normal, well spaced or recessed and with a raised dot on the number 5. These can be much easier to use for people who have difficulty seeing or operating small controls.

Hands-free: A phone that you can use hands-free, by having an in-built microphone and loudspeaker, can be useful if you have trouble holding a handset.

Hearing-aid compatible: Phones that can be used with a hearing aid (hearing-aid compatible phones) can be much easier to use if you are hard of hearing. To use this feature, set your hearing aid to the 'T' position.

Headsets: Some phones can be used with an earpiece or headset. This may be connected either through a standard 'mini jack' headphone socket in your phone or wirelessly using Bluetooth. Bluetooth is the name of the technology that allows devices to communicate wirelessly. This can produce better call quality for some people and is easier to use if you need voice output.

Voice output: Voice output is available on some mobile phones to speak out the menus and other information on the display. Voice output makes most or all of the phone's functions available if you cannot read the text on the display.

Volume: Some phones are louder than others. Most have adjustable volume level.

Text (SMS) and multimedia messaging (MMS): All mobile phones and some fixed-line phones can be used to send text messages. Some can also send multimedia messages that contain video, sound, or photographs.

Text size: Some phones have larger displays with bigger text or text that is adjustable in size if you have low vision.

Display screen contrast: The screen on some phones uses a display with more or better contrast than others.

Voice dialling: This allows you to dial a person by just speaking their name, once you have entered their number into the phone's 'phone book'.

Quick dial keys: Many phones allow you to associate specific numbers to certain keys, so that pressing the key automatically dials the number. In some cases, special keys are provided with symbols on them to indicate the function, such as Doctor, Police or Assistance. This can be very useful in providing security if you cannot easily remember numbers.

Backlit keypad: Some mobile phones have keypads that light up, making it easier to see the numbers and letters in the dark.

Flashing indicator: Phones may offer a flashing display function which visually notifies you of an incoming call or text message.

Vibration Function:
A phone with a built in vibration function will notify you of an incoming call or text message by vibration.

Useful broadband internet services

Broadband internet offers a number of alternative or additional possibilities for communication. Some of these may make communication easier or more cost effective if you have a disability.

Internet calling: There are various services available over the internet to make low-cost phone calls, video calls and text messages. One of the more popular low-cost phone call services is called Skype™ .

Instant Messaging: Instant messaging can be described as having a text conversation in real time. Many Instant Messaging programs are available free of charge and some can even be used on a mobile phone. Popular Instant Messengers are MSN Messenger, AIM, ICQ and Yahoo Messenger.

Email: An email is a message which is sent electronically (over the internet) from one person to another. To send and receive emails you need an email account. These accounts are mostly free of charge. Popular email services are provided by Google, Yahoo, and Windows Live.

Reading bills and other information

If you find it difficult to read printed text, there are other ways you can access the information.

Other bill formats:

If you have difficulty reading your phone bill, it may be possible to ask for it in a different format, such as large print, Braille, audio or clear print. Alternatively, you may be able to have your bill delivered by email, or to view an accessible online version on the service provider's website.

Other information: Information describing services and instructions on how to set them up is often available in accessible formats, such as large print, Braille, plain text, email or accessible web pages.

Online access to services: Some service providers offer online access through their website to services like looking at your bill or changing to another package.

Customer Support: All service providers offer customer support for the range of equipment and services they provide. The following supports can be very useful.

Set-up assistance: Assistance may be available with the set-up of equipment and services.

User guides:

When you purchase a new phone, a user guide will be included. If you need the user guide in a different format, such as Braille, you should contact your service provider to find out what other options they can provide.

Help with costs

The following services can help greatly to reduce the cost of using your phone.

The Telephone Allowance: Many people with disabilities and older people can receive help with their phone bills from the Department of Social and Family Affairs, under the Household Benefits Scheme. To find out whether you qualify and how to apply, contact the Department of Social and Family Affairs (details available in the ‘Contact information’ section of this guide)

Free calls: Many mobile phone and fixed-line service providers provide packages that allow you to make free calls to people who are registered with the same service provider. This can save you a lot of money for numbers that you dial frequently.

Free equipment:

Some of the features or accessories that you need in a phone handset or mobile phone are provided by some operators at no extra cost or at a discount.

Contact your service provider to find out which ones they offer.

Free services: Operators may provide some services free if you need them.

For example, free priority fault repair if you are vulnerable and rely on your phone for contact and requesting assistance.

SMS Bundles: Certain mobile operators may offer a special package called a Text Bundle. You could save money by purchasing text messages in a bundle compared to normal priced text messaging.

Contact information

Service providers

Below are the contact details of the service providers who have contributed to this guide:

BT Ireland

BT Communications Ireland Ltd,
Head Office, Grand Central Plaza,
Upper Grand Canal Street, Dublin 4

Phone: 1800 923 924 (Sales Support)

Phone: 1904

(Customer Care & Billing)

Website: www.btireland.ie

Eircom

Eircom Ltd,
114 St Stephen's Green West,
Dublin 2

Phone: 1901

Website:

www.eircom.ie/disabilityservices

3 Mobile

Hutchison 3G Ireland Ltd.,
PO Box 333, Dublin 2

From your 3 mobile: 333

From other mobiles/phones:

083 333 3333

Minicom users: 1800 944 032

Fax: 01 - 5426301

Website: www.three.ie

Meteor

Meteor Mobile Communications Ltd.,
4030 Kingswood Avenue,
Citywest Business Park,
Naas Road, Dublin 24

Phone: 1905

Website: www.meteor.ie

Email: info@meteor.ie

O2

O2 Customer Care Centre,
McLaughlin Road,
National Technology Park,
Limerick

Phone: 1747 (Prepay Customer Care –
14c per call)

Phone: 1909 (Pay Monthly Customer
care – Free of Charge)

Email: customer.care@o2.ie

Website: www.o2.ie

Vodafone

Vodafone, Mountainview,
Leopardstown, Dublin 18

Phone: 1850 20 87 87 (Ready To Go
Customers – Callsave charge applies)

Phone: 1907 (Pay Monthly Customers
– Free of Charge)

Fax: 042 - 932 67 45 (Pay Monthly
Customers)

Website: www.vodafone.ie

Disability organisations

**Below are the organisations that
contributed to the making of this
guide:**

People with Disabilities in Ireland (PWDI)

4th Floor Jervis House,
Jervis Street, Dublin 1

Phone: 01 - 872 1744

Fax: 01 - 872 1771

Email info@pwdi.ie

Website: www.pwdi.ie

Disability Federation of Ireland

Fumbally Court, Fumbally Lane,
Dublin 8

Phone: 01 - 454 7978

Fax: 01 - 454 7981

Email: info@disability-federation.ie

Website: www.disability-federation.ie

**National Council for the Blind of
Ireland (NCBI)**

NCBI Head Office, Whitworth Road,
Drumcondra, Dublin 9

Phone: 1850 334 353

Fax: 01 830 7787

Email: info@ncbi.ie

National Association for Deaf People

35 North Frederick Street,
Dublin 1

Phone: 01 872 3800

Minicom: 01 817 5777

Fax: 01 878 3692

Email: nad@iol.ie

Text Messages: 01 878 3692

Videophone: 01 817 1400

**Commission for Communications
Regulation (ComReg)**

ComReg is the regulator for the
electronic communications
(telecommunications, radio
communications and broadcasting)
and postal sectors.

Block DEF, Abbey Court,
Irish Life Centre,
Lower Abbey Street,
Dublin 1

Email: consumerline@comreg.ie

Main website: www.comreg.ie

Consumer website www.askcomreg.ie

Operator comparison website:

www.callcosts.ie

National Disability Authority (NDA)

The NDA is the lead state agency on
disability issues, providing
independent expert advice to
Government on policy and practice.

25 Clyde Road, Dublin 4

Phone: 01-608 0400

Fax: 01-660 9935

Email: nda@nda.ie

Website: www.nda.ie

Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA)

The DSFA are in charge of the Household Benefits Package. Included in the package is the Free Telephone Scheme which can entitle you to a subsidy in either your mobile or fixed-line phone. Below are the contact details for the Sligo branch which are the head office in charge of the Household Benefit Scheme:

Social Welfare Services Office,
College Road, Sligo

Tel: 1890 500 000

Website: www.welfare.ie

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