

# Access to Ferry Travel

A guide for passengers with a disability or reduced mobility



Spring 2016

This publication is available in alternative formats on request.

Contact the Consumer Council 0800 121 6022 or [info@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@consumercouncil.org.uk)

An audio version can be downloaded in mp3 format from [www.consumercouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk)

## Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure the information provided in this guide is accurate and correct at the time of going to print but no legal responsibility is accepted for any errors, omissions or misleading statements.

Please note the information in this guide could be subject to change. You will be able to download an updated version from the Consumer Council's website [www.consumercouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk)

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## Introduction

Ferry travel provides an important service to passengers travelling to, from and within Northern Ireland.



The rights of people with a disability or reduced mobility are protected to ensure they have the same access to ferry travel as all other citizens.

All disabilities are covered including hidden disabilities such as learning difficulties, autism and hearing loss. A person may have reduced mobility because of an illness, an age related condition or a temporary injury, for example a broken leg.

The rights explained in this guide apply to people travelling on all passenger ferry services operating to, from or within European Union (EU) countries.

However, the rights do not apply to passengers travelling on vessels:

- Certified to carry up to and including 12 passengers;
- With a crew responsible for operating the ship of no more than three people;
- Where the distance of the service is less than 500 metres, one way; or
- On excursion and sightseeing tours other than cruises.

These exceptions mean that the passenger rights outlined in this guide do not apply to some smaller ferry services.

More detailed information, including advice concerning your rights when travelling on local ferry services, is available by contacting the Consumer Council on **0800 121 6022** or **info@consumercouncil.org.uk**.

We can talk to you about your specific requirements and advise you on what assistance you can expect from the ferry company and port operator.

## Booking travel



Ferry companies, travel agents and tour operators are not allowed to refuse a person to travel by ferry on the basis of their disability, unless:

- Restrictions are imposed for safety reasons; or
- The design of the vessel or terminal makes it impossible for the person to board or disembark the vessel, or to carry the person safely or in a manner which is practical for assistance staff.

If a ferry company, tour operator or travel agent refuses to allow you to travel they must inform you immediately of the reason why. You can also request the explanation in writing and this must be provided within five working days.

Each ferry company must ensure their booking process is accessible for people with a disability or reduced mobility. All relevant information, including your ticket, journey information and access conditions must be available in accessible formats, for example, text, Braille, audio, video and electronic formats.

## Arranging assistance



Ferry companies and terminal operators must provide assistance free of charge to people with a disability or reduced mobility. If it is possible the assistance should be adapted to your individual needs.

Assistance must be provided at any stage of the journey that you need, from your arrival at the port terminal until you leave your destination port.

**If you require assistance you should inform the ferry company or terminal operator of your assistance needs at least 48 hours before the assistance is required. It is often easiest to do this at the time of booking.**

You should inform the ferry company of any accommodation or seating needs you have and of any medical or mobility equipment you need to bring. The ferry company is required to send you a formal confirmation that your assistance request has been received.

If for some unforeseen reason, or in the case of last minute travel, you do not give more than 48 hours notice, the ferry company and terminal operator are still required to make all reasonable efforts to assist you.

If you booked your ticket from a travel agent, you need to inform only the travel agent of your assistance needs. The travel agent is responsible for communicating your assistance needs to the ferry company and terminal operator. The travel agent must also confirm to you that they have notified the ferry company and terminal operator.

## Arrival at the port



If you require assistance you need to arrive at the port at a time agreed in writing by the ferry company, which shall not be more than one hour before the published boarding time. If you are not given a boarding time you should arrive at least one hour before the departure time unless you have agreed a shorter time with the ferry company or terminal operator.

There will be a designated point, either inside or outside the terminal for passengers with a disability or reduced mobility to announce their arrival and request assistance. The point should be clearly signposted.

**You are entitled to assistance from trained staff from your arrival at the port and where possible the assistance provided should be adapted to meet your individual needs.**



## In the terminal



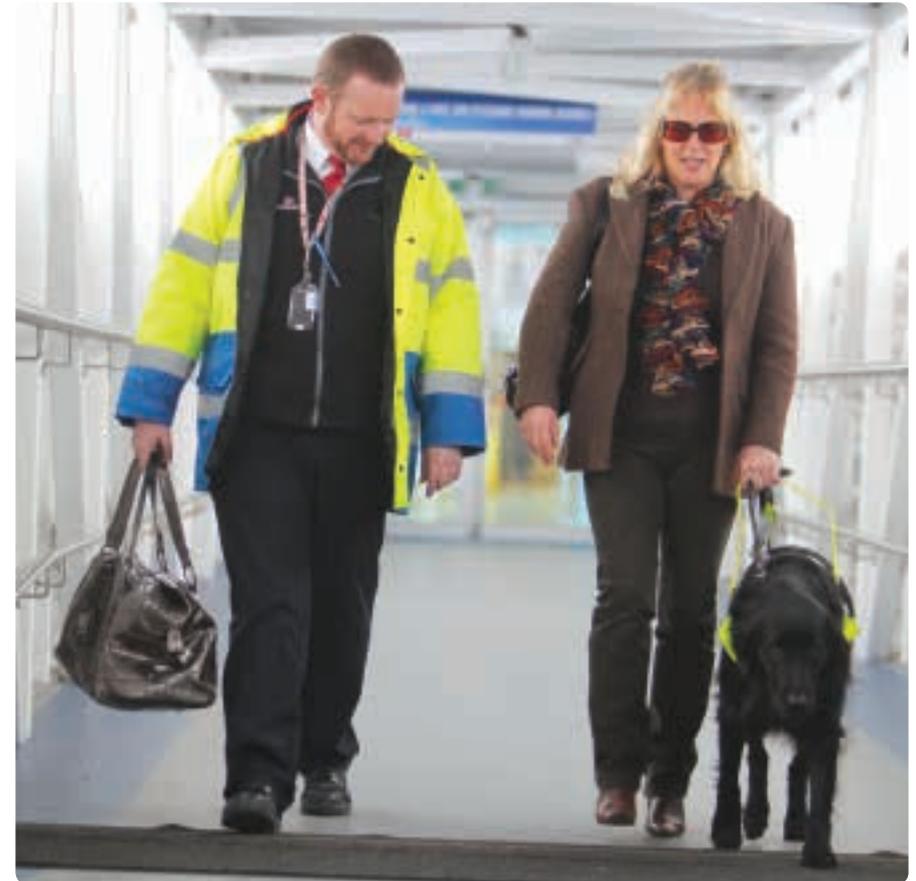
If you are travelling as a foot passenger, staff will be available to assist you to move to the check-in counter and check-in your baggage. The staff will also help you proceed from check-in to the security search area.

Security staff will have received specialist training and should be aware of your needs to ensure searches are carried out appropriately.

It may be possible for searches to be carried out in a private area. If you would prefer this ask a member of security staff.

## Boarding the vessel

The specific assistance you are provided when boarding will differ depending on whether you are travelling as a foot passenger, with a car or as part of a coach party. When informing the ferry company of your assistance needs it is important that you ask for information on how you will be assisted.



## On-board the vessel



Staff will be available to assist you from the vessel door to seating areas or your cabin. All reasonable efforts must be made to arrange seating to meet your needs.

Staff will be able to store and retrieve your baggage on the vessel and help you make your way to the toilets. However, staff are not required to help you access recreational or retail facilities on-board the vessel.

Where it is considered strictly necessary, a ferry company may require a passenger with a disability or reduced mobility to be accompanied by another person capable of providing personal care such as feeding, breathing, using medication or using the toilet. If this happens, the accompanying passenger will be allowed to travel for free. The ferry company must also make all reasonable efforts to give the accompanying person a seat or cabin next to the passenger with a disability or reduced mobility.



## Getting off the vessel



The specific assistance you are provided when disembarking the vessel will differ depending on whether you are travelling as a foot passenger, with a car or as part of a coach party. When informing the ferry company of your assistance needs it is important that you ask for information on how you will be assisted when getting off the vessel.

## Assistance at your destination port



If you are travelling as a foot passenger, staff at your destination port terminal should be provided with details of your assistance requirements by the ferry company.

Once you are off the vessel, staff will assist you to retrieve any baggage you checked-in, access toilet facilities and help you move to the terminal exit.

## Mobility equipment and medical equipment



If you have medical or mobility equipment that you need during the voyage, you can take this on-board free of charge. Terminal and ferry company staff are responsible for handling your mobility equipment.

If the ferry company or terminal operator damages or loses your mobility equipment or other specific equipment, it will be required to pay compensation equal to the cost of repairing or replacing the

equipment. If your equipment is lost or damaged, the ferry company or terminal operator must make every effort to provide suitable temporary replacement equipment as soon as possible.

Some items of medical equipment (such as oxygen cylinders) may not be permitted on-board vessels, or may be subject to a size limit. Large or heavy items of mobility equipment may not be permitted in all parts of the vessel. You should contact the ferry company for information about any restrictions.

If you need to bring medical equipment on-board the vessel, you must notify the ferry company when making your booking.

If you are a wheelchair user and wish to bring your own wheelchair on-board the vessel you should check when making your booking that your wheelchair can be safely accommodated on-board the vessel and whether it will be restricted to particular areas of the vessel.

If you use a motorised wheelchair that is too large or heavy for the passenger areas of the vessel you will be provided with alternative equipment by the ferry company for use during the voyage.

## Assistance dogs



If you are accompanied by an assistance dog, the dog will be allowed with you on-board the vessel. Assistance staff will be trained to recognise the needs of assistance dog users and also the needs of your assistance dog.

The ferry company may ask you to provide evidence that your dog has been properly trained as an assistance dog. Before you travel you should check with the ferry company about the specific documents they require.

If you are travelling on a ferry service within the UK, for example, Belfast to Cairnryan, there are no restrictions on travelling with an assistance dog, except for reasons which are justified on the grounds of safety. If you are travelling from a port in the Republic of Ireland to the UK or to another EU country your assistance dog will be subject to applicable EU rules on the movement of animals.

If you are travelling outside the UK you should check the latest government guidance before travelling.

## Complaints

During your journey, if you are not satisfied with the service you receive, it is best to raise a complaint immediately. This will allow the ferry company or terminal operator to address your issue and provide you with the assistance you need.

After your journey if you wish to make a complaint concerning the treatment you received when travelling you must submit the complaint to the ferry company or terminal operator within two months of the date you travelled. The company must respond to you within one month of receiving your complaint to explain whether your complaint has been accepted, rejected or is still being considered. You should receive a final reply no more than two months after the company received your complaint.

If you are unsatisfied with the response you receive, contact the Consumer Council. We can investigate the complaint further on your behalf.

Alternatively, if you do not feel comfortable making a complaint to the ferry company or terminal operator, contact the Consumer Council in the first instance and we will make the complaint on your behalf.

**The Consumer Council handles complaints concerning ferry services operating to, from and within Northern Ireland. If you have a complaint about any other ferry service, contact us and we will direct you to the organisation responsible for handling your complaint.**

## Contact Details

### The Consumer Council

Complaints line: 0800 121 6022 (freephone)  
Tele/Textphone: 028 9025 1600  
Fax: 028 9025 1663  
Email: [complaints@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:complaints@consumercouncil.org.uk)  
Address: Floor 3, Seatem House  
28 - 32 Alfred Street  
Belfast, BT2 8EN

### P&O

Tel: 08716 64 21 21  
Email: [customer.services@poferries.com](mailto:customer.services@poferries.com)  
Address: P&O Ferries  
Channel House  
Channel View Road  
Dover, CT17 9TJ

### Port of Larne

Tel: 028 2887 2100  
Email: [info@portoflarne.co.uk](mailto:info@portoflarne.co.uk)  
Address: Port of Larne  
9 Olderfleet Road  
Larne, BT40 1AS

### Stena Line\*

Tel: 0342 081 801  
Email: [feedback@stenaline.com](mailto:feedback@stenaline.com)  
Assistance  
Email: [assistance@stenaline.com](mailto:assistance@stenaline.com)  
Address: Customer Services  
Stena Line  
Stena House  
Station Approach  
Holyhead, LL65 1DQ

### Isle of Man Steam Packet Company\*

Tel: 01624 661661  
Email: [iom.reservations@steam-packet.com](mailto:iom.reservations@steam-packet.com)  
Assistance  
Email: [iom.reservations@steam-packet.com](mailto:iom.reservations@steam-packet.com)  
Address: Passenger Services  
Isle of Man Steam Packet  
Company Limited  
Imperial Buildings  
Douglas  
Isle of Man, IM1 2BY

\* If you are travelling with Stena Line or the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company, you should contact the ferry company directly if you wish to make a complaint about the Port of Belfast.

## Contact Details

### Strangford Ferry

Tel: 0300 200 7898  
Email: [roads.strangford.feedback@drdni.gov.uk](mailto:roads.strangford.feedback@drdni.gov.uk)  
Address: Strangford Lough Ferry Terminal  
1 The Slip  
Strangford, BT30 7NE

## Notes



Floor 3, Seatem House  
28 - 32 Alfred Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8EN



Complaints line: 0800 121 6022



Tele/Textphone: 028 9025 1600



Fax: 028 9025 1663



Email: [info@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@consumercouncil.org.uk)



Website: [www.consumercouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumercouncil.org.uk)



Consumer Council Northern Ireland



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