

Disability services guidebook for Helsinki residents

Helsinki

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1. Disability services guidebook for Helsinki residents

This guidebook serves as a comprehensive resource for the key disability services in Helsinki. It encompasses a wide array of services and support measures designed to enhance the independence and everyday life management of individuals with disabilities or developmental challenges. Our primary objective is to minimise the obstacles that disabilities may pose in a person's daily life.

More information and application forms:

www.hel.fi/vammaiset/en

www.hel.fi/vammaiset/fi/lomakkeet

2. Legal definition of the services

The Disability Services Act outlines the services and financial support options available to individuals with disabilities within a municipality, in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Individuals experiencing long-term disabilities or facing challenges in managing their daily activities due to illness are eligible for services and support measures under the Disability Services Act. These services and support measures are provided when a person with a disability cannot access services that are sufficient and appropriate for their needs through other legislative means.

Certain services and support measures specified in the Disability Services Act are mandatory for municipalities to provide, and individuals with severe disabilities have a legal entitlement to these services. Additionally, some services and support measures mentioned in the Disability Services Act are subject to budget allocations, allowing municipalities to determine their distribution.

Individuals with developmental disabilities can also apply for specialised services as stipulated in legislation governing the care of people with developmental disabilities.

Furthermore, under the Social Welfare Act, assistance related to housing and employment can also be made available.

3. Applying for services

Services designed for individuals with disabilities can be accessed at the service point located in your residential area, which specialises in social work for people with disabilities. Contact details for these service points can be found at the end of this guidebook.

It's important to note that when applying for these services, the applicant's

income or wealth will not be considered. The primary focus will always be on the individual's need for services and how the disability or chronic illness affects their daily life. Applications for services can be submitted throughout the year.

You can have a discussion with a social worker regarding the assistance and support needed to address housing, transportation, and daily life management challenges arising from your disability or illness. Social workers are experts in providing services as outlined in the Disability Services Act and the Developmental Disabilities Act. Collaboration takes place with various entities, including home care, home services for families with children, hospitals, and organisations. Additionally, medical care, medical rehabilitation, and home care for individuals with disabilities are integral components of health care services.

Services for families with children encompass home services and social guidance. Home services offer temporary support to families in managing their daily lives, taking into account factors like reduced functional capacity, family circumstances, stress, childbirth, disability, or other relevant considerations. Social guidance for families with children is tailored to families with children aged 0–16 and provides support, guidance, and counselling for various life situations, as well as questions related to parenthood and child-rearing. You can find more information about family services in Helsinki at www.perheentuki.fi.

Individuals living with disabilities actively participate in the development of a client plan. This plan assesses their overall situation, establishes goals, determines services, and identifies responsible parties. Ongoing monitoring and assessment are also integral components of the client plan.

4. Services for individuals with severe disabilities

Services and support measures designed for individuals with severe disabilities fall under the specific mandate of municipalities. These encompass the following services:

4.1 Transport services

Transport services are intended to assist individuals with severe disabilities who face unreasonable challenges when using public transport. These services can also be applied for when commuting to work or school, as well as for essential errands or leisure activities.

Upon approval by the municipality, clients eligible for transport services will receive a personal transport service payment card, which can be used to cover the cost of trips. Clients are typically required to make a copayment for their journeys.

The payment card is valid for transportation within Helsinki and its neighbouring municipalities. In cases where the workplace or educational institution is situated in Helsinki or the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, transport services for work and school-related commuting are generally granted to

individuals with severe disabilities.

Additionally, mobility support provided under the Social Welfare Act constitutes a form of transport service and is an integral component of support for independent living. This support primarily targets the elderly population whose declining functional capacity prevents them from using public transport independently or with assistance. Eligibility for mobility support under the Social Welfare Act is subject to discretion based on income and wealth.

4.2 Personal assistance

The primary aim of personal assistance is to empower individuals with severe disabilities to lead their lives on their own terms. The fundamental requirement for granting such assistance is that the individual can articulate the specific support they require in terms of content and implementation.

Personal assistance encompasses essential support for individuals with severe disabilities, both within and outside their homes, involving:

- Daily tasks
- Work and educational pursuits
- Recreational activities
- Engagement in societal activities
- Maintaining social connections

This assistance covers activities and responsibilities that a person with severe disabilities would ordinarily undertake independently if they did not face limitations due to their disability or illness. The extent and manner of assistance are determined and documented in the client's service plan.

Personal assistance is primarily administered through the "employer model," whereby the individual with a disability selects their own assistant and establishes an employment contract with them. The city covers all necessary salary expenses and other associated costs incurred by the employee. The city utilises the Oima programme to facilitate the payment of personal assistance salaries.

Alternatively, the city can provide a service voucher for personal assistance. In this scenario, the person with a severe disability selects their personal assistant from among companies approved by the city as service voucher service providers. The service voucher for personal assistance is offered to clients at no charge.

4.3 Apartment modifications

The objective of apartment modifications is to enhance the independence and self-sufficiency of individuals with disabilities. These modifications are eligible for reimbursement when a person is living with a severe disability, and the changes are deemed necessary due to the disability or an illness, enabling the individual to engage in their routine daily activities. It's important to note that these modifications are exclusively applicable to permanent residences, and the associated costs must be reasonable for them to be covered as part of disability services. No modifications are undertaken in the homes of individuals requiring institutional care.

Reimbursable modifications encompass a range of adjustments, including widening doorways, eliminating thresholds, constructing ramps, replacing bathtubs with accessible alternatives, modifying fixtures, making alterations to building and interior design materials, as well as clearing obstacles in the immediate vicinity of the apartment.

4.4 Devices and equipment included in an apartment

Devices and equipment integrated into an apartment are designed to enhance the independent living of individuals with severe disabilities. These may include built-in lifting devices, stairlifts, alarm systems for individuals with hearing impairments, and electric door-opening systems. The reasonable costs of equipment and devices included in the apartment are fully reimbursed.

When determining the reimbursement for such equipment, factors considered include the severity of the person's disability, their ability to manage daily life within the apartment, available alternative solutions, the permanence of the apartment, the suitability of the devices, and the reasonableness of costs. Typically, municipalities offer these devices and equipment to individuals with severe disabilities at no charge, assuming responsibility for installation and maintenance costs. However, if a client chooses to procure a device or equipment independently, they are responsible for potential maintenance and insurance expenses.

4.5 Service housing

Service housing designed for individuals with severe disabilities comprises both the living accommodation and housing-related services that promote independent living. This service is tailored to individuals with severe disabilities who require substantial assistance in their daily lives, often at various times throughout the day, due to their disability or illness.

Service housing for individuals with severe disabilities can be delivered in various settings, including the individual's own residence, supported living groups, or service homes. Regardless of the setting, service housing always encompasses essential services needed for everyday life. These services may encompass assistance with mobility, dressing, personal hygiene, meal preparation, and housekeeping.

When service housing is provided within the client's own home, assistance is frequently delivered as a combination of home care and personal assistance in accordance with the Disability Services Act.

Service housing for individuals with severe disabilities can also be available in service homes or group-style housing units through the city's own services, purchased services, or service vouchers. Residents are responsible for covering rent and all other everyday living expenses. Services deemed necessary due to a disability are provided to the client free of charge.

4.6 Day activities

See 7.5 Daytime activities and employment support.

5. Other services pursuant to the Disability Services Act

Certain services and support measures outlined in the Disability Services Act are contingent upon available funding. In these instances, approval for reimbursement is always subject to discretion and influenced by factors such as the necessity of the service, reasonable expenditure, and the availability of allocated funds.

Financial support measures specified in the Disability Services Act can also be sought retroactively, with a window of up to six months after incurring the associated expenses. Nevertheless, the most advisable approach is to submit an application for financial support measures before incurring the expenses that are intended to be reimbursed.

5.1 Equipment, machinery and devices essential for everyday living

Under the provisions of the Disability Services Act, expenses related to the acquisition of equipment, machinery, and devices necessary for mobility, communication, or other forms of managing daily life due to a disability can be eligible for reimbursement, provided they are not covered by medical rehabilitation. Reimbursable items may include a car, car accessories, and household appliances.

The maximum reimbursement amount is typically limited to half of the reasonable procurement expenses. Reimbursement rates for the purchase of a car and car accessories are established separately. The City of Helsinki only provides a subsidy for car procurement when the vehicle is required for daily activities, such as commuting, education, or transporting a disabled child.

5.2 Adjustment training

Adjustment training encompasses a range of services, including counselling, guidance, and training, which can be offered both individually and in group settings. Disability services encompass various forms of assistance such as communication instruction, orientation and mobility guidance, as well as trial periods for independent living.

Additionally, adjustment training is available through the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela), insurance companies, and organisations. These training courses focus on improving social skills, leveraging peer support, and reducing the obstacles that disabilities may pose in daily life. It's worth noting that participation in adjustment training is free of charge for attendees, with the exception of any travel expenses incurred, for which clients are responsible for the copayment.

5.3 Additional clothing costs

Additional clothing expenses can be eligible for reimbursement as part of disability services, and the determination is contingent upon individual means-testing. Typically, recoverable costs encompass tailored clothing, modifications to regular attire, or exceptional wear and tear on clothing due to a disability or illness.

6. Services pursuant to the Developmental Disabilities Act

Services for individuals with developmental disabilities are defined within the legal framework concerning special care for people with developmental disabilities. The primary goal of special care is to enhance the daily coping abilities of individuals with developmental disabilities, support their integration into society, and ensure their well-being. The Developmental Disabilities Act places significant emphasis on the right to self-determination.

Any person whose developmental or cognitive functioning is impeded or disrupted due to a congenital condition, defect, disability, or one acquired during adolescence has the right to apply for services designated for individuals with disabilities. The condition for eligibility is that the person cannot access the required services through other legislative means.

Becoming a recipient of special care services entails reaching out to a social worker specialising in services for individuals with developmental disabilities within your residential area. This initiates the drafting of a tailored special care programme for the client.

Moreover, individuals with developmental disabilities are entitled to services as outlined in the Disability Services Act, provided they are appropriate and suitable for their needs. It's important to note that the Disability Services Act takes precedence over the Developmental Disabilities Act in such cases.

6.1 Social work

You have the option to seek advice, guidance, and information regarding services from social workers. When it comes to applying for these services, you can either submit a written application using the disability service application form or request assistance orally by engaging in a conversation with a social worker specialising in services for individuals with developmental disabilities in your residential area.

6.2 Disability Outpatient Clinic

The Disability Outpatient Clinic caters to residents of Helsinki across all age groups who are special care clients. This clinic provides a wealth of expertise, research-based insights, guidance, and counselling pertaining to developmental

disabilities. It is also responsible for the strategic planning of rehabilitation efforts with the goal of enhancing the functional capacity of individuals with disabilities and facilitating their active participation in society. Importantly, the services offered by the Disability Outpatient Clinic are provided free of charge.

6.3 Granting early childhood education free of charge on the basis of a rehabilitation-related reason

Early childhood education can be provided as part of special care services, but this inclusion must be specified as a distinct component within a comprehensive rehabilitation plan. To request early childhood education for rehabilitation purposes, individuals must submit an application and provide a doctor's medical opinion that explicitly outlines the rehabilitative benefits associated with early childhood education for the client. This medical opinion should clearly state how early childhood education contributes to the client's rehabilitation efforts.

6.4 Afternoon care for school-aged children and care during holidays

The Education Division offers after-school care and holiday care services to students in grades 3–9 who have developmental disabilities or autism. These services are not administered as standalone special care but can be included in the special care programme. When included in the special care programme, these services are provided free of charge. Parents are responsible for ensuring that the care service is officially documented in the special care programme when their child enters the third grade.

6.5 Housing services for individuals with developmental disabilities

The City of Helsinki offers various housing options and support services for individuals with developmental disabilities. These services can either be provided directly by the city or procured from service providers located in Helsinki or elsewhere in Finland.

Housing services encompass group homes, housing groups, family care, supported housing units, and support for independent living. Staff presence varies, with some units offering 24/7 support, while others have staff available during specific daytime hours. Supported housing units consist of separate apartments, and staff members visit as needed, based on the resident's requirements. Clients are responsible for covering rent, meal fees, and expenses related to electricity, sauna, detergents, and laundry room usage, according to their individual consumption.

Family care involves providing care within a family caregiver's home or the residence of the individual receiving care. The city enters into commission agreements with family caregivers or contracts with private family care providers to deliver these services. It's important to note that the City of

Helsinki no longer provides institutional services for individuals with developmental disabilities, but certain services are obtained through external service providers.

Both short- and long-term service options are available for housing services, family care, and institutional care.

6.6 Work and day activities

See 7.5 Daytime activities and employment support.

7. Other services for individuals living with a disability or long-term illness

7.1 Informal care support

Informal care involves the provision of care to an elderly, disabled, or ill person within their own home by a close relative or friend.

Informal care support consists of two components: the informal caregiver's fee and statutory days off.

New clients aged 65 and above can apply for this service by contacting the Senior Info telephone counselling, while those under 65 can apply through the service points of social work for people with disabilities.

To seek this support, you must complete an application form and attach a doctor's medical opinion that describes the applicant's functional capacity. These documents should be submitted to the social work department for people with disabilities. Once the application for informal care support is received, a social worker will reach out, visit your home, and develop a service plan. Following this assessment, the social worker will determine the eligibility for informal care support.

Informal care support may be granted if the individual requires daily care or other forms of assistance due to a decline in functional capacity, illness, disability, or similar reasons, and if this care can be effectively provided within the person's own home. An agreement outlining the terms of informal care support is established with the informal caregiver.

7.2 Temporary care

Temporary care is offered to cover the informal caregiver's days off, in accordance with the Act on Support for Informal Care. In certain cases, discretionary temporary care can also be arranged. Temporary care services are available in various settings, including housing units, institutional care, and family care. Moreover, in the context of informal care, respite days can be organised as an in-home service or as hourly support

provided by a substitute caregiver.

To determine the need for temporary care, the client and their family members collaborate with a social worker. Please note that temporary care services are subject to fees established by the Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division.

7.3 Support person activities

This service is designed for individuals living with disabilities who require assistance in establishing and nurturing social relationships, in their personal development, or in gaining independence. The primary objective is to facilitate the individual's active participation and inclusion in recreational and leisure activities. Clients have the option to either independently find a support person or seek assistance from a social worker in locating one. Support persons receive compensation for their services as well as reimbursement for related expenses.

7.4 Social guidance

When deemed necessary, disability work social instructors offer support and guidance to individuals of all ages living at home who have disabilities, as well as their family members. Social instructors assist individuals with disabilities in various aspects of life, including managing daily activities, pursuing employment, engaging in leisure activities, and nurturing relationships. Social guidance is a structured and typically fixed-term initiative aimed at bolstering the client's ability to live independently.

7.5 Daytime activities and employment support

7.5.1 Day activities pursuant to the Disability Services Act

Day activities, in accordance with the Disability Services Act, are designed for individuals of working age (under 65) who have severe disabilities and are unable to engage in work-related activities provided under the Social Welfare Act. These individuals primarily rely on benefits due to illness or incapacity for work as their main source of income.

The primary goal of day activities is to enhance both physical and mental well-being, foster social interaction, and facilitate active participation in the community and society. Day activities also provide peer support, contribute to the individual's ability to live at home, and can reduce the need for other forms of care. The content of day activities is tailored to the specific needs and functional capacity of the clients. Additionally, day activity centres typically offer meals, with clients responsible for a copayment for these meals and any associated transportation expenses.

7.5.2 Work and day activities for individuals with developmental disabilities

Work and day activities for individuals with developmental disabilities become available once their compulsory education has concluded.

Participation-focused activities are designed to assist clients in actively engaging with their community as equal residents. These activities emphasise support for self-expression, the right to self-determination, social interaction, and the acquisition of skills necessary for independence and adulthood.

In activities aimed at facilitating inclusion in the workforce, clients acquire skills essential for employment. These activities take the form of client-centred and goal-oriented group guidance. Additionally, individual job coaching is provided with the objective of helping clients secure gainful employment.

Adult education and preparatory education programmes are geared towards assisting both young people and adults in achieving independence and preparing for further education and future employment opportunities.

7.5.3 Assisted employment service

The goal of the assisted employment service is to assist its clients in securing gainful employment. Eligibility criteria for this service include being a resident of Helsinki, aged 18 or older, and living with a developmental disability, autism spectrum disorder, another neuropsychiatric diagnosis, or a different form of disability.

Job coaching encompasses a range of activities such as assessing and enhancing workplace skills, collaborating with the client to find suitable employment opportunities, providing initial support during the transition to the workplace, and conducting support visits as agreed upon with the employer. Job coaching is tailored to the specific needs of each individual, with the ultimate objective being the attainment of employment. Depending on the client's skill level, they may enter employment directly or through a work trial period. For additional information, individuals can contact the social work unit for people with disabilities in their residential area or reach out to the Assisted Employment Service at tel. +358 9 310 69597.

7.5.4 Supporting employment and social rehabilitation

The work activity services provided by the Social Services, Health Care, and Rescue Services Division are specifically aimed at individuals who are long-term unemployed or those with limited work capacity. The primary objectives of these services are to enhance well-being, develop life management skills, improve work ability, and enhance overall functional capacity. In certain instances, these services may also encompass work ability assessments, rehabilitation programmes, or considerations for retirement.

To apply for these services, individuals can get in touch with the Cross-Sectoral Joint Service Promoting Employment (TYP) in Helsinki or contact the service point for adult social work in their residential area.

7.6 Client fee reduction or non-enforcement

The client fee can be reduced or waived if the payment would negatively impact the client's financial situation, as outlined in Section 11 of the Act on Client Charges in Healthcare and Social Welfare.

To apply for a reduction or non-enforcement of the client fee, individuals can submit a freeform application. This application should be sent to the Client Fees and Collection Unit along with relevant income and expenditure documentation, covering the preceding two months. It is advisable to prepare a summary detailing all income and expenditures and attach it to the application.

The application should specify the time period or starting date from which the fee reduction or non-enforcement is sought, as well as the specific service to which the application pertains. The maximum duration for which client fee reduction or non-enforcement can be applied is 12 months. Normally, the decision on client fee reduction or non-enforcement is effective from the beginning of the application month. It's important to note that such requests cannot be retroactive, and individual unpaid invoices cannot be cancelled. To be eligible for client fee reduction or non-enforcement, the client must have been receiving regular income support or be otherwise financially insolvent for a minimum of 6 months.

8. Other services for individuals living with a disability or long-term illness

8.1 Kela benefits

Information about Kela benefits is available at www.kela.fi/disability

Kela's disability benefits encompass various allowances, including the disability allowance for individuals under 16 years of age, disability allowance for individuals aged 16 years or older, and care allowance for pensioners. Individuals participating in rehabilitation programmes may also be eligible for the rehabilitation allowance or rehabilitation allowance for young persons. Kela provides a range of rehabilitation services for individuals who require them due to a disability or illness. Additionally, individuals can apply for the EU Disability Card through Kela.

Kela offers interpreting services to individuals with hearing impairment, vision and hearing impairment, or speech impairment who require interpretation assistance due to their disabilities. These interpreting services are also available remotely.

8.2 Parking permit for individuals with disabilities and basic vehicle tax exemption

The parking permit for individuals with reduced mobility is issued on an individual basis and is granted upon meeting specific criteria supported by a medical assessment from a doctor. This permit is applicable to the vehicle in which the permit holder is either the driver or a passenger. Notably, the parking permit is valid throughout all Member States of the European Union. Additionally, individuals may apply for an exemption from the basic vehicle tax. For more details, please visit the Traficom website at www.traficom.fi > Digikaista Services > Applying for a parking card for people with reduced mobility and tax exemption.

8.3 Car tax refund

An individual with a disability or their family member may be eligible for a car tax refund when acquiring a vehicle intended for the personal use of the disabled individual or for transporting a disabled family member, provided that the vehicle is being registered in Finland for the first time.

The refund application must be submitted within six months of registering the vehicle in the name of the person with a disability. It's worth noting that the application can be made even before purchasing or registering the vehicle. For additional details, please visit the Finnish Tax Administration's website at www.vero.fi > Individuals > Vehicles > Car tax > Car tax refund based on disability (Autoveron palauttaminen vamman perusteella).

8.4 Special swimming card

A special swimming card is issued to Helsinki residents who have disabilities or long-term illnesses, enabling them to engage in independent swimming. This card is valid for access to all indoor and outdoor swimming pools in Helsinki and is valid for one year from the date of purchase. For additional details, please visit liikunta.hel.fi/en > Support for physical activity > Special swimming card.

Service points for Social Work for People with Disabilities

Telephone Counselling for People with Disabilities

Mon–Fri 9.00–11.00 and Tue and Thu 12.00–14.00, tel. +358 9 09,310 32889.

Swedish-language counselling

Wed 9.00–11.00, tel. +358 9 310 35154.

At other times, you can leave a contact request on the answering machine or by sending an SMS message. You can also contact the services by sending an email to sote.vammaisneuvonta@hel.fi

Service point for Counselling for People with Disabilities

Itäkatu Family Centre, Tallinnanaukio 1, 00930 Helsinki, 1st floor, Wed 14.00–16.00. You do not need an appointment for Counselling for People with Disabilities. You just need to notify the janitor of your arrival.

Office secretaries' telephone service

Mon–Fri 8.15–15.00, tel. +358 9 310 23100 (transport service payment cards, matters related to transport profiles and service vouchers).

Clients under the age of 18 living in the eastern or northern area

Itäkatu Family Centre
PO Box 6730, 00099 City of Helsinki
Itäkatu 11, 00930 Helsinki

Clients under the age of 18 living in the southern or western area and all Swedish-speaking clients

Kallio Family Centre
PO Box 6450, 00099 City of Helsinki
Toinen linja 4 C, 00530 Helsinki

Clients over the age of 18 living with a disability or developmental disability in the southern area and those living with a developmental disability in the eastern area

Southern service point for Social Work for People with Disabilities
Kalasatama Health and Well-being Centre
PO Box 6420, 00099 City of Helsinki
Työpajankatu 14, 6th floor, 00580 Helsinki

Clients of services for people with disabilities over the age of 18 living in the eastern area

Eastern service point for Social Work for People with Disabilities
PO Box 6250, 00099 City of Helsinki
Kahvikuja 3, 00980 Helsinki

Clients over the age of 18 living with a disability or developmental disability in the western or northern area

Western and northern service point for Social Work for People with Disabilities
PO Box 7980, 00099 City of Helsinki
Ala-Malmin tori 2, 00700 Helsinki

Helsinki

**CITY OF HELSINKI,
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