



The Blue Badge parking scheme

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This factsheet offers an introduction to the Blue Badge parking scheme, which allows disabled people to park close to necessary facilities and services.

Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| What is the Blue Badge parking scheme? | 2 |
| Using a Blue Badge in London | 3 |
| Using a Blue Badge in Europe | 3 |
| Reforms made in 2011 | 4 |
| How do I apply for a Blue Badge? | 5 |
| How much does it cost? | 5 |
| Who qualifies for a Blue Badge? | 5 |
| Personal Independence Payment (PIP) | 6 |
| Disabled Children | 6 |
| Disability organisations | 6 |
| Discretionary grounds for getting a badge | 7 |
| Blue Badge assessments | 8 |
| If your Blue Badge application is unsuccessful | 8 |
| Useful contacts | 9 |

What is the Blue Badge parking scheme?

The purpose of the Blue Badge parking scheme is to allow disabled people to park close to the facilities and services that they need and wish to use. Holders of a Blue Badge are allowed to park in places where other drivers cannot.

For example, they may usually park on single or double yellow lines for up to three hours in England and Wales and without any time limit in Scotland. They can also often park free of charge. However, note that private roads and off-street car parks may charge unless they have special reserved places. Also certain boroughs in London operate very different rules (see p 3).

When using a badge it is an offence to cause an obstruction and consideration must always be given to other road users. When parking off-street you should always check the local rules.

When displaying your Blue Badge you need to ensure that the whole of the side of the badge showing the wheelchair symbol is visible from the outside of the vehicle-displaying the wrong side can result in a penalty.

More information is available in the leaflet, *The Blue Badge scheme: rights and responsibilities*. You can order a copy by phone from the Department for Transport (Tel: 0300 123 1102) or download a copy from www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-blue-badge-scheme-rights-and-responsibilities-in-england

For more information about the Blue Badge in Scotland, visit www.bluebadgescotland.org

For more information about the Blue Badge in Wales, visit www.gov.wales/topics/transport/road-users/bluebadgeschemeinfo/?lang=en

For more information about the Blue Badge in Northern Ireland, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/the-blue-badge-parking-scheme

Using a Blue Badge in London

You can download a leaflet about using your Blue Badge in London from www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/blue-badge-holders-guide.pdf

Parking regulations for Blue Badge holders are very different in certain boroughs in London, so it is important to contact the local authority if you live in or want to visit:

- City of London borough
- Kensington and Chelsea
- Westminster or
- Camden.

Blue Badge holders qualify for a 100% exemption from the London congestion charge. You must register with Transport for London 10 days before your journey and pay a one-off £10 registration fee if you want to take advantage of this.

You can register by phone (Tel: 0343 222 2222) or download a registration form from www.cclondon.com

Using a Blue Badge in Europe

Blue Badge Holders visiting some European Countries can take advantage of concessions that are in place for their own disabled citizens.

More information is detailed in the Department of Transport leaflet, *Parking card for people with disabilities in the European Union*. Download a copy from www.ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/parking_card_leaflet_en.pdf

Reforms made in 2011

A number of reforms to the Blue Badge scheme, implemented in April 2011, were aimed at combating fraud within the scheme and extending Blue Badge eligibility.

Changes implemented include:

- extending eligibility to more disabled children between the ages of two and three with specific medical conditions
- wider use of independent mobility assessments to determine eligibility, including where previously that assessment was carried out by a GP; and support for this by giving local authorities control of National Health Service spend on Blue Badge assessments
raising the maximum fee for a badge that local authorities can charge from £2 to £10
- introduction of a new electronic badge design intended to be harder to copy, forge or alter
- providing local authorities with powers to cancel badges that have been lost, stolen, have expired or been withdrawn for misuse
- providing local authorities with an on-the-spot power to recover badges that have been cancelled and misused
- shared administration between authorities, including an online application facility
- continuous automatic entitlement to a badge to severely disabled service personnel and veterans who have a permanent and substantial disability which causes inability to walk or very considerable difficulty in walking
- removing residency requirements for disabled service personnel and their families who are posted overseas on UK bases
- greater monitoring of cancelled, lost and stolen badges
- issue of new, case-study based, good practice guidance to local authorities to help them make improvements in scheme administration and eligibility assessment.

How do I apply for a Blue Badge?

The Blue Badge scheme is administered and enforced by your local council and you will need to apply to them for a Blue Badge. You can find your local council at www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council

You can also make an application for a blue badge at www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge

You will need to complete an application form and provide two passport-sized photographs. The stage at which you are required to provide the photos will vary from authority to authority.

For more information about the Blue Badge scheme and how to apply, visit www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge

How much does it cost?

Local authorities can charge a maximum of £10 to issue a badge. In Scotland local authorities have the discretion to charge up to £20. In Wales it is free.

Who qualifies for a Blue Badge?

The badge can be issued in the following circumstances, if you are aged 2 or over and

- you receive the higher rate of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (see below for information about Personal Independence Payment) or
- you receive war pensioner's mobility supplement or
- you are registered blind or
- have received a lump sum payment from the Armed Forces and Reserve Forces Compensation scheme

You may also qualify under the assessed route if you are aged 2 or over and

- you drive regularly, have a severe disability in both arms, and are unable to operate, or have considerable difficulty in operating, all or some types of parking meter or
- you have a permanent and substantial disability, which means you are unable to walk or have considerable difficulty in walking or
- In Scotland only you are unable to walk or virtually unable to walk because of a temporary but substantial disability which is likely to last for a period of at least 12 months but less than three years.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is the new benefit that is replacing DLA. PIP was introduced in April 2013 and is being phased in over several years. At first PIP only affects new claimants and existing DLA claimants will continue to receive DLA.

PIP has some similarities to DLA but it is a completely new benefit. It is a points-based test and people will now be measured against descriptors to see if they score enough points to qualify for support.

If you currently receive DLA, the DWP will contact you to see if you wish to make a claim for PIP. To find out more, see Action for M.E.'s PIP factsheets (our contact details are on p 9).

In England, if you have been awarded eight points or more in the 'moving around' activity of PIP, you can get a Blue Badge.

In Scotland and Wales you can get the badge if you have been awarded eight points or more in the 'moving around' activity or 12 points in the 'planning and following journeys' activity. Eligibility for the scheme in Northern Ireland as it relates to PIP has not yet been decided.

Disabled children

Parents of a disabled child aged over two or under 16 can apply for a badge on their child's behalf. In Wales and Northern Ireland children under two years old do not qualify for a badge because they would not normally be expected to walk independently. In England and Scotland, children under two who meet specific criteria may qualify for a badge.

Disability organisations

Badges can also be issued to organisations which transport disabled people. The badge lasts for three years only. When you need a new one, apply to the issuing authority for reassessment some weeks before the badge is due to expire.

Discretionary grounds for getting a badge

If you have M.E. and do not automatically qualify for a badge (eg. Because you get DLA high rate mobility or the mobility part of PIP) you will have to show that you meet one of the assessed criteria. The one that often applies to people with M.E is that you have a permanent and substantial disability making it difficult for you to walk.

If this is the case you may be asked to answer a series of questions to help your local authority determine whether you are eligible. Your local authority may write to your doctor or someone else that you see in connection with your M.E., for more information about your mobility problems.

It is very important that you update your doctor or anyone else that you see such as an occupational therapist on the difficulties you are experiencing prior to putting in an application form.

Recommendations have been made that an accredited healthcare professional should undertake these assessments and that he/she should not be the applicant's own doctor.

Blue Badge assessments

Some local authorities already employ independent health care professionals (eg. occupational therapists) to undertake assessments and this may become standard procedure in the future. Reforms made in 2011 (see p 4) mean the use of independent assessments will become much more widespread.

A problem faced by people with M.E. is the need for the disability to be described as 'permanent' in order for them to meet the criteria. As badges last for three years it is usually expected that the condition will last for at least three years.

People with M.E. can argue that their condition is indefinite. The longer you have had M.E., the more likely it is that it will be considered to be permanent.

However, in Scotland, a disabled person with a temporary but substantial disability which is likely to last for at least twelve months may be eligible for a blue badge.

Your local authority will decide if you are eligible for a blue badge using set criteria and guidelines that are issued by the Department of Transport. You can view these guidelines and other information about the Blue Badge scheme at www.dft.gov.uk/transportforyou/access/bluebadge

If your Blue Badge application is unsuccessful

If your application is unsuccessful there is no formal right of appeal against the decision, although some authorities do offer the opportunity to appeal or ask for a review. Even if there is not a process in place you can always ask for the decision to be reconsidered.

Useful contacts

Action for M.E.

Information and support for people with M.E. and their carers
General enquiries: 0845 123 2380 or 0117 927 9551 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)
Enquiries email: admin@actionforme.org.uk
Welfare Rights Line: 0845 122 8648 (times vary)
Online M.E. Centre: www.actionforme.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau

Offers advice on a range of issues and may complete a benefits check for you
www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Civil Legal Advice

Help with some benefit appeals for eligible people.
www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice

Disability Law Service

Offers information and advice on a range of issues.
Tel: 020 7791 9800
www.dls.org.uk

Disability Information and Advice Line (DIAL)

To find your local DIAL office, contact Scope, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW
Tel: 0808 800 3333
www.scope.org.uk/help-and-information/dial-groups

Disability Rights UK

Factsheets on benefits, tax credits and independent living
www.disabilityrightsuk.org



If you have found the information in this factsheet helpful, please consider making a donation to Action for M.E. at www.actionforme.org.uk or by calling 0117 927 9551. Thank you.

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