

Comprehensive Blue Badge Reform Programme High Level Implementation Plan





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1 Purpose of document

This document explains the purpose and objectives of the Blue Badge reform programme. It sets out the key programme messages and provides a high level timescale for milestones of various projects within the programme. The timing of these milestones may change from time-to-time as the programme evolves but this document will be kept up-to-date with the latest information.

2 Programme Context, Background and Rationale

The Blue Badge Scheme in England currently enables severely disabled people to park without charge or time limit in the on-street parking environment, and for up to three hours on yellow lines, unless a loading ban is in place.

The Blue Badge Scheme has been in place since the early 1970s and many changes have taken place since then. A review of the Scheme in 2007 highlighted several areas where improvements needed to be made to the administration of the Scheme, the eligibility criteria and to prevent abuse. After further consultation, the Government published a reform strategy in October 2008 that included a suite of commitments that are designed to ensure that the Blue Badge Scheme stays fit for purpose in the 21st century, and to improve the lives of disabled people who rely on the access that the Scheme enables.

The reform strategy includes a commitment to deliver the promised changes within five years. The DfT has established a programme to manage and ensure the delivery of the various commitments, which will subsequently be referred to as projects.



3 Programme Frequently Asked Questions

3.1 What is the programme for?

The programme has several objectives. It aims to:

1. ensure that those who are most in need of a Blue Badge are able to have one;
2. maximise the benefits for Badge holders by reducing abuse and preventing fraud;
3. raise the reputation and value of the scheme; and
4. raise standards and improve consistency

3.2 What will it achieve?

The programme will;

- maximise the benefits of the Scheme for Blue Badge holders;
- prevent fraud and reduce abuse of the Scheme;
- increase the reputation of the Scheme.

3.3 Why is it happening?

The Blue Badge Scheme has been in place since the early 1970s and many changes have taken place since then. A review of the Scheme in 2007 highlighted several areas where improvements needed to be made to the administration of the Scheme, the eligibility criteria and to prevent abuse. Since then, we have carried out more research and consolidation and everyone involved in using the scheme supported the changes we are proposing to make.

3.4 What will be different?

The Scheme will be extended to:

- people with certain severe temporary mobility problems (lasting at least one year);
- people with severe mental impairments;
- seriously disabled service personnel/veterans; and
- more children, under the age of three, with specific medical conditions.



- Badges will have improved security features.
- Local Authorities will have new or amended powers to reduce mis-use and to prevent fraud and abuse of the Scheme.
- The management of the Scheme will be improved and the assessment process will be fairer and more consistent across England.
- A data-sharing system will be in place to deliver customer service improvements and to improve the administration and enforcement of the Scheme.
- The exchange of good practice between Local Authorities will be increased.

3.5 How will this change be delivered?

The Blue Badge programme includes 6 major projects that will deliver the changes needed¹:

1. The Data-Sharing Project
2. Centres of Excellence
3. Independent Medical Assessments
4. Badge Security
5. Enforcement Powers
6. Eligibility Extension

3.6 What does this mean for Blue Badge holders?

For the vast majority of Blue Badge holders, the reform of the Scheme will lead to improvements in customer service and improved access, as fraud, abuse and mis-use of the Scheme is reduced. Some disabled people who are not currently eligible for a Badge will be able to obtain one.

Improvements in the way that people are assessed may mean that a small minority of people who currently hold a Badge will not be able to renew their Badge. This is not because of a change in the eligibility criteria but because of a more consistent and thorough application of those criteria and improved eligibility assessment.

Badge holders will need to pay more for a Badge. The current fee of £2 has not been changed since 1983 and our consultations have shown support for the fee to be raised to a more appropriate level.

¹ These main projects will be supported by a number of other initiatives to improve accessibility, as set out in the Reform Strategy.



4 Headline Delivery Commitments

4.1 When will these changes happen?

The Government has committed to delivering the commitments included in the Reform Strategy within five years. The 6 main projects should result in the following changes being in place by the following dates. It should be noted that these dates are dependent on many factors and may be subject to changes to ensure that the programme remains focussed on effectively delivering its objectives.

By:

- 2009 – The eight Blue Badge Centres of Excellence are in place and their action plans to share good practice are being implemented.
- 2010 – Regulations to extend the eligibility criteria to more severely disabled children under 3 years old and severely disabled service personnel and veterans should be in place.
- 2010 – Initial payments of a grant to support Local Authorities in moving to independent medical assessments of eligibility should be distributed, alongside improved guidance.
- 2010 – Good practice from the Centres of Excellence should have been consolidated and disseminated to other Local Authorities.
- 2011 – The data-sharing system should be developed and roll-out initiated.
- 2011 – A new design of Blue Badges that include more security features should start being issued to new applicants and those renewing Badges.
- 2011 – New Badge application fee to apply.
- 2011 – Regulations to extend the eligibility criteria to people with a severe mental impairment and to people with certain severe temporary mobility problems lasting at least one year should be in place.
- 2011/2012 – New or amended enforcement powers for local authorities should be in place.

4.2 How will we know what is happening?

- There will be frequent informal and formal consultations with stakeholders through workshops, roadshows, and Government consultations on specific issues.
- A regular newsletter reporting progress will be available on the DfT's web-site for external stakeholders.
- Announcements on any changes being implemented will be widely publicised using all available media.
- Local Authorities will be able to exchange good practice and information via a new web-based Blue Badge Community of Practice



5 Phase One High Level Plan v09

