

Summary of the Government's reforms to the Blue Badge scheme

Ensuring fair allocation of badges

1. The following measures will be implemented to help ensure that badges are issued fairly against a background of rising demand and that the scheme remains sustainable in the long term for those disabled people who rely on it in the most:

Reform measure	Earliest delivery¹
Transfer control of current NHS spend on badge eligibility assessments to local authorities	April 2011
Publication of non statutory guidance on scheme administration and enforcement	May/June 2011
Amend legislation to require wider use of independent mobility assessments to determine eligibility, including where previously that assessment was carried out by a GP	2012
Extend eligibility to more disabled children under 3 with specific medical conditions	May 2011
Provide continuous automatic entitlement to severely disabled service personnel and veterans with specific tariffs of award under the Armed Forces Compensation scheme	May 2011
Amend residency requirements for disabled Armed Forces personnel and their families posted overseas on UK bases, so that they can apply for a badge	2013/14
Further research to inform a decision on whether or not to extend eligibility to people with a severe temporary disability (lasting at least one year)	Decision to be taken later in 2011

Delivering efficiency savings and improving customer services

2. The following measures will be implemented to help local authorities improve service delivery and achieve efficiency savings, and to improve customer services for badge holders:

Reform measure	Earliest delivery
Establish with local authorities a common service improvement project (BBIS) that will deliver operational efficiency savings. This project will be self-funding and should deliver efficiency savings of between £6.5 and £20 million per year.	System go live end 2011
This project will improve customer services and establish an on-line application facility. It should result in faster, more automatic renewals for people whose circumstances do not change between renewal periods	Early 2012

Improved and effective prevention of abuse and enforcement

3. The following measures will be implemented to help prevent abuse from happening in the first place and to deal with rising levels of fraud and abuse:

Reform measure	Earliest delivery
Introduce a new badge design that is harder to copy, forge and alter. Implement (via the common service improvement project) new arrangements for printing and distribution to prevent fraud and effectively monitor cancelled, lost and stolen badges	End 2011
The common service improvement project (BBIS) will enable local authorities to detect abuse more effectively. Officers will be able to check details of new badges issued anywhere in England.	Early 2012

¹ Delivery of many of the measures are subject to primary or secondary legislation and may change as a result of factors such as the availability of Parliamentary time

Introduce new or amended powers for local authorities to tackle abuse and fraud. In particular to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extend the grounds available to local authorities to refuse to issue and to withdraw badges • provide local authorities with a power to cancel badges that have been lost, stolen, have expired, or have been withdrawn for mis-use • provide local authority authorised officers with a power to recover, on-the-spot, badges that have been cancelled or misused • amend existing legislation to clarify wrongful use of a badge and the powers to inspect badges 	End 2011
	2013/14
	2013/14
	2013/14

The Badge fee

4. The following measure will be implemented to enable local authorities to cover administrative costs more appropriately and to enable the delivery of the new badge design:

Reform measure	Earliest delivery
Change legislation to raise the maximum fee that local authorities can charge for a badge from £2 to £10. This will pay for the new badge design and it enable the common service improvement project (BBIS). Badge holders should, in return, benefit from improved accessibility as abuse is reduced.	End 2011

What we are not doing

5. The following measures will not be implemented:

Increasing or decreasing the length of time that badge holders can park on yellow lines (from the current 3 hours); or changing it so that badge holders, for example, could not park on double-yellow lines; or extending the scheme so that it includes off-street parking or includes the four local authorities covered by the 'London Concession'. <u>No changes are being made to the concession itself.</u>
Further extending eligibility, for example, to those with cognitive or behavioural impairments, those with colitis, Crohn's disease or similar conditions (or those with a temporary disability of less than one year).
Introducing a centrally administered scheme.
Raising the maximum fee to £20 (as is the case in Scotland) or removing the maximum that a local authority may charge. It was felt, based on consultation, that £10 would be the most appropriate fee.
Amending primary legislation to make it mandatory for all local authorities to charge the same fee. This was rejected as it does not support the localism agenda.
Charging the fee on application for rather than on issue of a badge, so that unsuccessful applicants would also have to pay the fee. This was rejected as it was felt to be unfair.
Other options in relation to new or amended enforcement powers that were not considered proportionate.