

Blue Badge eligibility assessment: Independent Review findings

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Background

 Extensive independent review of Blue Badge administration and assessment good practice in England for DfT...

 Review of 33 local authorities Sep '0' 	9 – Sep	o '10
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National Blue Badge scheme data

- 2010 DfT Blue Badge scheme stats...
 - 1,053,000 BB applications (418,000 new / 635,000 renewal)
 - 86% of new / 93% of renewal applications accepted
 - 906,000 badges issued (558,000 subject to further assessment)
 - 349,000 successful new applications (590,550 renewal)
 - BB acceptance rates range from 91% 71% by region
 - DfT estimate 300,000 medical assessments in 09/10
- 2011 DfT Blue Badge scheme stats.....
 - 939,000 badges issued (571,000 subject to further assessment)
 - 324,000 successful new applications



1: Scheme publicity and information

- Provide information for applicants, for example online and in printed literature.
- Signpost potentially eligible people to the Blue Badge application pathway.
- Raise public awareness on the Blue Badge Scheme's purpose and who is entitled to one.

2: Handling new/renewal applications

- Application forms available in print & online with clear submission mechanism
- Offer support with completing the forms & request proof of ID and address.
- Anti-fraud declarations and provision of applicant's consent to share information.

3: Eligibility determination

- Processing application forms when they arrive with the local authority.
- Check proof of identity/addless and determine eligibility assessment pathway.

3a: Without further assessment

- Check proof of entitlement
- Issue/refuse Blue Badge

3b: Subject to further assessment

- Desk-based assessment of self-reported information
- Telephone contact with applicant (as required)
- Refer applicant for mobility assessment with OT/Physio (as required)
- Seek specific information from applicant's healthcare professional (as required)
- Site visit to organisational Blue Badge applicant's premises (as required)
- Determine eligibility based on recommendations & evidence

4a: Administration of unsuccessful applications

- Write to applicant, explaining grounds for refusal and providing an opportunity for a review, or complaint
- If required, lead applicant through the review or complaint process. If successful refer applicant step 4b

4b: Administration of successful applications

- Applicant to receive DfTs 'Blue Badge Scheme: rights and responsibilities' leaflet and sign declaration
 on terms of use and awareness of their duty to return the badge if their circumstances change
- Applicant to pay Blue Badge issue fee and be promptly issued aBlue Badge & parking disc

5: Ongoing administration

- · Manage standard renewals, with a reminder letter 3 months before expiry
- Manage renewals of lost/damaged and stolen badges
- Reguest badges from Blue Badge holders registered as deceased
- · Share information with parking enforcement teams where abuse of the Blue Badge is suspected

6: Proactive Blue Badge enforcement

- Include Blue Badge checks in routine parking enforcement inspections
- If required, monitor suspected Blue Badge abuse/fraudulent users
- If required, withdraw the Blue Badge from fraudulent holders/users



Critical dependencies

BB application form:

- Does it provide useful information about applicant's condition?
- Declarations information sharing / IMAs

Appeals procedures:

- Detailed refusal letter heads off many appeals
- Separate appeal 'reviews' from 'complaints'
- Only ever need to reassess following complaint against procedure
- No legal requirement to carry out appeals

Renewals

- Does the applicant need to be reassessed?
- Opportunity to check fluid conditions



Early findings were bewildering...



Detailed results made case for IMAs...

- 63% of BB applicants are subject to further assessment
- Most have some form of walking impairment
- Research study pilots found that using IMAs...
 - Reduce costs by 30% compared to GP assessments
 - Reduce award rates from 95% (GP) to 70%
 - Achieve lower rates of appeal (20% IMA, 39% GP)
 - Result in fewer successful appeals (21% IMA, 28% GP)
 - Accelerate the eligibility decision-making process



And prompted new legislation...

"In order to ensure a fairer allocation of badges, we have therefore amended legislation to prescribe that the eligibility of those applying because of a "permanent and substantial disability that causes inability to walk or very considerable difficulty in walking" (regulation 4(2)(f) of the Principal Regulations) be confirmed by an independent mobility assessor.

The above condition does not apply when a local authority determines that, from the information that they have about the applicant, it is self-evident that the applicant meets the eligibility criterion"

DfT Local Authority Circular November 2011



Other key findings also helpful...

- OTs/Physios are most appropriate healthcare professionals
- Suggested caseloads for healthcare professionals:
 - Assessment: 30 mins, Decision & reporting: 10 mins
 - 7-8 applicants /day maximum
- IMAs have been implemented successfully by all types of LA
- Desk-based assessments <u>are</u> effective filtering tools
 - Identify clearly eligible/ineligible applicants
 - Piloted approach was 91% accurate compared to IMAs



Eligibility assessment 'Core principles'

- Developed for DfT BB Scheme Guidance in England
- A way of enabling DfT to emphasise to English local authorities what should go into an assessment, without prescribing a specific approach.
- Tested through piloting and rigorous evaluation
- Supported through legislation coming into force in April 2012



Core principles – Desk Assessments

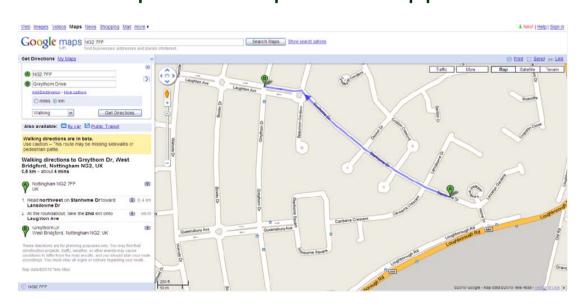
- Get OTs/Physios involved in the design & staff training
- Devise an objective quantitative scoring mechanism
- Can be completed by (trained) administrative staff members
- Require applicants to fully complete BB application form





Core principles – Desk Assessments

- Cross-check self-reported information on walking ability with disability/condition and local health services accessed
- Additional information can be sought by phone
- Look up on a map where applicant walks to from their home





Overview of desk-based assessments

Pro's:

- Offers uniformity of outcomes
- Significantly reduces assessment costs

Con's:

- Good filtering tool <u>but</u> not suitable for making a decision on every applicant.
- Recourse to an IMA where a decision can't be made



- Full design & delivery by health professionals (OT/Physio)
- Check applicant's ID at start of assessment!
- Cross-check information from applicant's application form
- Observe & record the applicant's manner of walking







- Use ROM functional movement tests as appropriate
- Observe and time the applicant walking a known distance
- Observe resting, pauses and amount of time taken to walk
- MRC dyspnoea scale for breathlessness & observe

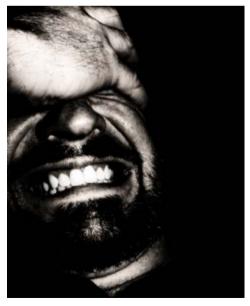






- Ask applicant about where & how they normally walk
- Consider (correct) use of walking aids could an aid help?
- Discuss (self-reported) pain and observe applicant







Decision is a holistic view of all information gathered...

"Consider each aspect of walking (pain, breathlessness, speed, distance, use of walking aids and manner of walking) first in isolation, and then in combination, to reach a decision as to whether they combine to mean the applicant experiences very considerable difficulty in walking."



Overview of IMAs

Pro's:

- Most accurate way of determining eligibility
- Applicants feel their case has been fully considered
- Reduces number of consequent case reviews/complaints

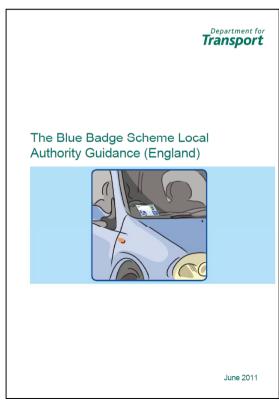
Con's:

- Extends the decision-making process
- Expensive and time consuming for all parties



Golden rules

- Always refer to the eligibility criteria for BB Scheme
- Ensure your assessment regime complies with the following hierarchy of rules/guidance:
 - Primary legislation
 - 2. Secondary regulations
 - 3. DfT Scheme Guidance
 - 4. Research evidence



Thanks for your time today...

- DFT Blue Badge Scheme Guidance:
 - http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/blue-badge-scheme-localauthority-guidance
- ITP's independent review of Blue Badge Scheme for DfT:
 - http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/blue-badge-good-practice-review

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