

Blue Badge eligibility assessment: Independent Review findings

Neil Taylor

Integrated Transport Planning Ltd.

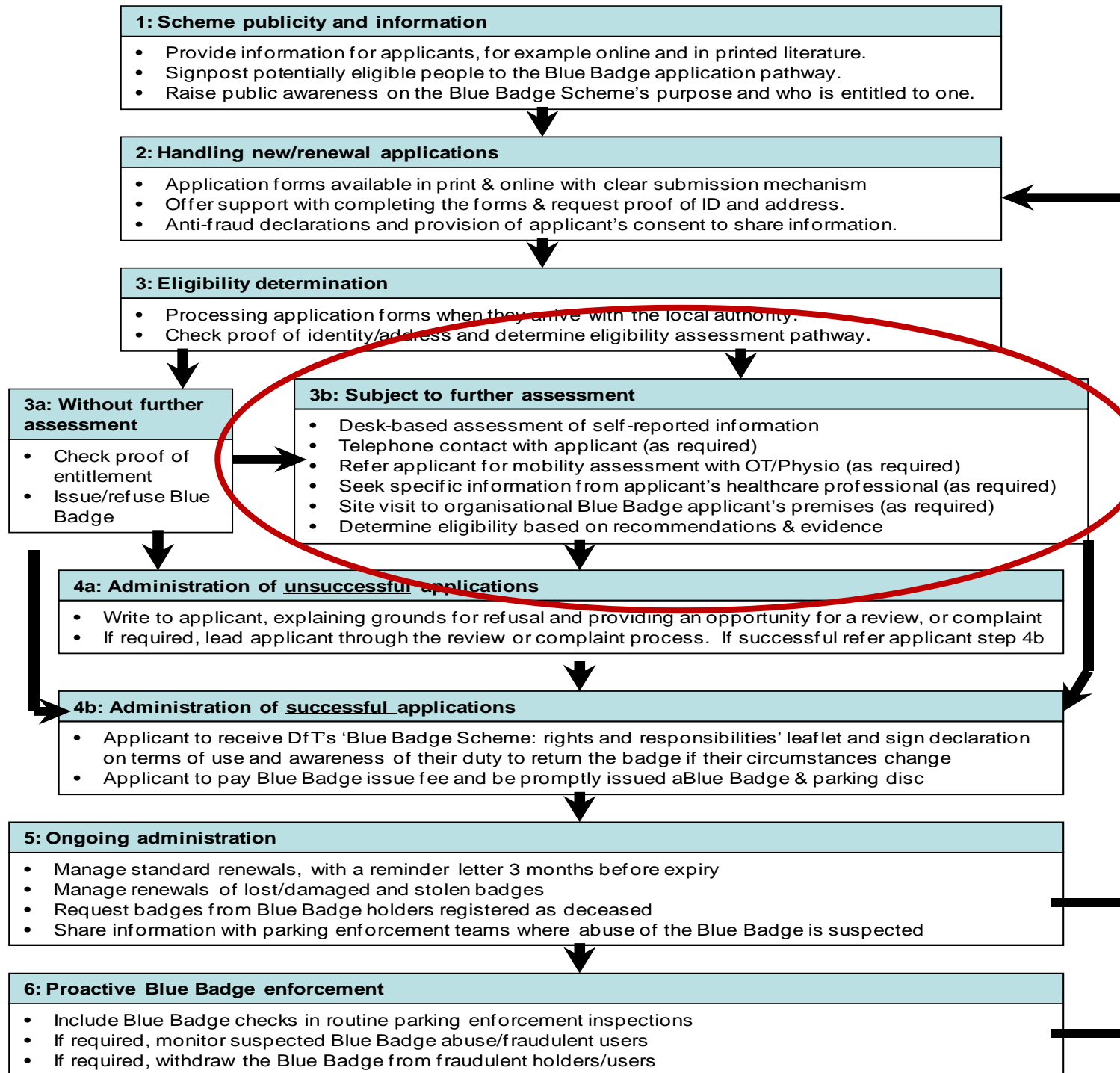


Background

- Extensive independent review of Blue Badge administration and assessment good practice in England for DfT...
 - Review of 33 local authorities Sep '09 – Sep '10
 - Evaluate CoE Programme Sep '09 – Sep '10
 - Pilot emerging good practices Sep '10 – Jan '11
 - Prepared updated guidance for DfT June 2011
 - Final report published August 2011

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



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 are 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

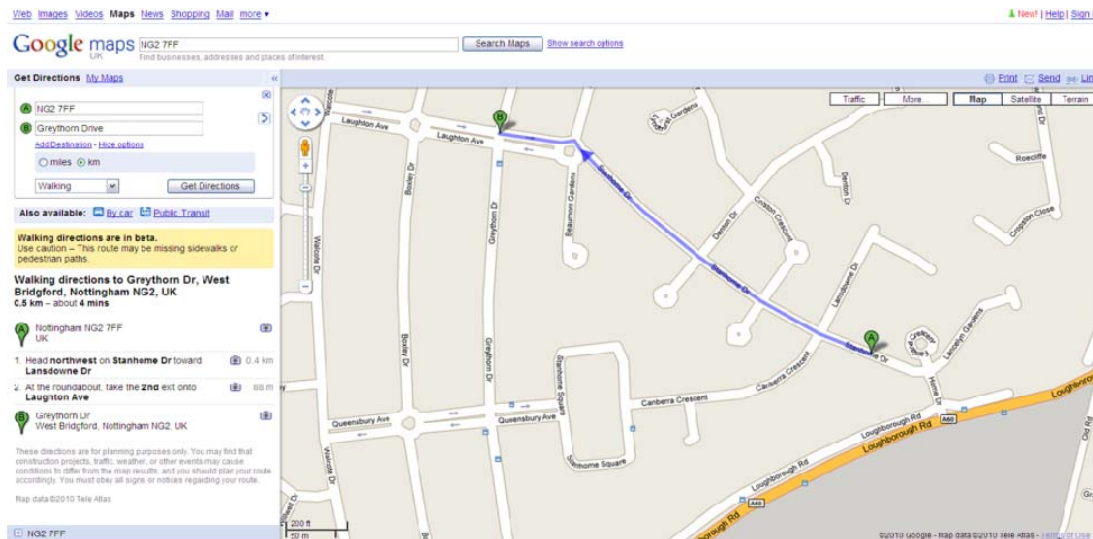
Core principles – Desk Assessments

- 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 but not suitable for making a decision on every applicant.
- Recourse to an IMA where a decision can't be made

Core principles – IMAs

- 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



Core principles – IMAs

- 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



Core principles – IMAs

- 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



Core principles – IMAs

- 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:

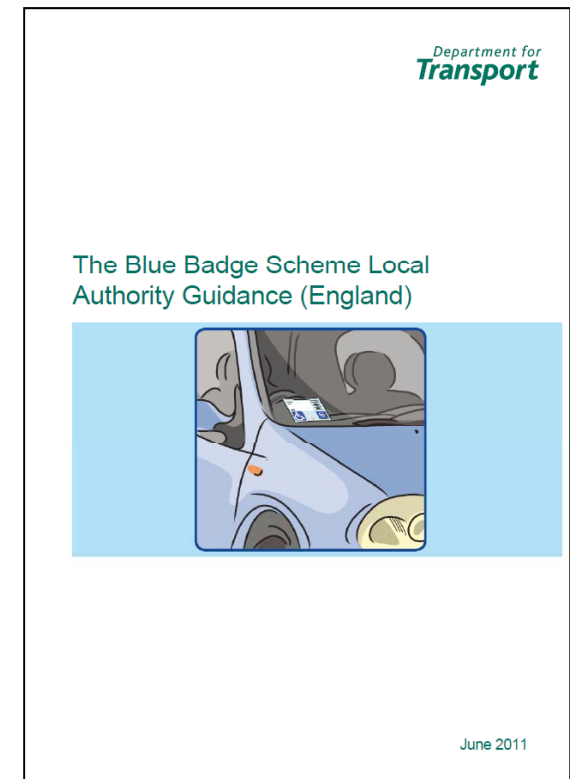
- Extends the decision-making process
- Expensive and time consuming for all parties

Golden rules

- Always refer to the eligibility criteria for BB Scheme
- Ensure your assessment regime complies with the following

hierarchy of rules/guidance:

1. 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-local-authority-guidance>
- ITP's independent review of Blue Badge Scheme for DfT:
 - <http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/blue-badge-good-practice-review>

Neil Taylor
ITP Nottingham

T: 0115 988 6903
E: taylor@itpworld.net

