

Subject: Advice Note on Blue Badges

Date: Wed, 11 Jan 2012

Following the issue being raised at this yesterday's EC meeting, I have been looking further into the issue of Blue Badges for disabled drivers.

The rules as follows:

1. You automatically get a badge if you receive the Higher Rate Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
2. Those who become disabled after reaching 65 would not qualify for DLA and therefore fall under the discretionary criteria. This means that they have to be assessed in order to decide whether or not they are immobile enough to warrant the awarding of a Blue Badge. 66% of the 2.5m Blue Badge holders fall into this category.

As from 1 April 2012 anyone applying under category 2 above for a new badge or re-applying because their old one has expired (they last every 3 years) will have to see an Independent Mobility Assessor. This is likely to be an occupational or physiotherapist who is privately employed by the local authority.

There are England-wide guidelines for them to follow, but each individual assessor might view things slightly differently. Off the record discussions have revealed that before the assessment even begins - individuals will be viewed arriving at the assessment centre. If they get out of their car easily or climb the stairs to the assessment office they will not get a badge. A crude rule of thumb that assessors will use is to ask whether an individual can go to the shops on their own. IF they can - then it is unlikely they will be awarded a badge.

A concern for our members is that they may have received a Blue Badge under the old system (signed off by their GP) and now find that their badge is due for renewal under the new system. As a result, they may find they no longer qualify.

Whilst there is an appeals procedure, it is difficult at this stage to know how successful these will be.

It would therefore be extremely useful if affiliates and regions could let the NPC know of any cases where individuals have been refused an application to renew or apply for a Blue Badge. If such evidence becomes available, it may then be possible to raise the matter with ministers and officials at the Department for Transport and/or local authorities.

Best wishes

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National Officer

NPC