

Advice note to local authorities



People with severe temporary impairments

Introduction

This note provides local authorities with advice on how they can use existing powers to help meet the mobility needs of people with severe temporary mobility issues and who do not qualify under the Blue Badge scheme's eligibility criteria.

The main purpose of a Blue Badge is to help disabled people with a permanent and substantial disability that means they are unable to or have very serious difficulty walking to lead independent lives. There are currently over 2.5 million disabled badge holders in England who are able to benefit from the national arrangement of preferential parking concessions that are available under the scheme. The normal period of issue for a Blue Badge is three years, unless it is linked to a shorter award under the Higher Rate of the Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance.

We are, however, conscious that there is not a similar arrangement in place to support people who suffer a short term, but often debilitating, reduction in their mobility caused by serious injury or illness. (e.g. stroke; brain injury; lower limb amputation; major trauma and double joint replacement.)

The Government has considered extending eligibility for the Blue Badge scheme to this group of people, but has decided not to proceed at this point in time. This is because of the costs it would impose on local authorities and the impact on the ability of existing holders to find available spaces.

How local authorities can help

The DfT would like to encourage local authorities to think about innovative ways that they could assist this group of vulnerable people by making it possible for them to park close to shops, jobs and other services.

One way this could be achieved is by setting up a locally determined concession and we are already aware of locally determined concessions being delivered up and down the country using existing local authority powers. We recently conducted a survey of some local authorities to find out more information and to identify the types of schemes being offered.

The survey shows that many local authorities already offer locally determined parking schemes for residents who require that little bit of extra assistance, or that they are working with such as other organisations like hospitals. This includes parking permits for the elderly and even free hospital parking for people undergoing treatment.

Examples of locally determined schemes

Parking for the elderly

The London Borough of Enfield and the London Borough of Hillingdon operate brown badge schemes for older residents in the borough. This allows them to park in designated car parking spaces in pay and display car parks close to store entrances and exits, lifts and parking ticket machines. These are sometimes located next to Blue Badge bays.

Brown badge holders must display their badge and pay at the meter as normal, and cannot park in blue badge spaces or on yellow lines. They are for use only in the local authority area. This scheme assists older motorists who may have mobility problems and allows them to lead a more independent life.

Free Hospital parking

We are aware of a scheme in Stafford Borough Council where they permit free parking in their car parks for people issued with tokens from the cancer department of the local hospital. This takes away the added financial worry of car park charges at a very difficult time for the patient.

Concessions for carers

A number of local authorities told us that they issue specific parking concession badges for carers of sick and disabled people. The London Borough of Hackney offers its own "Companion Badge" which allows holders to have access to more parking spaces in the area.

Concessions within existing residents parking

Liverpool City Council regularly receives and considers requests from residents for additional temporary parking dispensations or concessions to the resident parking schemes. Some of these requests have come from people with temporary mobility problems and grant them access to a greater number of spaces.

Conclusion

In light of some of the initiatives mentioned above, we would like to encourage local authorities to consider setting up locally determined parking concessions to assist the recovery of residents who have recently undergone major surgery or suffered serious illness.

Local authorities already have powers (*Part IV of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984*) to mark out bays for specific purposes, issue local parking permits and use Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to reserve spaces for specific purposes. This can be a voluntary local scheme and the cost and nature of the concession would be for local authorities to decide.

Additionally, local authorities could look at additional hospital parking or concessions for those regularly using hospital car parks. This may be a matter for discussion with the local health authority concerned, but would make a huge difference for people who find themselves with mobility problems at a very difficult time in their lives.