

Blue Badge Scheme frequently asked questions

Badge re-design

Q. Why is the Blue Badge being re-designed?

- The current design is easily copied and forged. Many local authorities and disabled people have reported incidences of fraudulent copies being used
- Production of the badge is time consuming for local authorities. Local authorities currently have to personalise the badge themselves by handwriting the details and cutting and gluing the holder's signature and photograph onto the badge. This leads to inconsistencies and details can easily be changed
- There are potential security issues with the storage and distribution of badges, with some local authorities reporting missing stock. Changes will remove the need for local authorities to order stock and store blank badges
- Local authorities have said that the standardisation of information on the badge will help enforcement

Q. How has the Badge been re-designed?

- The badge will be harder to copy and to forge and the physical security features of the badge will be enhanced, with the use of new technologies and printing techniques
- A supplier has been contracted to personalise, print and distribute badges to improve security in production, distribution and supply, to reduce production costs and to help local authorities realise efficiency savings

Q. How will it make it better?

By finding a supplier to manufacture and personalise the badge on behalf of local authorities it will lead to:

- Greater consistency in the appearance of the badge
- The ability to use different manufacturing and personalisation techniques offered by a single specialist supplier, increasing the options of security features for the badge
- The ability to make subtle changes to the badge quickly should the new-style badge be fraudulently reproduced
- Local authorities no longer have to order stock and store the blank badges, freeing up space and time
- Local authorities will no longer have to personalise each badge they issue, saving time
- Identifying and standardising the information on the badge will aid enforcement, especially cross boundary checks
- Enhancing the security features of the badge will help prevent forgery and deter fraudsters and will boost the credibility of the scheme

Q. Why is the fee for a Blue Badge being increased?

- The legislation has been changed so that local authorities can charge successful applicants up to a maximum of £10. It will still be for local authorities to decide the fee that will be payable locally
- Raising the fee will enable the implementation of the reform programme. It will allow local authorities to recover some of the costs involved in the new-style badge and administering the scheme

Q. Will the new badge include a readable chip?

- Not at this time. Badges need to be displayed in the windscreen of a car and so are used in a different way to bus and train tickets. Enforcement would be reliant on an officer walking past a vehicle with a hand-held device that was capable of reading the chip through a windscreen
- These readers would be expensive for local authorities to buy and there may be additional administrative costs. The costs therefore at this time are prohibitive
- But the new-style badge could include a chip at some point in the future (e.g. five years) if costs reduce and hand-held devices are more available
- The unique numbering system on the new badge will link in with the BBIS and will enable roadside checks to be made using mobile devices that have web browsers

Q. What are the environmental credentials of the badge, clock and the booklet?

- The booklet is printed on 100% recycled paper and is 100% recyclable
- The new parking clock is made from 50% recycled polypropylene and is 100% recyclable
- The new badge is made from a combination of PVC and PET and is 50% recyclable. It cannot be fully recycled due to the new security features and the need for the badge to withstand being placed in heat and sunlight for long periods of time
- The new badge has been designed to withstand high temperatures such as those found on a car dashboard during the summer months. The inks used are developed to be lightfast

Blue Badge Improvement Service

Q. What is the Blue Badge Improvement Service?

- The English, Scottish and Welsh Governments have been working closely with local authorities and Northgate Information Solutions in partnership with Payne Security to develop a new system for issuing badges and delivering common services

- The Blue Badge Improvement Service will offer:
 - secure printing, supply and distribution of a new Blue Badge
 - a common store of key information on badges and badge holders to enable verification checks to be made quickly and easily, either from a PC or via smart phones or similar technology
 - a web-based management information system for local authorities
 - a national online application form available via Directgov

What are the advantages of the Blue Badge Improvement Service?

- By establishing a common system for processing Blue Badge information and securely printing and distributing badges, we can prevent many types of fraud and abuse from happening in the first place
- Local authorities will have instant access to key Blue Badge details anywhere in Great Britain, not just in their local authority area

Q. Will the Blue Badge Improvement Service be safe and secure?

- The Blue Badge Improvement Service will adhere to strict HMG security standards and will only be accessible over secure Government network links
- Local authority administrators will be appointed to control access to the service
- Only authorised LA staff will have access to the system which will be controlled by unique log-on IDs and passwords
- The system will comply and be operated within the requirements laid out in the Data Protection Act

Q. What will it mean if I apply online?

- Applying online through Directgov should make it easier for you to apply as you will only be asked to complete those sections that are relevant to the eligibility under which you are applying
- If you provide your mobile phone number or e-mail address, reminders can be sent to you at renewal time through these routes. Otherwise, you will be sent a letter
- Some automatic checks can be made to help speed up your application and to reduce and prevent fraud
- You will be able to track the progress of your application

Other

Q. What is changing with respect to assessments of applicants?

- From 1 April 2012 in England, the regulations have been changed and will mean that more people will see an independent mobility assessor when they apply for a badge. This is to ensure that those most in need

- This will only apply to people applying under the 'with further assessment' criteria. If you are seen at the time of your first application, the assessor may decide that you will not need to be assessed again at renewal time
- Independent assessors are being used to help avoid compromising the GP/patient relationship

Q. Have the rules changed on eligibility?

- No. Apart for some minor changes in the case of children under 3 and severely disabled service personnel in June 2011, the eligibility criteria are the same as before. But independent mobility assessments may result in some people not being able to get a badge at renewal