

Blue Badge Reform 2008 - Consultation Questionnaire and Response Form

PART 1 - Information about you

Name Sue Banton
Address steps, Warrington Lane, Lymm, Cheshire
Postcode WA13 0SA
email sue@steps-charity.org.uk
Company Name or Organisation steps Charity Worldwide
(if applicable)

Please tick one box from the list below that best describes you /your company or organisation.

- Small to Medium Enterprise (up to 50 employees)
- Large Company
- Representative organisation (e.g. disability charity)
- Trade Union
- Interest group
- Local Government
- Central Government
- Police
- Member of the public
- Other (please describe):

Are you a Blue Badge holder? Yes No

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation or interest group how many members do you have and how did you obtain the views of your members:

We have widely publicised the consultation through our magazine and newsletter (mailing 2000), website (average monthly visits -13,000) and online discussion forum

– (membership -1,600). We have had over 700 posts on the forum throughout 100 threads which have been expressing views on the Blue Badge amendments as they relate to children. We have also had numerous email responses.

If you would like your response or personal details to be treated **confidentially** please explain why:

Part 2 - Your Comments

The Department for Transport would like to comprehensively reform the Blue Badge Scheme. Your views are important; background information is available at pages 21-31 of this document to help you answer the following questions:

Eligibility for a Badge

Q1: Do you think that the Scheme’s **assessed eligibility** criteria should be brought into closer alignment with that used for the Higher Rate Component of Disability Living Allowance (HRMCDLA) by:

(a) Raising the maximum age that a child can qualify for a badge due to a specific medical condition (i.e. a dependence on bulky medical equipment or the need for emergency medical treatment) from two to three years	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> √	No <input type="checkbox"/>
--	-----------------------------------	--------------------------------

See comment.

(b) Raising the minimum age criteria for the main Assessed Eligibility Criteria to three years	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> √	No <input type="checkbox"/>
---	-----------------------------------	--------------------------------

See comment.

(c) Enabling people that are severely mentally impaired or who have extremely disruptive behavioural problems to qualify for a badge under the assessed eligibility criteria	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> √	No <input type="checkbox"/>
---	-----------------------------------	--------------------------------

(d) Lowering the minimum badge issue period (currently 3 years) to:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| i) 1 year; | Yes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| ii) 18 months; or | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> | No
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| iii) No, keep it as it is (3 years) | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> | No
<input type="checkbox"/> |

Please explain your reasons or add any additional comments you wish to make (including the conditions that you think should be covered by the revised eligibility criteria):

We think it is sensible and less confusing to adjust the eligibility criteria so that there are two main eligibility groups, one for people under the age of 3 and another for those aged 3 and over rather than under and over 2 as currently. Children under the age of three would qualify for a Blue Badge if their ability to use any form of transportation was impaired by bulky medical equipment such as a hip spica plaster cast. Children over three would automatically be eligible if they were in receipt of the HRMCDLA.

Clearer guidelines of what constitutes "bulky medical equipment" are needed. As this is still open to interpretation in different parts of the company which leads to inconsistency across the country.

12 mths is a reasonable time to have the greatest benefit for families without overburdening local authorities.

Q2: What do you perceive the impact would be of making the above changes on:

(a) The number of people granted badges:

The extra number of children under the age of three receiving badges will be relatively small.

(b) Availability of disabled parking spaces:

N/A

(c) Local government administration and costs:

N/A

(d) Other:

Concessions Provided to Badge Holders

Please note; there are no current proposals in this area. These questions are purely for debate:

Q3: Do you think that local authorities should have more discretion to vary the yellow line and on-street parking concessions (e.g. allowing badge holders to park without charge for more time in some areas and less in others depending on local traffic conditions and disabled access?)

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> ✓	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain your reasons or add any additional comments you wish to make:

Q4: Would you support redrawing the London Concession (the regulations that exempts the four Central London boroughs from the national Blue Badge Scheme) so that it is aligned with the clearly marked, London Congestion Zone – recognising that the zone

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

may alter in size?

Please explain your reasons or add any additional comments you wish to make:

Q5: Do you have any further suggestions in relation to the future concessions associated with the Blue Badge? Yes No
 √

Please add any additional comments you wish to make:

There should be clearer guidelines between local authorities, the parking, retail and service sectors to investigate how off-street parking concessions should best sit alongside their on-street counterparts.

Administration and Enforcement

Q6: Do you support the introduction of :

(a) A national framework for sharing Blue Badge data between issuing authorities and with on-street enforcement agencies? Yes No
 √

(b) New technology features to the badge e.g. a machine readable badge that can be read by local authority hand held devices? Yes No
 √

Please explain your reasons or add any additional comments you wish to make:

Sharing data may help to make the scheme more equitable between different authorities

Q7: Do you think that parking enforcement officers should be given a legal power (like the police) to remove misused badges on the spot? Yes No

Please explain your reasons or add any additional comments you wish to make:

Persistent offenders yes, but care should be taken that genuine mistakes or forgetfulness are not penalised.

Q8: Do you have any other ideas for improving enforcement and/or public understanding of the Scheme?

Q9: Do you think that local authorities should be able to charge more than the existing £2 maximum badge issue fee - to more appropriately covers costs? Yes No

Please explain your reasons or add any additional comments you wish to make:

Fees should rise in line with inflation, however we would not want to see different authorities charging different fee rates.

Alternatives and Choice

Q10: Do you have any suggestions for alternatives to the Scheme for meeting the mobility needs of people that do not qualify for a badge (e.g. people with Autism, Alzheimer's, mental health problems, Crohn's or Colitis, learning difficulties and partially sighted people).

Please provide your suggestions in the space provided:

Q11: Is there anything else that the Government could do to improve the wider personal mobility of badge holders (e.g. enhanced local taxi voucher schemes)?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please explain your reasons or add any additional comments you wish to make:

Q12: Is there anything that the Government could do to encourage badge holders to use public transport more often? Yes No

Please explain your reasons or add any additional comments you wish to make:

Public transport is often not an option for sick and disabled children and their families. Hospitals are often poorly serviced by direct transport routes and transport is often over crowded and unsuitable to accommodate babies and toddlers and their paraphernalia, children with special needs are even more disadvantaged. Access for people in wheel chairs is extremely patchy, especially on local bus services.

General Comments

Q13: Do you have any other comments or suggestions for reforming the Scheme? Yes No

Please explain your reasons or add any additional comments you wish to make:

Please send this completed form to:

Ella Roberts
The Accessibility and Equalities Unit
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DR
Tel: 020 7944 3533

Email: bluebadgeconsultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk

The deadline for responses is: **Thursday April 17 2008.**