

Report

Report to:	Equal Opportunities Forum
Date of Meeting:	21 February 2018
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Blue Badge Scheme - Extension of the Qualifying Criteria to People with Mental Disorders or Cognitive Impairments
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide the Forum with an update of the Blue Badge Scheme for disabled people and advise on the extension of the scheme's criteria to include people with mental disorders or cognitive impairments

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Forum is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the contents of the report be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. Blue badges support independent living by enabling people who would otherwise not be able to get out and about to access facilities such as work, education, community, social or health services in the same way as others can.
- 3.2. This essential service for disabled people supports them to lead independent lives by providing parking concessions for on-street parking, allowing badge holders to park close to where they need to go.
- 3.3. Initially the Blue Badge Scheme was mainly for those people who have severe mobility problems. It was recognised that some people with a diagnosed mental disorder (a legal expression including conditions like dementia, autism and Down's syndrome) lack awareness of danger from traffic. This is likely to compromise their safety, or the safety of others. Therefore, on 1 April 2016 a pilot project was set up to extend the standard Blue Badge scheme. It was extended to anyone with a diagnosed mental disorder or cognitive impairment who is in receipt of certain social security benefits and whose lack of awareness of danger from traffic is likely to compromise their or other people's safety, during journeys. The pilot ran until September 2017.
- 3.4. Following evaluation of the pilot, in December 2017, the eligibility criteria of the Blue Badge Scheme were revised and extended to include carers and relatives of people who pose a risk to themselves or others in traffic to apply for a disabled person's parking badge, provided they meet the eligibility criteria.

4. Eligibility criteria

- 4.1. Anyone applying for a badge using the mental disorder or cognitive impairment criteria needs to demonstrate their eligibility. All applications made will be checked by the local authority.
- 4.2. To meet the eligibility criteria for a Blue Badge the applicant must:-
- ◆ have a diagnosed mental disorder
 - ◆ lack awareness of danger from traffic, meaning something is likely to risk the applicant's safety or the safety of other people during journeys
- 4.3. The applicant must also receive one of the following:-
- ◆ Disability Living Allowance care component at middle or higher rate
 - ◆ Attendance Allowance at lower or higher rate
 - ◆ Personal Independence Payment (PIP), having been given a total of at least 8 points from the following sections:
 - ◆ section 7 (communicating verbally)
 - ◆ section 8 (reading and understanding signs, symbols and words)
 - ◆ section 9 (engaging with other people face-to-face)
- 4.4. As well as this, a healthcare professional (not their GP) or a registered social worker must complete Section 3 of the Blue Badge form to confirm that the person meets the definition.
- 4.5. Some applicants will also need an assessment which will be carried out by occupational therapists employed by the Council, this can take approximately 6 to 8 weeks. The applicant won't need an assessment if they receive any of the benefits outlined in 4.3 above.
- 4.6. The mental disorder or cognitive impairment criteria application process is separate to the normal Blue Badge application process and is made using a paper based application.

5. Application refused

- 5.1. If an application is refused there is a right of appeal against this decision, which should be made within 20 working days, detailing why the applicant believes that this is the wrong decision. To date no Cognitive Impairment applications have been refused.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. Employees will need to be fully aware of the revised criteria when advising and working with customers to ensure they receive a fair and equal level of access.

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1. There are currently no financial implications arising from the extended criteria.

8 Other Implications

- 8.1 None.

9 Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. This report does not introduce a new policy or procedure and does not require an impact assessment.
- 9.2. The report does highlight issues that if taken forward can help the council meet its commitments as set out in the mainstreaming equalities report and will help us to continue to meet our Equality Duties.

Paul Manning
Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

17 January 2018

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Fair, open and sustainable
- ◆ Focused on people and their needs
- ◆ Working with and respecting others
- ◆ Support our communities by tackling disadvantage and deprivation and supporting aspiration

Previous References

- ◆ Equal Opportunities Forum, 2 September 2014

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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