

P-06-1380 Make Blue badge Applications Lifelong for individuals who have a lifelong diagnosis, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 01.12.23

P-06-1380 Eich deiseb / Your petition

We appreciate the feedback in the attached letter, but we do not feel that it is adequately addressing the issues raised and you have added more confusion to the situation, raising more questions. As we have only just received this information, we have no time before the 5th December to look into this further. It has certainly highlighted that there are inconsistencies

We have reached out to various Local Authorities, we asked about

- The letter stating “The Blue Badge Digital Service (BBDS) allows local authorities to mark on the system if a badge should be granted for life.”
- Qualifications of desk based assessors
- IAS process (The Independent Assessment Services).

Life award

- We have received inconsistent answers, with one LA saying ‘they never give anyone a Life award’
- No LA’s can provide data on how many people have received a Life award
- No Parent we have talked to has been given or informed that there is a possibility of a life award
- No information is given on LA website or application form regarding Life award

Qualifications/Training

According to the guidance, the local authority must conduct a thorough assessment based on the evidence from healthcare professionals, such as reports, letters (not appointment letters), summaries and assessments by relevant healthcare professionals involved in an applicant’s care. However, we found that this was not the case in practice.

Local authorities in different counties could not tell us what qualifications or training their desk-based assessors had in health, ALN or disability. How can they make informed decisions about complex needs without having the appropriate expertise? The decision makers need to have some kind of medical knowledge

IAS

- We received varied answers to whether IAS is an appeal process or part of the application process.
- LAs could not provide any data on how many cases were referred to the IAS process or how many were successful in obtaining a blue badge.
- There is no information on the website or on the application form about IAS.

Parents responses

- I don’t find the response particularly useful in addressing the issues that we have raised. It sets out the political timeline for the different discussions held regarding mobility and blue badges but doesn’t consider the actual practice and the problems faced by families of children with learning disabilities

- It simply states that it is for 3 years without explaining or examining the reasons for it being 3 years. My daughters DLA was issued for a longer period than 3 years why doesn't it align to the period of the award?
- I have never been informed about a badge being awarded for life. Why is this not signposted within the application process? It may be within the policy but as with many political or legal documents if they aren't promoted then they aren't used by those in need.
- It fails to address our comments regarding consistencies within local authorities. It does not address my concerns regarding training of those councils in carrying out their role in issuing blue badges particularly in case involving cognitive rather than physical disabilities.
- I don't understand why blue badge eligibility helps assess and monitor applicants continued eligibility. If it is based upon the actual award ie if we are issued with DLA for a period of 5 years why does it not cover the length DLA has been awarded? It is suggesting that the DLA assessment process is flawed and not to be trusted.
- I don't believe that the system of awarding blue badges should be devised to prevent misuse or abuse. The process should be based upon need, accessibility and designed to be transparent and easy to access. Is the system specifically designed to reduce the number of blue badges being issues? IF this is the starting point then barriers may be subconsciously put up by those issuing

It fails to provide any adequate reasons why he considers that blue badges can not be issued for a longer period than 3 years. He simply states avoid misuse or abuse. Does he have any evidence to support this assertion? Why 3 years? why not 5 years? why not 10 years, this could include photo ID?

- He has not addressed the issue around life long conditions
- He has not addressed the issue surrounding lack of consistency and lack of knowledge around appeals or support in making applications

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- My son was awarded his blue badge in January 2023. He is 15 years years old, non-verbal, cognitive disabilities, adhd, myoclonic and atonic seizures and charcot marie tooth. All of which are lifelong and are life limiting for him. He is on the lower rate of mobility, but we were fortunate to have a blue badge issued. Which has transformed our life, making every day trips so much easier for both him and myself. I have learnt that the blue badge can be awarded for life. Lee stated in his letter 'The Blue Badge Digital Service (BBDS) has the ability for local authorities to flag up on the system if a badge should be awarded for life.'

How do I go about this? There is no information regarding this process on your website, and I can't find this on Gov.uk website either. I have not been notified of this when we received my sons Blue Badge and the information booklet that was with the Blue Badge. Surely this information should be included in the notes of eligibility in the applying

process!! There must be thousands of people, who like my son have lifelong conditions and would welcome not having to 'reapply' every 3 years.

My sons conditions are lifelong. He is 15years old and has no awareness of danger, he could not plan a route or follow a route that was planned for him. Coupled with his ADHD which leads him to be spontaneous and a flight risk. Along with him being non-verbal, so can't ask for help. This is a very dangerous situation for him and people around him. Charcot Marie Tooth is a genetic muscle wasting disease, there is no cure to it. He is effected everyday by the CMT. He has poor fine and gross motors skill, a wide gape and he can't run, instead he skips, due to his muscle tone.

I look forward to your reply and receiving the information regarding how I go about getting my sons blue badge awarded for life.

Questions

- Have the Welsh Government undertaken any research as to whether that training in relation social model of disability is working.

Evidence from our working group suggests that there is inconsistencies within local authorities; there is not transparency within the process and people don't know about their rights to appeal or the Independent Advisory system. Feedback from our discussions would suggest that more needs to be done to improve understanding of some conditions such as cognitive impairment and better information about the process needs to be disseminated by the council.

- IF they do not support our proposed changes - can the system be simplified for those who are reapplying who have lifelong conditions.
- What assessments have been carried out to ensure that there is consistency within local governments in processing blue badges.
- The legislation is broadly worded in relation to cognitive disability and will often depend upon the individual's own interpretation of 'danger' etc. What training is provided to ensure that councils have real life understanding of what this means to individual families who children have learning difficulties.

The current blue badge system is unfair and distressing for people with ALN or Disabilities. They have to go through a lengthy and exhausting process that often does not take into account their specific needs or circumstances and in some instances their disabilities are not going to go away or improve. In some instances, mobility cars have been removed leaving individuals isolated. This is not only a problem in North Wales, but across the whole country. The existing guidance is flawed and inefficient, wasting the Welsh government's resources. There is an urgent need for change and to grant people with lifelong disabilities a blue badge for life

Please see article written by IWA who has interviewed individuals and professionals across Wales, please use to support our case

<https://www.iwa.wales/agenda/2023/11/the-blue-badge-application-process-an-inconsistent-and-harrowing-process/>

Is there anything additional that you would like the Committee to know at this stage,

Some parents from Our STAND for change groups have agreed to share their stories and explain how the blue badge helps them with their daily challenges and how a life time award would take one stress away from their lives. They hope that you will listen to them and understand their situations.