



Willowbank Ltd

LARG

Lobbying, Activism & Research Group

Blue Badge Consultation Response

24th July 2013

About Us

LARG is a group of disabled people who meet on a weekly basis in Willowbank Resource Centre, Dungannon to engage directly with decisions which impact upon our member's lives. We respond to consultations, meet with councillors, MLA's and Executive Ministers to highlight issues and the impacts of decisions on disabled peoples everyday lives. We also actively engage with trainee social workers to help them understand the impact their work has on the lives of the clients they work with. We work within a strong human rights and community development ethos.

Consultation Question 1

What are your views on Option 1 – no legislative link between Blue Badge eligibility and PIP?

1a Do you think that everyone between the ages of 16 and 64 should apply directly for a badge to the Department's Blue Badge Unit under the 'with further assessment' criteria? Please explain your reason.

No if you are on high rate mobility/PIP there should be an automatic entitlement to Blue Badge – otherwise you are unnecessarily putting people through the assessment twice.

1b Who do you think will be affected by this option in terms of their eligibility?

Everyone could be affected by this depending on the fairness of PIP

It's difficult to answer this as PIP is not yet in place. People were concerned about the knock on effect on the Blue Badge as PIP may knock some people off who would previously have been entitled to DLA. What about people who are on Attendance allowance – will they be included in this?

1c Do you think this option should be extended to people under 16 and over 65 years of age so that they too would apply under the 'with further assessment' criteria? Please explain your reason.

Yes again why would people have to be put through this process again when it has been established they qualify for this support.

Consultation Question 2

Establishing a legislative link between Blue Badge eligibility and both mobility components of PIP?

2a Do you think that everyone who receives a score of 12 in the Planning and Following Journeys mobility criteria or 8 in the Moving Around mobility criteria should be automatically eligible for a Blue Badge? Please explain your reason.

Yes, however this will depend again on the fairness of PIP.

2b If this option is taken forward, who do you think will be affected in that they will become automatically eligible for a badge?

This is a strange question to put into the consultation as we believe you should have the data on those who are currently eligible for DLA and should be able to better estimate the nos of people who will be affected by the 12 & 18 scores in the future.

2c How many people do you think will be affected by this option in terms of their eligibility?

As above

2d How do you think this option will affect existing badge holders and the future sustainability of the Blue Badge scheme?

If the PIP system is successful and a fair judgement of people's mobility/ability to plan & follow journeys this should be a positive option for the future sustainability of the Blue Badge scheme. If on the other hand it's a mechanism to cap the eligibility criteria it will undoubtedly be unfair for some disabled people.

Consultation Question 3

3a What are your views on Option 3 – establishing a legislative link between Blue Badge eligibility and a score of 8 or more under the ‘Moving Around’ activity within PIP?

We believe this option will have a negative impact on many people with learning difficulties who will no longer be automatically eligible for a Blue Badge & will be penalised for their entitlement for Blue Badge due to the fact that they experience difficulties in planning

3b If this option is taken forward, who do you think will be affected in that they will no longer be automatically eligible for a badge? Do you think that they would be eligible under the ‘with further assessment’ criteria?

3c How many people do you think will be affected by this option?

As above

Consultation Question 4

Are there any other practical and sustainable solutions that should be considered?

What would be the impacts and effects of these solutions/options on eligibility, impacts on existing badge holders and the operation of the Blue Badge scheme?

We are not aware of any further practical solutions.

Consultation Question 5

Do you agree with the way in which we propose to extend eligibility to children between the age of 2 and 3 with specific medical conditions? Please provide information to support your decision

Yes we believe that where a condition is a well-recognised condition which limits mobility or necessitates parents to carry additional medical equipment that this child should have an eligibility for Blue Badge. In many situations parents are having

to accompany children on their own to medical appointments requiring them to park the car and support the child into appointments therefore parking would be essential.

Consultation Question 6

What are your views on the Department's proposals to remove hard copy applications and introducing telephony and online application processing?

This would concern us as how would someone with a speech impairment and no internet access be able to access the telephony or online service. What is the saving by removing hard copy applications and should they not at least be available in a selected number of relevant organisations within the community. Some people are worried about sharing their information on the internet and it requires a great deal of confidence to be able to speak to someone over the phone confident that you have given the information correctly.

Consultation Question 7

What are your views on the Department moving towards using a UK – wide central database and distribution of badges to help improve the security of the badge and the service provided in Northern Ireland?

For some consultees they identified that they would prefer to stick to the NI design with updates on the security detail. For others they could see the advantages in having the badge the same as the rest of the UK for ease of identifying who owns the badge etc. This was under the assumption that in printing all badges from one central location would be more cost effective than having this done in the regions. There was a strong preference for the local contacts of people in Enniskillen to be maintained rather than option for answering machine services.

There were, however, concerns around the “discreet references to whether the badge belongs to a driver or passenger, male or female and the age of the badge holder”. Consultees felt this would make people vulnerable as it could be used to identify vulnerable people etc.

Consultation Question 8

What are your views on the Department raising the fee for a Blue Badge?

In recognition that costs must be covered for the production & distribution of the Blue Badge there was an acknowledgement that the fee may need to be increased. However a more detailed breakdown of these costs should be transparent so people can see the actual costs currently to fully understand how the costs are not currently being met as well as the costs taking into account the proposed changes to show how economies of scale can be achieved in moving to a new system. A cap of no more than £10 was identified which would, in effect, represent a 500% increase in the current price.

Consultation Question 9

What are your views on the Department’s proposal to charge for a replacement badge?

There was much discussion around the proposal to charge for a replacement and some felt that people can lose their badges for reasons beyond their control therefore one replacement should be provided free of charge with additional replacements incurring a charge. This cost should relate directly to the actual cost of producing the replacement badge

Consultation Question 10

Which parking option do you think best serves the needs of blue badge holders?

Consultees felt that parking should for blue badge holders should recognise the additional time it would take many disabled people to do the everyday tasks other people may be

able to achieve within 10 / 15mins. For this reason the preferred option was Option 3 offering 3hrs at no charge. It was also felt that this would reduce the incidence of people using a space for use over an entire working day and would increase the turnover of bays. If disabled drivers are in employment they should not be using these bays free of charge.

Consultation Questions 11

Do you think there are any alternative parking options not considered in this consultation exercise?

Not aware of any

Consultation Question 12

If free parking was available would you have any objection to it being time limited?

Again bearing in mind our response to question 10 we feel a 3 hr allowance would be fair.

Consultation Question 13

Are you aware of any other data that could be used to inform the Department's thinking on the parking issue?

No

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