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**Blue Badge scheme – Non-physical (‘hidden’) disabilities**

The aim of this document is to try and explain the new qualifying criteria for a disabled blue badge in a more condensed and easier to understand format than the full guidance.

The full guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-blue-badge-scheme-local-authority-guidance-england>

**The extended criteria comes in to force on 30 August 2019.**

Applicants will not be able to apply before this date.

Background

Following extensive consultation in 2018, the Department for Transport has extended the eligibility criteria for the Blue Badge scheme to also include criteria for people with non-physical (‘hidden’) disabilities.

This includes, but is not limited to, people with learning difficulties, mental health conditions and hidden disabilities such as autism.

There are two ways an applicant can be awarded a blue badge;

1) Eligible without further assessment or

2) Eligible subject to further assessment

Eligible without further assessment

The applicant only needs to provide proof they are in receipt of one of the following benefits or have a condition listed below. No further proof of disability would be required. The existing automatic criteria all still apply with one addition;

* Mobility Component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) – 8 points or more under the “moving around” descriptor
* Disability living allowance (DLA) – Higher Rate Mobility component
* Have been awarded a lump sum benefit from the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme
* Receive a War Pensioners’ Mobility Supplement
* Registered blind or severely sight impaired
* Mobility Component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) – 10 points specifically for Descriptor E under the “Planning and following journeys” activity

**Please be aware that** **Descriptors D and F of PIP will not qualify an applicant automatically** even though they have been awarded 10 or 12 points respectively. The applicant would need to apply under “subject to further assessment”

Descriptor D – Cannot follow the route of an unfamiliar journey without another person, an assistance dog or an orientation aid. **10 points**

Descriptor F – Cannot follow the route of a familiar journey without another person, an assistance dog or an orientation aid. **12 points**

Eligible subject to further assessment

**Important** – **The applicant must have an enduring and substantial disability** which causes them, during the course of a journey, to:

* Be unable to walk
* Experience very considerable difficulty whilst walking, which may include very considerable psychological distress
* Be at risk of serious harm when walking; or pose, when walking, a risk of serious harm to any other person

‘Enduring’ – is defined as; A disability the applicant will experience for a period of at least 3 years.

Applicants with non-physical (‘hidden’) disabilities may qualify under one of the two highlight criteria above.

1. **Experience very considerable difficulty whilst walking, which may include very considerable psychological distress**

Where applicable, an applicant would need to:-

* Explain how their disability affects them whilst walking
* Identity any coping strategies they use, and how effectively these work in practice
* Document any treatment or medication they receive to help them manage their condition
* Identify the names and contact details of any health or social care practitioners involved in their diagnosis and ongoing treatment
* Provide any relevant supporting evidence, for example such as: diagnosis letters, care plans, patient summaries, education health and care (EHC) plans or disability benefits
* Explain how they experience very severe or overwhelming anxiety (e.g. through hypervigilance)
* Explain how they experience an overwhelming sense of fear of public/open/busy spaces
* Explain why they avoid some/all types of journeys due to the kinds of experiences listed above

1. **Be at risk of serious harm when walking; or pose, when walking, a risk of serious harm to any other person**

A risk of serious harm to self/others could manifest as one or more of the following behaviours in the context of walking between a parked vehicle and a destination:-

* Becoming physically aggressive towards others, possibly without intent or awareness of the impact their actions may have;
* Refusing to walk altogether, dropping to the floor or becoming a dead-weight;
* Wandering off or running away, possibly without awareness of surroundings or their associated risks (e.g. nearby roads, car park environments);
* Disobeying, ignoring and/or being unaware of clear instructions;
* Experiencing very severe or overwhelming anxiety (e.g. through hypervigilance);
* Experiencing an overwhelming sense of fear of public/open/busy spaces;
* Experiencing serious harm or causing harm to others;
* Avoiding some/all types of journeys due to the kinds of experiences listed above.

**Key points to note:-**

1. In this context it is recognised that some of the listed behaviours, as well as others, may be exhibited ordinarily by children who do not have any enduring or substantial disability. Local Authorities will need to consider the extent of any such behaviours and/or difficulties experienced by an applicant in relation to common developmental milestones.
2. If such difficulties can be managed through reasonable coping strategies then a blue badge would not help an applicant. For example, where an applicant would only ever be accompanied by another person that would negate the ‘very considerable’ difficulty.
3. If coping strategies are being adopted but require significant time to be invested on the part of the applicant this would not negate the ‘very considerable’ difficulty.
4. The frequency with which an applicant experiences very considerable difficulty whilst walking during the course of a journey should be ‘more often than not’

A new application form will be available from 30 August 2019.

For further information please contact the Blue Badge team;

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