

Outcome of the Consultation on the Blue Badge Scheme

Summary

The consultation on plans to link automatic eligibility for a Blue Badge to receipt of Personal Independence Payments (PIP) closed on 30 October 2012.

There was strong support for plans to link automatic eligibility to;

The PIP enhanced mobility rate for 'Planning and following a journey' for those with cognitive and sensory impairments, or

The PIP standard mobility rate for 'Moving around' for those with mobility impairments.

Background

The Blue Badge Action Plan is a five year programme and addresses many of the concerns raised in the consultation.

In fact we have already delivered the Blue Badge Improvement Service, with a national database and secure badge design.

In Wales badges are provided free unlike the rest of the UK

We recently passed a Legislative Consent Motion for the UK Disabled Person's Parking Badge Bill to tackle fraud and abuse

We are actively considering how to target badges to those who need them most.

The Issue

The UK Welfare Reform Programme will replace the Disability Living Allowance with Personal Independence Payments (PIP) for people aged 16 to 64. The changes will be phased in from April 2013.

Currently the award of the Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance provides automatic eligibility for a Blue Badge in Wales. As Disability Living Allowance is replaced by PIP it is likely that fewer people will be able to benefit from the passported link to the Blue Badge Scheme. We have explored options that will minimise the adverse impact of the benefit changes on people most in need in Wales

The Proposals

The consultation outlined proposals for linking automatic eligibility for a Blue Badge to the award of PIP on the following basis;

The PIP **enhanced** mobility rate for 'Planning and following a journey' for those with cognitive and sensory impairments, or,

The PIP **standard** mobility rate for 'Moving around' for those with physical mobility impairments.

There will be no other changes to the current eligibility criteria.

Outcomes

We received 72 responses to the consultation exercise and there was strong support for the plans on the way forward.

Following consideration of the responses to the consultation exercise and advice I have agreed to;

1. Maintain the link between the receipt of the Higher Rate Mobility Component Disability Living Allowance and eligibility for a Blue Badge;
2. The retention of current Blue Badges until they expire in cases where badge holders are assessed and do not qualify for PIP. This was to take into account any appeal procedures and to help the transition as the person loses their entitlement to benefits.
3. Link automatic eligibility to:
 - The PIP **enhanced** mobility rate for 'Planning and following a journey' for those with cognitive and sensory impairments, or,
 - The PIP **standard** and **enhanced** mobility rate for 'Moving around' for those with physical mobility impairments.
4. Scope a pilot project to determine how to identify people with autism who would benefit from the scheme. This will form the basis of further work around inclusion of people with cognitive impairments in the Blue Badge scheme who fall outside of the PIP age range.
5. These proposals will deliver the priority in the Blue badge Action Plan for extending the scheme to people with cognitive impairments. I want to take a balanced approach so that I can be sure that we target those most in need.

6. This will ensure that the underlying aims of the scheme to support people; who cannot walk or, have considerable difficulty walking, are addressed by setting the thresholds for a passport from PIP to the Blue Badge Scheme at the right level.

Other Issues

The consultation responses to the specific detailed proposals for the level that PIP should passport to a Blue Badge identified that respondents are confused by PIP, the PIP assessment process and the underlying activity descriptors. There is a great deal of concern about the welfare reform programme generally and the impact on those most in need.

DWP have yet to publish the final descriptors so our proposals are based on principles and the details cannot be confirmed.

