

Hillingdon Blue Badge Guidance

V1 March 2026



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1. Purpose and Scope

This guidance outlines the London Borough of Hillingdon's approach to administering the Blue Badge (Disabled Persons' Parking) Scheme. It ensures the scheme is operated fairly, consistently, and in line with Department for Transport (DfT) guidelines. The guidance applies to all Blue Badge applicants and holders in Hillingdon, and to Council staff involved in Blue Badge decisions.

2. Background and Legal Framework

The Blue Badge Scheme was established under Section 21 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. It aims to help people with severe mobility problems – including those with non-visible (“hidden”) disabilities – park closer to their destinations. The DfT sets out the scheme's regulations and guidance (most recently updated in 2019 to include hidden disabilities). Hillingdon Council implements the scheme according to this legal framework. All staff handling applications receive training to uphold these rules and the Equality Act 2010.

3. Equality and Accessibility Statement

Hillingdon Council will make reasonable adjustments to assist any applicant who has a disability or difficulty that makes the Blue Badge application process hard to access. This includes providing documents in alternative formats (large print, other languages) and helping people complete forms (by phone). Our goal is that no one is disadvantaged in applying for or using a Blue Badge due to their disability or communication needs.

4. Application Process Overview

Residents of Hillingdon can apply for a Blue Badge online via GOV.UK or by paper application (available if you cannot apply online). To apply, you must:

- Complete the application form (online or paper).
- Provide proof of identity (e.g. passport, driving licence, birth certificate).
- Provide proof of address in Hillingdon (e.g. council tax or utility bill, dated within last 12 months).
- Provide a recent passport-style photograph of the applicant (head and shoulders, clear likeness, taken in the last 6 months).
- Provide evidence of eligibility (see Section 5 for details – e.g. benefit award letters or medical reports).

Processing Times: Once we have your completed form and all documents, we aim to process your application within 6–12 weeks. If information is missing, we will contact you and allow up to 28 days for you to respond with the required documents. Your application may be closed if the information isn't provided in that time (you would need to reapply).

No fee is charged to apply. If your application is approved, a £10 fee is payable for the badge (see Section 8). If your application is not successful, you will not be asked to pay anything.

5. Eligibility Criteria

You must meet at least one of the criteria below to qualify for a Blue Badge. There are two categories of eligibility:

- 5.1 Eligible Without Further Assessment – automatic qualification based on certain benefits or conditions.
- 5.2 Eligible Subject to Further Assessment – qualification based on an assessment of your mobility/disability.

We will only issue a badge if you clearly meet one or more criteria. The evidence you provide is crucial to demonstrate eligibility.

5.1 Eligible Without Further Assessment (Automatic Qualification)

You will automatically qualify for a Blue Badge if any of the following apply:

1. Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance (HRMCDLA): You receive HRMCDLA.
2. Personal Independence Payment (PIP) – “Moving Around” 8+ points: You receive PIP and scored 8 points or more in the “Moving Around” mobility activity.
3. PIP – “Planning and Following Journeys” 10 points (Descriptor E): You receive PIP and scored 10 points under Descriptor E of the “Planning and Following a journey” activity (meaning you cannot undertake any journey due to overwhelming psychological distress).
4. Registered Severely Sight Impaired (Blind): You are registered as blind with your local authority.
5. War Pensioner’s Mobility Supplement: You receive a War Pensioner’s Mobility Supplement.
6. Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS): You were awarded a lump sum under AFCS tariffs 1–8 and have been certified as having a permanent disability that causes inability to walk or very considerable difficulty walking.
7. Child under 3 with medical needs: Your child is under 3 and has a medical condition that requires bulky medical equipment at all times (e.g. ventilator, oxygen tank) or immediate access to a vehicle for emergency treatment at all times.

Evidence Required: For any automatic criteria, you must provide official proof. For example, a DWP award letter for DLA/PIP (dated within the last 12 months, showing the relevant points or rate), a registration document for blindness, or correspondence from the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency for AFCS awards. For a child under 3, provide a letter from a medical specialist detailing the child’s condition and equipment/treatment needs.

If you meet one of these criteria and supply the evidence, we will generally approve your application without further assessment. (We may verify evidence, e.g. checking benefit entitlement via DWP systems.)

5.2 Eligible Subject to Further Assessment (Discretionary Criteria)

If you do not qualify automatically, you may still be eligible under one of the following conditions. In these cases, we will look closely at the information and may conduct an assessment (see Section 6). You may qualify if:

- 5.2.1 You have a permanent and substantial disability that means you cannot walk or have very considerable difficulty walking. This could include:
 - Being unable to walk at all (e.g. due to paralysis or loss of function).

- Severe difficulty walking: you can walk only a short distance (meters) before needing to stop or experiencing extreme discomfort.
- Severe pain when walking, or because of walking, such that it restricts distance.
- Breathlessness or extreme fatigue from minimal walking effort.
- Instability or risk of collapse when walking (e.g. serious balance issues, frequent falls).
- Reliance on a walking aid or personal assistance to walk and still facing significant difficulty.

Example: A person with a serious heart condition may become breathless after 20 metres; or someone with chronic arthritis may experience severe pain after a few steps. These situations could meet the criteria. We will consider factors such as how far you can walk, how long it takes, your gait, and the after-effects (pain, breathlessness).

- 5.2.2 You have an enduring and substantial non-visible disability causing considerable psychological distress while walking, or you pose a risk of serious harm to yourself or others when walking. This typically refers to conditions such as autism, dementia, or severe mental health disorders. For example:
 - Overwhelming anxiety or panic in open or busy environments, making you unable to continue walking.
 - Behavioural outbursts or loss of safety awareness when outdoors – e.g. you might run into the road due to lack of danger perception or become physically aggressive due to stress.
 - “Meltdowns” or refusals – e.g. a child with autism dropping to the ground and refusing to move in a car park or attempting to run off unpredictably.
 - Serious risk to self/others – e.g. a person might accidentally harm themselves or others because their condition prevents safe walking (such as not understanding traffic signals).

In essence, even if physically able to walk, the nature of your condition makes it unsafe or untenable for you to do so in many situations. We will require evidence from healthcare professionals about these difficulties.

- 5.2.3 You have a severe disability in both arms, drive regularly, and cannot operate parking meters or pay-and-display machines. This is for drivers who, due to conditions like limb loss or deformity, muscular dystrophy, or paralysis in both arms, cannot use a parking machine. To qualify under this:
 - You must be the driver of the vehicle (not just a passenger) and drive regularly.
 - You have a severe disability in both arms (for example, you have no arms or cannot use both arms effectively).
 - Operating a parking meter or ticket machine is impossible or very difficult (e.g. you cannot insert coins or retrieve a ticket from the machine).

Note: This does not apply if your only difficulty is carrying items or shopping – it specifically relates to operating parking equipment due to upper limb disabilities. Most people in this category drive an adapted vehicle (e.g. with steering attachments). We may ask for proof of vehicle adaptations or driving capability.

- 5.2.4 You are applying on behalf of a child aged 3 or over who has severe walking difficulties. Once children reach age 3, they no longer qualify under the automatic infant criteria, but they can be considered under the same criteria as adults (5.2.1 or 5.2.2). For example, a 4-year-old with a severe neuro-muscular condition who can only walk very short distances with support may qualify via 5.2.1.
- 5.2.5 Blue Badges cannot be issued for temporary disabilities. If your condition is expected to improve significantly (e.g. a broken leg that will heal or recovery from surgery), you will not qualify. The disability or difficulty must be likely to last at least three years. *(This is a clarification – temporary inconveniences don't meet the criteria.)*

Evidence Required: For further assessment criteria, you should provide letters/reports from doctors or specialists that describe your condition and its impact on your mobility. Examples:

- Clinic letters detailing diagnosis and prognosis.
- A letter from your GP or consultant explaining how far you can walk and what symptoms you experience.
- Reports from occupational therapists, physiotherapists, or clinical psychologists if relevant (especially for non-visible disabilities).
- Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for children with special needs, if applicable.

Include any relevant information about medication or aids you use, and whether they help. The Council will use this evidence to determine if you meet the strict criteria.

6. Assessment Procedure (for Non-Automatic Applications)

If you apply under the “subject to further assessment” route (Section 5.2), the following process will take place:

- 6.1 Desk-Based Review: A Blue Badge officer will first review your application form and all the documents you provided. They may also check any existing records – for example, checking the Council’s social care records. If the evidence clearly shows you meet the criteria (e.g. a consultant letter says “unable to walk more than 20m”), we will approve the application at this stage. If you do not meet the automatic eligibility criteria, we may ask you to provide further medical evidence or consider applying under an alternative criterion
- 6.2 Decision Making: A senior officer will consider all the information (application details, medical evidence) and make a decision. We will only approve the badge if the evidence shows the eligibility criteria are met. The decision will be:
 - Approved – if criteria are satisfied (go to Section 7.1), or
 - Refused – if criteria are not met (go to Section 7.2).

7. Outcome of Application

- 7.1 Approval and Issue of Blue Badge: If your application is approved, we will send you an approval email (or letter) confirming this. If you haven’t paid the £10 fee yet, the email (letter) will explain how to pay (online, by phone, etc.). Once payment is received:
 - We will order your Blue Badge from the national badge printing service.

- The badge will be posted to your address (or made available for collection in some cases).
- You will receive the Blue Badge, a parking clock (for use on time-limited parking like yellow lines), and a “Rights and Responsibilities” booklet explaining how to use the badge.
- Sign the back of your badge as soon as you receive it. The badge will show your name, photo (on the back), and expiry date. It is valid from the date of issue.

You can start using the badge immediately upon receipt, in accordance with the rules (see Section 11). Keep the booklet for reference on correct use. If you have any questions about using the badge, you can contact us.

- 7.2 If Your Application is Refused: If we decide you do not qualify for a Blue Badge, we will send you a refusal email (letter). This will explain the reason(s) for the refusal, citing the criteria and evidence. The email (letter) will also inform you of your right to appeal (request a review) and how to do so.
- 7.3 Review (Appeal) Process: Applicants may request a review of the decision within 28 days of receiving the refusal email or letter if they believe there has been an error or have additional information to submit. To initiate a review, contact the Blue Badge team using the details provided in the refusal correspondence and clearly state the reasons for requesting reconsideration. Any new evidence not previously considered, such as recent medical reports or omitted details, should be included.

After review:

- If the decision is overturned (i.e. we now agree you meet the criteria), we will approve your application and issue the badge.
- If the decision is upheld (still refused), we will send a final decision letter explaining that outcome.

This internal review is the final stage within the Council. If you remain dissatisfied, you may then submit a formal complaint, and if you are still not satisfied with the response, you can contact the Local Government Ombudsman.

7.4 Re-application After Refusal: Unless your circumstances change, we generally advise waiting 6 months before reapplying if your application was refused (and the refusal was upheld on review). Reapplying sooner without any new evidence or change is likely to result in the same outcome. However, if there is a significant change in your condition or a new diagnosis, you can submit a new application with updated evidence at any time.

8. Payment for the Badge

The Blue Badge (if approved) costs £10.00. This is a one-time fee for the badge’s issue (valid for up to 3 years). You do not pay anything if you are not awarded a badge.

How to Pay: We will provide instructions when your badge is approved. Payment methods include:

- Online: A secure payment link or the Council’s online payment portal.
- By Phone: Calling the Council’s payment line to pay by debit or credit card.
- In Person or Post: In special cases, we may accept cheque, postal order, or payment at a council office (we will advise if needed).

We will only dispatch the badge once the fee is paid (unless waived due to special circumstances such as a stolen badge – see Section 10). If you paid during the application (online applicants have this option), then we will proceed straight to ordering the badge on approval.

There are no ongoing fees – the £10 covers the entire badge period. If you need a replacement badge because yours was lost/stolen or damaged, another £10 fee applies in most cases (see below).

If your application is refused or deemed invalid and payment has been made, a full refund will be issued using the original payment method.

9. Badge Duration and Renewal

A Blue Badge issued by Hillingdon is normally valid for 3 years from the date of issue. The expiry date will be printed on the badge. Exceptions to the 3-year validity include:

- **Time-Limited Benefit Awards:** If you qualified due to a benefit (like PIP) that is scheduled to end in less than 3 years, we will align the badge's expiry with the benefit's end date. (Example: your PIP award ends in 18 months – your badge might be issued for 18 months instead of 3 years.)
- **Young Children:** For children under 3 who qualify (criterion 5.1 #7), the badge will expire on the day after their 3rd birthday.
- **Change in Condition:** In rare cases, if a medical professional indicates that an improvement is expected within a certain timeframe, a shorter badge may be issued and reviewed later (though usually we still issue for 3 years and rely on the duty to report changes).

Please note the expiry date of your badge and plan to renew about 12 weeks before it expires if you still need it. As a courtesy, Hillingdon will send a renewal reminder email to badge holders approximately 12 weeks before expiry, but it remains your responsibility to reapply in time.

Renewal Process: A renewal is essentially a new application – you will need to complete a form again (to update your details), provide current evidence of your eligibility and submit a recent passport-sized photograph taken in the last six months. Photos previously used for a Blue Badge application will not be accepted. If your situation is unchanged and you still meet the criteria, the renewal should be straightforward, but we do need to verify ongoing eligibility (especially if your previous badge was issued under discretionary criteria or if your benefit entitlement has changed). It's important to respond to any requests for information during renewal to avoid delays.

Expired Badges: Once a badge has expired, it is no longer valid. Do not use an expired badge – using it is the same as not having a badge and could result in a parking fine and confiscation of the badge. Upon renewal, when you receive your new badge, you should dispose of the old one. If a badge is no longer needed (for example, if the holder's mobility improves significantly or they pass away), please return it to the Council so we can cancel it – this helps prevent misuse.

10. Lost, Stolen, or Damaged Badges

- **10.1 Lost Badge:** If your Blue Badge is lost or you can't find it, inform Hillingdon's Blue Badge team as soon as possible. We will send you a Lost

Badge Declaration form to complete, confirming that the badge is missing. Once we receive your declaration, we will cancel the old badge (so it cannot be used fraudulently if found) and issue a replacement badge with the same expiry date. The replacement fee is £10. If you later find the original badge, you must return it to us or destroy it – it will no longer be valid once a replacement is issued.

- 10.2 Stolen Badge: If your badge is stolen, report the theft to the police and obtain a crime reference number. Provide that reference number to the Blue Badge team (along with a Theft Declaration form we will give you). We will cancel the stolen badge on our system and issue a replacement. There is no fee for the first replacement when a crime reference is provided (we waive the £10 in confirmed theft cases). If a badge is stolen more than once, we will review the circumstances – repeated claims may incur a fee or further investigation. If the original badge is recovered by the police or found later, please notify us and do not use it.
- 10.3 Damaged or Faded Badge: If your badge becomes damaged (illegible, torn, faded) or the details can't be read, you should request a replacement. Return the damaged badge to us (by post or in person). We will issue a replacement badge (with the same expiry date). A £10 fee applies for replacing a damaged badge. If the damage is due to a manufacturing fault or something beyond your control, let us know – we may waive the fee in certain cases (e.g. a batch of badges that faded early). It's important to always have a clearly readable badge on display, so don't delay in getting a replacement if needed.

Replacement Badge Issuance: Replacements are usually processed quickly. After you submit the lost/stolen/damaged declaration and any fee, you can expect the new badge to arrive within 2-4 weeks. In urgent cases, we can arrange collection. The replacement badge will have a new serial number but will expire on the same date as your original badge (we do not “reset” the 3-year period for replacements).

11. Rights and Responsibilities of Badge Holders

Using a Blue Badge comes with important rules. Blue Badges can greatly assist with parking, but misuse can lead to fines or losing the badge. Below are key points every badge holder (and anyone driving them) should know:

- Badge Use is for the Holder's Benefit: The Blue Badge can only be used when the badge holder is travelling in the vehicle – either as the driver or a passenger. It is not valid if the badge holder is not in the car. For example, do not give your badge to a friend or relative to use for their own parking. It's illegal for someone else to use your badge when you are not with them. The badge holder may be asked by enforcement officers to present identification to verify they are the badge owner.
- Where You Can Park with a Blue Badge:
 - Yellow Lines: You can park on *double or single yellow lines* for up to 3 hours, except where there is a ban on loading or unloading. You must display your blue parking clock showing the time you arrived. (Example: set the clock to 10:00 if you park at 10am; then you can stay until 1pm on yellow lines not otherwise restricted.)
 - Disabled Bays: You can park in on-street disabled parking bays free of charge and without time limit unless the bay signage indicates a time

restriction. Always check the sign – a few disabled bays have time limits.

- Pay-and-Display or Parking Meters: You can park in pay-and-display bays or at parking meters without paying and for unlimited time. (This applies to on-street parking. Off-street car parks may differ – see below.)
- Resident Permit or Restricted Bays: In Hillingdon, Blue Badge holders may park in residents' permit bays or other controlled parking zones without a permit, as long as the badge is displayed. (Exception: some permit bays might be suspended or have specific rules – always check local signage.)
- Council Car Parks: Many council-owned car parks allow Blue Badge holders to park for free – check the tariff board. If a car park does require payment from Blue Badge holders, it will be stated. Typically, disabled bays are provided and are free to use with the badge.
- Motorway service stations: Badge holders can park for free for up to 3 hours in signed disabled bays at motorway services.

Always observe local signs. Blue Badge rules can vary in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and abroad – this guidance covers usage in England.

- Where You Cannot Park (Even with a Badge):
 - Where there is a loading ban in force (indicated by yellow kerb markings and signs).
 - On zig-zag lines at pedestrian crossings or school entrances.
 - In bus lanes or bus stops during their hours of operation.
 - In resident or permit bays if local rules explicitly exclude Blue Badge holders (generally not in Hillingdon, but other boroughs may have Red Routes or special zones).
 - In suspended parking bays or where temporary restrictions (e.g. roadworks) are in place.
- Displaying the Badge: The Blue Badge should be displayed on the dashboard or fascia of the vehicle with the front side (blue side) facing up, so that the expiry date and serial number are visible from outside. The accompanying clock (time disc) must be displayed alongside the badge and set to your time of arrival when you are parked on yellow lines or any place with a time restriction (like certain disabled bays). If no time limit applies (e.g. in a disabled bay with no time restriction), you do not need to use the clock. Make sure nothing obscures the details on the badge – traffic wardens need to read the date and number.
- Care of the Badge: Treat your badge like a valuable document:
 - Do not laminate it or cover it with plastic.
 - Do not write on or alter any details.
 - Keep it safe when not in use – ideally remove it from the dashboard when driving (to avoid glare and to prevent theft when parked).
 - Avoid leaving the badge on display in an unattended car when you're not using a Blue Badge space, as it could attract thieves.
- Misuse of the Badge: It is a criminal offence to misuse a Blue Badge. Misuse can lead to a fine of up to £1,000 and confiscation of the badge. Examples of misuse include:

- Letting someone else use your badge when you're not with them (for their own benefit).
- Using a badge that doesn't belong to you (unless the badge holder is present and you are driving them).
- Using an expired badge or one that has been reported lost/stolen.
- Forging or altering a badge in any way.
- Using the badge to park in places you shouldn't, causing an obstruction or danger.

If a friend or family member is using your badge improperly, both they and you (as the badge holder) could face enforcement action. The Council actively enforces against Blue Badge fraud (see Section 12).

- **After Use – Don't Forget Your Badge/Clock:** When you drive away, reset the clock (don't leave an old time displayed for next time) and stow the badge safely. Do not leave the clock on display showing a false time when parked elsewhere – it should only be displayed when needed.
- **Return the Badge if Circumstances Change:** You (or your family) must return the badge to the Council if:
 - The badge has expired.
 - You no longer need it (for example, if your mobility improves to the point you're not eligible, or if you stop driving and don't use it as a passenger).
 - The badge holder has passed away. (We understand this is a difficult time, but returning the badge helps prevent misuse. Many councils participate in the Tell Us Once service which can handle this.)
 - The Council asks for it to be returned (this might happen in cases of misuse or if you obtained it fraudulently).

By following these rules, you ensure that the Blue Badge scheme remains fair and that you continue to enjoy its benefits without issue.

12. Enforcement and Misuse Prevention

Hillingdon Council takes Blue Badge fraud and misuse seriously. We have measures in place to detect and act on misuse:

- **Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs):** Our parking enforcement officers patrol streets and will inspect Blue Badges on display. They may verify details like the photograph on the back of the badge to ensure the user is the badge holder. If someone is misusing a badge, the officer can confiscate the badge on the spot. They will issue a receipt to the driver for any badge taken.
- **Fraud Investigations:** The Council's fraud team may investigate cases of suspected misuse, often based on reports from the public or patterns noticed by officers. Examples of situations investigated:
 - A badge being used frequently when the badge holder is not present (e.g. someone using a relative's badge to commute to work).
 - Reports of forged or altered badges.
 - Badges reported as lost/stolen being displayed (indicating possible misuse).
- **Public Reporting:** Members of the public can report suspected Blue Badge misuse via the Council website - [Misuse and withdrawals - Hillingdon Council](#).

We encourage this to help us keep the scheme fair. All reports are treated confidentially.

- **Consequences of Misuse:** If you misuse a badge or allow others to misuse it, you risk:
 - Receiving a Penalty Charge Notice (fine) for any parking offence committed.
 - Having the badge confiscated by an officer. If your badge is taken, you will not be able to use it until the investigation is resolved, and we may not return it if misuse is confirmed.
 - Legal action: In serious or repeated cases, the Council can prosecute offenders. A court can impose fines up to £1,000 for Blue Badge offences. We also have the power to refuse to issue a new badge or to cancel a badge if it has been misused.

Remember, the Blue Badge is there to help those who genuinely need it. Misuse can deprive disabled people of parking spaces and damages the credibility of the scheme. Hillingdon Council, in line with all London councils, will not tolerate misuse and will take appropriate action to protect legitimate badge holders.

13. Organisational Blue Badges

Organisations that transport disabled people who themselves meet the eligibility criteria can apply for an organisational Blue Badge. Examples include care homes, hospices, or community transport services for disabled residents.

Criteria for Organisations:

- The organisation must be responsible for transporting disabled people who would qualify for a Blue Badge individually (e.g. they have severe mobility impairments or are blind).
- The organisation must demonstrate a clear need for a badge rather than using individuals' badges. Typically, this means the organisation uses a vehicle (or fleet) to carry various disabled people, and it's not practical to rely on personal badges.
- The vehicle(s) must be primarily used for the care of those disabled people.

Application Requirements:

- A letter on the organisation's letterhead, signed by the manager, explaining what the organisation does and why a badge is needed.
- Number and details of clients with disabilities that the organisation transports. (No personal medical details needed, just general information like "we have 10 residents who are wheelchair users and cannot walk").
- Copies of the V5C registration documents for the vehicles the badge would cover, and proof of insurance for those vehicles (showing they are used for transport of disabled people).
- Any registration or accreditation (for example, if a care home, provide CQC registration number).

The Blue Badge team will assess the request. It is quite rare for an organisational badge to be issued; most often, disabled people have their own badges. However, if an organisation meets the criteria, we will issue a badge stamped with the organisation's name (instead of a person's name/photo).

Use of Organisational Badge: The badge can be used in any vehicle picking up or dropping off the disabled people in the care of that organisation. The rules of use

and parking (Sections 11–12 above) apply similarly. The badge must not be used for staff convenience or for purposes not involving the disabled clients. Misuse by an organisation can result in withdrawal of the badge.

The fee for an organisational badge is £10, and it is valid for 3 years (renewable with a new application). The organisation should keep the badge secure when not in use.