

Organisational Blue Badges – Research with Local Authorities

A number of questions were email to the following authorities (via their generic blue badge email addresses): **Cheshire West & Chester, Cheshire East, Warrington, Liverpool, Knowsley, Sefton, Trafford, Bolton, Manchester, Oldham, Blackburn, Rochdale, Lancashire, Cumbria** (those in **bold** are those who responded)

Have you developed specific local criteria to determine the types of organisations that are eligible for a badge, which goes over and above the information contained in the guidance?

Warrington	No we are faithful to the LA Guidance.
Oldham	No local policy regarding this currently exists.
Blackburn	We follow the DfT guidance to the letter! We don't have a 'local' policy for this; we refer organisations to the DfT criteria and will refuse applications if they do not match.
Sefton	All the applications now come to the OT Team for vetting and we have reduced our numbers considerably. We do use the Local Authority guidance and we have a separate form that we give out.
Cheshire West	We haven't developed specific Local criteria as we are familiar with organisations working in the community. We have worked with these organisations closely for many years so are familiar with their requirements. In addition when an Organisational badge comes in and if we are unfamiliar with the company we will look into the organisation to see who they are and what they do.

What do you consider constitutes providing 'care' when looking at whether the organisation *cares for and transports* those who would themselves be eligible for a badge? Is the care the primary consideration? Should it be a care provider such as a care home and as part of that care transport may be provided? Or would you consider that if a transport operator provides assistance boarding the vehicle and during the journey (e.g. provision of passenger assistants) that they are then providing 'care'?

Warrington	<p>We are usually looking at care homes but those with residents who would themselves qualify for a Blue Badge. An example is we recently received an application for a home that had residents with learning disabilities – we researched the home online (including CQC reports etc.) and spoke to one of our social workers who had recently visited and she told us that none of the residents had mobility issues; it was mental health issues only. We refused the application.</p> <p>Another example is a supported living home for maximum 12 residents, mostly mental health and learning disabilities, some with mobility issues. We questioned the care provider and again one of our mental health team. We found that most were mental health/learning disability only and that those with mobility issues were in receipt of DLA or PIP. We refused the badge for the home and encouraged individual badges for those who needed them. The care provider reluctantly applied for the individual badges for their clients as they said it was time consuming and the organisational badge was an easier option for them.</p> <p>Care is our primary consideration and no, if a transport operator provides assistance we would not consider that to be 'care'. Again, we would encourage</p>
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	individual badge holders to use their badges.
Oldham	The organisations which have applied for blue badges have been those for care homes and day centres however as many of the people who are being transported already have badges anyway the number of organisational badges tends to be limited.
Blackburn	We have issued badges to Care Homes, special education services or Day Care services, such as our Welfare transport service, however we do not issue badges to community transport organisations as they are only providing a ‘taxi service’ and do not provide any care to the passenger. We advise CT organisations to encourage their users to apply for their own badge (if eligible) and then use it whilst travelling with the CT provider.
Sefton	We do not define ‘Care’ when looking at the provision of the Badge.
Cheshire West	<p>We would use all the information provided on the application by the organisation applying. (Please see attached application) We would apply common sense, for example if it was an elderly care home they are going to have mobility concerns. They are going to need to be taken to appointments, as well as other necessary trips out to assist with their quality of life and the care they are given.</p> <p>We wouldn’t consider a transport operator as any passengers they transport would be able to apply in their own right providing they met the necessary criteria. We would be looking more to award organisational Blue badges to Care providers like care homes, day care facilities where they are responsible for a larger number of disabled people.</p> <p>We apply the criteria set out in the Guidance document that you have quoted previously is so much that, “ An organisational badge may be issued to organisations whose responsibility includes the care and transportation of disabled people who would themselves meet the eligibility criteria for a badge should they apply individually.”</p>

Are there any circumstances in which you would give badges to a private hire or community transport operator?

Warrington	No, they would only be transporting and not in their ‘care’.
Oldham	Not unless this was proved to be essential.
Blackburn	None at all – the DfT criteria states that it is unlikely that they are eligible as they do not provide ‘care services’ to the passenger.
Sefton	We have historically given to our Community Transport Local providers although we have had less and less of late.
Cheshire West	<p>We wouldn’t award Blue Badges to private hire companies.</p> <p>With regards to community transport companies we would look at on an individual basis and would be looking to award when they regularly transport disabled people and not just on an ad-hoc basis.</p>

Do you have any local authority fleet vehicles (e.g. those that provide transport specifically for disabled groups etc.) with blue badges?

Warrington	Yes, we do have approx. 8 fleet vehicles with Blue Badges. They have been issued specifically to a special needs school who have their own vehicles allocated for each key stage. The school, across each key stage, has a variety of mobile and non-mobile students with learning disabilities. The badges have been issued with guidelines for their use and are only used when a non-mobile pupil is present on one of the vehicles. At other times the vehicles are used without the badges. They sign the badge out to a driver when they know a non-mobile pupil is going to be present on the vehicle.
Oldham	No.
Blackburn	Yes, our Welfare transport fleet do have Blue Badges as the drivers also provide care to passengers and stay with them for the duration of their trip (including at the destination).
Cheshire West	We do not have any fleet vehicles that have been awarded an organisational badge.

Do you only give blue badges to organisations with vehicles that are registered in the DPV tax class (and are therefore tax exempt because they are used solely for transporting disabled people)? Or only to vehicles that have ramps/lifts etc.?

Warrington	No, we ask about DPV taxation class as part of the application process as that can play a part in our decision making. We also ask about adaptations but we don't make a decision just on the vehicle used.
Oldham	Applications are considered for all organisations however those issued tend to be for vehicles which are DPV tax class.
Blackburn	It is wholly dependent on what they do with the passenger (as detailed above). CT and Private Hire companies can be registered in the DPV tax class but are not eligible for a Blue Badge.
Sefton	The first thing we look at is whether the organisation has a DPV tax certificate and this must be provided. Although, as this does not necessarily prove the vehicle is adapted, we will also accept a photo displaying the disabled ramp etc.
Cheshire West	If the organisation passes in its own right for the care and transportation of disabled people then it would not matter what vehicle they use as the Blue badge will cover the organisation. In the majority of instances the care home will have a DPV and will also have lifts/ramps etc. but this is not the only basis we will award on.

How do you expect organisations to demonstrate that they will only use the badge when transporting people who would themselves be eligible for an individual badge? Do you expect them to know detailed information about the people they are transporting, such that they should be able to say whether or not they would be eligible for a badge as an individual?

Warrington	When we receive an application, we research the organisation to see what type of residents are likely to be in their care. We are very clear on why we are issuing a badge or not. There is an element of trust once the badge has been issued as the resource is not there to monitor the use of the badge(s).
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Oldham	We issue very few of these and they have to be able to prove the type of people going to be transported however more usually it is easier to get the individuals to apply.
Blackburn	We ask the organisation to provide details of their passengers' disabilities and whether or not they would be eligible if they made a personal application. We do not do checks on this as we know the majority of organisations who apply for badges.
Cheshire West	<p>We interrogate each organisational application and if necessary liaise with other local authority departments to gain an insight into the level of care and transportation provided. We also work closely with colleagues in the Fraud team to ensure ongoing enforcement is present in the authority.</p> <p>We would assume this as they would have specific experience in the their field and due to the genuine requirement of the Blue Badge and the inconvenience of having a badge removed from them it is unlikely they would apply fraudulently but again we find that by researching the companies we are able to match the disabilities that they cater for to the criteria that we would use to award Blue Badge on an individual basis. If information is lacking we will request further evidence and information in support of their application.</p>

What sort of things do you look for in determining whether the organisation needs an organisational badge rather than using the individual badges of the people it is transporting?

Warrington	<p>We are really keen for individual badge holders to use their badges rather than issue an organisational badge. We really question the applicant to be clear that we are issuing for the right reasons – we use the LA Guidance to help us ask the right questions.</p> <p>We want to know how many residents there are; how many have mobility problems and why do they not have their own badges? How old are the residents; is it an elderly care home?</p> <p>We look at the ration between mobile and non-mobile, if a low number of non-mobile, they should have their own badges.</p>
Oldham	The size of the organisation, type of organisation, type of vehicle i.e. is it a suitable type of vehicle for transporting the individuals, how often the badge is likely to be used etc.
Blackburn	We ask the organisation to provide details of their passengers' disabilities and whether or not they would be eligible if they made a personal application. We do not do checks on this as we know the majority of organisations who apply for badges.
Sefton	We ask the question regarding how many eligible disabled individuals are in the organisation. We look at a minimum of 15. If there are less we encourage individual applications.
Cheshire West	We will Research the company requesting the badge in order to see what they need it for and the amounts of disabled people they are likely to transport. As previously advised, if necessary we liaise with service partners and council teams to understand the level of care provided.

Do you routinely visit organisations in assessing their applications? What questions are asked etc.?

Warrington	No, we don't routinely visit, however, I believe Liverpool City Council did visit each one, and this reduced the amount of badges issued.
Oldham	No as unfortunately there is no capacity with the team for carrying out any visits, it is all we can manage to keep up with the number of applications with the staff we have.
Blackburn	We do not visit organisations to assess their applications – most checks are done online to understand the organisation, their customers and their requirements.
Sefton	We do not have the capacity to visit the organisations.
Cheshire West	We don't feel the need as we work closely with our fraud team.

Cheshire East (telephone conversation with Liz Rimmer – 01270 371448 / liz.rimmer@cheshireeast.gov.uk)

- Don't have a Blue Badge Policy – just follow the DfT guidance
- Organisation must be concerned with the care of disabled people, which wouldn't include assisting onto/off the vehicles
- Cap of 20 badges per organisation – one organisation (David Lewis Centre) appealed but it was rejected and they were simply advised to manage their badges better

All LAs were asked to share a copy of their Blue Badge Policy; none of those who responded actually sent a copy. However, some are available online:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/Parking,%20roads%20and%20travel/parking/Blue%20badges%20and%20disabled%20parking/Wirral%20Blue%20Badge%20Policy.pdf>

<http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/media/897181/lcc-blue-badge-policy.pdf>

Also, their web page (<http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-travel/parking/blue-badges.aspx#organisation>) states the following:

Organisational badges

Blue Badges for organisations may be issued to an organisation for use in a motor vehicle used solely for the purpose of transporting disabled people who would themselves be eligible for a badge. An organisation is defined as meaning an organisation concerned with the care of disabled persons to which a disabled person's badge may be issued.

You will be required to provide proof of any vehicle adaptations and Disabled Passenger Vehicle (DPV) excise exemption.

The rules about eligibility for a Blue Badge have changed considerably. Even if you have been issued with a Blue Badge in the past, this does not mean that you will be able to get one again.