

**The Blue Badge Scheme Local authority  
Guidance (England) 2014- summary  
Independent mobility assessment –  
assessing eligibility  
Updated October 2018**

## **Assessing Eligibility - subject to further assessment**

### 4.4 Assessing people with walking disabilities

To qualify under this criterion, an applicant must have **any** permanent (i.e. likely to last for the duration of a person's life) and substantial disability that means they **cannot walk, or means they have very considerable difficulty walking**. Each application should be considered against this criterion, regardless of the particular condition. Applicants will need to demonstrate that their ability to walk is affected to the extent that they would be unable to access goods and services unless allowed to park close to shops, public buildings and other facilities.

Local authorities should be aware that it is not appropriate to refuse an applicant a Blue Badge solely on the basis that they are able to use public transport independently or because they already have a concessionary travel pass.

In all cases, entitlement depends on the applicant's difficulty in walking, and considerations such as difficulty in carrying parcels or luggage are not to be taken into account.

In addition, the DfT considers that it would not be appropriate to refuse an applicant a Blue Badge on the sole basis that they are due to have a medical procedure which may or may not improve their mobility.....” In all cases it remains the responsibility of the local authority to decide whether the applicant's disability is permanent or temporary.”

Unable to walk means

- (a) they cannot walk;
- (b) the applicant has very considerable difficulty walking consider:
  - pain
  - breathlessness
  - distance
  - speed
  - the length of time
  - the manner

#### **A The applicant cannot walk**

Being unable to walk means that they **cannot take a single step**.

They need to show that because of their disability they:

- Cannot put one foot in front of the other.
- Walking involves always having one foot on the ground.
- If their **only way of getting about is to swing through two crutches then they will be considered unable to walk**.

**B The applicant has very considerable difficulty walking**

The applicant will need to show that, as a result of their permanent and substantial disability, they are unable to walk very far without experiencing severe difficulty. Several factors may be relevant to determining this:

**Excessive pain** reported by the applicant when walking, or as a consequence of the effort of walking.

- Pain is subjective, and some people have higher pain thresholds than others. Consideration may need to be given to cross-referencing an applicant's reported experience of pain with information they provide about their permanent and substantial disability, details of medication they take, coping strategies they have adopted and any courses of treatment designed to help them manage their pain.

**Any breathlessness** reported by the applicant when walking, or as a consequence of the effort of walking.

- The applicant's reported breathlessness may need to be cross-referenced with details of diagnosed medical conditions known to cause breathlessness (e.g. emphysema) and any observations of the applicant's respiratory rate during a mobility assessment.

It does not matter whether excessive pain or breathlessness occurs at the time of walking, or later - what counts is that it is a direct result of their attempt to walk.

Breathlessness can be measured using a range of tools, such as the Medical Research Council's Dyspnoea Scale:

Are you troubled by shortness of breath when hurrying on level ground or walking up a slight hill? Yes/No	If NO	MRC Grade 1
If yes do you get short of breath walking with other people of your own age on level ground? Yes/No	If NO	MRC Grade 2
If YES do you have to stop for breath when walking at your own pace on level ground? Yes/No	If NO	MRC Grade 3
If yes do you get too breathless to leave your home, or do you get breathless after dressing? Yes /No	If NO	MRC Grade 4
	If YES	MRC Grade 5

The applicant's reported breathlessness should also be checked against visual signs of shortness of breath, and any difficulty maintaining conversation while walking or recovering from the effort of walking.

An applicant rated at MRC Grade 3 or above may be considered eligible for a Blue Badge if an assessor's observations support the applicant's self-reported degree of breathlessness. An applicant rated at MRC Grade 1 or 2 may still qualify for a Blue Badge under the other aspects of the walking criterion.

The **distance** an applicant is able to walk without excessive pain or breathlessness; taking due consideration of the environment the individual usually walks.

unable to walk 30 metres (33 yards) in total	they can be deemed as having very considerable difficulty in walking. Eligible
if they can walk 30-80 metres (33-87.5 yards)	no pain or breathlessness combination of other factors extremely slow pace and/or manner of walking <i>may</i> be deemed eligible
can walk more than 80 metres (87.5 yards)	do not demonstrate very considerable difficulty in walking through any other factors Not eligible

The **speed** at which they are able to walk.

**a guide the average person can walk the following in 1 minute:**

>90 metres	Brisk pace
61-90 metres	Normal pace
40-60 metres	Slow pace
<40 metres	Very slow pace

- If an applicant cannot walk 40 metres (44 yards) in a minute (a pace of less than 0.67 metres/second), including any stops to rest, then this is an extremely slow pace which is likely to make walking very difficult when considered in isolation.
- If an applicant can walk 40 metres (44 yards) in less than a minute (a pace of 0.67 metres/second or more), including any stops to rest, then the speed at which they walk is not likely to make walking very difficult when considered in isolation. The applicant *may* still be considered eligible if they demonstrate very considerable difficulty in walking through any other factors.

The **length of time** that an applicant is able to walk for.

- For example, if an applicant is only able to walk for less than one minute in total then walking is likely to be very difficult for them.

The **manner** in which the applicant walks.

- The applicant's posture, rhythm, coordination, balance and stride should be considered in terms of the degree of effect they have on their ability to walk.

**An applicant's use of walking aids.**

- The fact that a walking aid is or is not used may be relevant to the eventual decision, but this alone should not determine whether or not a Blue Badge is issued.
- For example, if a person can walk relatively normally with the use of an artificial leg or walking stick, then they should not be considered as eligible to receive a Blue Badge.
- It may be pertinent to consider whether an applicant is using any walking aids in a correct manner when determining whether they have very considerable difficulty in walking.
- It may also be pertinent to consider whether an applicant who is not using any form of walking aid at the time of their application could improve their walking ability, to the extent that they would no longer demonstrate very considerable difficulty in walking, through the correct use of such an aid.

The applicant's **outdoor walking ability**.

- It is important to consider the person's ability to negotiate the types of pavement or road one would normally expect to find in the course of walking outdoors. No pavement or road is absolutely flat therefore a degree of "incline" and "decline" should be considered in the course of a mobility assessment.
- It is not necessary for the assessment to be completed outdoors. However, it is important the assessment enables the healthcare professional conducting the mobility assessment to determine how the applicant would cope with walking outdoors based on their indoor walking ability.

**Whether the effort of walking presents a danger to the applicant's life, or would be likely to lead to a serious deterioration in their health.**

- The applicant needs to show that they should not walk very far because of the danger to their health.
- This element is intended for people with serious chest, lung or heart conditions who may be physically able to walk normally.
- The serious deterioration does not need to be permanent but it should require medical intervention for them to recover.
- They will need to show that any danger to their health is a direct result of the effort required to walk.

People with epilepsy will need to show that any fits were brought about by the effort required to walk.

**For example:** - if a person can walk relatively normally with the use of an artificial leg, then they should not be considered eligible. Alternatively, a person who can only swing through two crutches could be considered eligible as they would be seen as being unable to walk (providing it is due to a permanent disability and not due to legs being in plaster).

**Medical conditions such as:**

A permanent disability is one that is likely to last for the duration of your life. Medical conditions such as asthma, autism, psychological / behavioural problems, Crohn's disease / incontinent conditions and Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (M.E.) are not in themselves a qualification for a badge. People with these conditions may be eligible under this criterion if they are unable to walk or have very considerable difficulty in walking

**The final decision** is for local authorities to make, and they should ensure that an assessment is made by an independent health professional where they have difficulty in determining whether a person is eligible.

**CCC additions**

**Notes for defensible decision making**

**Please ensure that the recording on the assessment form states whether the applicant is eligible or not**

**Then ensure that you justify this decision making below by evidencing FACTS to support the decision. These MUST be harmonious.**

**This may be using observations and cross referencing to other acquired documented evidence.**

**Use only objective factual words do not use subjective text. “I feel “ is inappropriate language. Text such as “based on the presenting evidence from the assessment Mrs blogs meets the eligibility because .....”**

**Outcome of National Blue badges review is imminent**

**ASSESSING ELIGIBILITY – GOOD PRACTICE DECISION TREE**

