

Blue Badges and the new Blue Badge Criteria - FAQs

1. What are the Current Criteria for a Blue Badge?

Currently a person may be eligible for a Blue Badge under certain automatic and non-automatic criteria.

A. Automatic criteria

Provided the applicant meets one of the automatic criteria then they will automatically qualify for a Blue Badge. These are:

- People who are severely sight impaired and either registered as such on the South Gloucestershire Council Visual Impairment Register or who have a Certificate of Visual Impairment evidencing this;
- People who receive the Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance;
- People who receive 8 points or more under the Moving Around Component of the Mobility Element of their Personal Independence Payment award;
- People who receive the War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement; and
- People who receive a specific benefit under the Armed Forces and Reserve Forces (Compensation) Scheme.

If you are 75 or over and renewing your South Gloucestershire Council Blue Badge within 3 months of expiry then your Blue Badge will automatically be renewed provided that you complete and sign the 75+ Renewal Application form. This is a different form to the standard one.

B. With Further Assessment criteria

If you do not qualify automatically for a Blue Badge then you may still be eligible if:

- You have a permanent and substantial disability which means you are unable to walk or have very considerable difficulty walking; or
- You drive a vehicle regularly, have a severe disability in both arms, and have considerable difficulty operating or are unable to operate parking meters; or
- You are applying on behalf of a child who, on account of condition: must always be accompanied by bulky medical equipment (which cannot be carried around with the child without great difficulty); or who must always be kept near a motor vehicle (so that, if necessary, treatment for that condition can be given in the vehicle, or the child can be taken quickly in the vehicle to a place where such treatment can be given).

If someone currently has a physical condition which restricts their walking, for example, then they may already be eligible for a Blue Badge. In this circumstance we would consider factors such as pain and/or breathlessness experienced when walking, pace of walking, distance walked, walking style and poor balance when walking.

2. Will the Current Criteria remain?

Yes, but the wording for the 'With Further Assessment' walking difficulties criteria is changing slightly; please see question 4 for more detail.

3. What has changed?

From the 30th August applicants with Non-Visible (Hidden) disabilities, are able to apply for a Blue Badge where they meet the new criteria.

A Non-Visible (Hidden) Disability might include, but is not limited to:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD/Autism);
- ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder);
- Learning Disabilities;
- Dementia;
- Anxiety;
- Bipolar Disorder; or
- Schizophrenia.

There is a new 'automatic' criteria for applicants who meet a specific descriptor under their Personal Independence Payment award.

Where an applicant with a Non-Visible (Hidden) disability does not automatically qualify for a blue badge as they do not meet any of the automatic criteria, then they may still be eligible under the new 'With Further Assessment' criteria, following assessment of their conditions and the impact those conditions have on them.

4. What is the new criteria?

A. Automatic award for Personal Independence Payment

Applicants who are receiving Personal Independence Payment and have scored points under the 'Planning and following a journey' Component of that award **may** now be eligible for a Blue Badge.

They will only be eligible where they have received 10 points under the specific descriptor, 'Cannot undertake any journey because it would cause overwhelming psychological distress to the claimant'.

Applicants who have obtained 10 points or more under any other descriptor will not be eligible under this automatic criterion. The points must have been awarded due to the distress experienced by the applicant. For example, where an applicant had been awarded 10 points for 'Cannot follow the route of an unfamiliar journey without another person, assistance dog or orientation aid' they would not be automatically eligible under this criterion.

B. With Further Assessment Criteria

Where an applicant does not meet the automatic criteria for a Blue Badge, they may still apply under the 'With Further Assessment' criteria.

From 30th August 2019 the eligibility criteria wording has changed. Under the new criteria, a person must have an **enduring** and substantial disability which causes them, during the course of a journey, to either:

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

The wording has changed to allow for the fact that applicants with Non-Visible (Hidden) disabilities may need to park closer to facilities due to factors such as the considerable psychological distress they experience when walking, or the serious risk of harm that is posed to them when they are walking.

(To note - where a person is applying on behalf of a young child, it will be considered whether other children of the same age who do not have that condition would present the same risk to themselves when taking a journey; for example due to a tendency not to follow instructions or to run out into the road.)

5. Is there anything I need to be aware of when completing my application form?

There will be a new application form (available from South Gloucestershire Council One Stop Shops from 30th August 2019). When filling in the application form, it is essential that you provide as much information and evidence as possible. Please complete all questions in the section you are applying under.

If you are applying under the new 'With Further Assessment' Non-Visible (Hidden) criteria, you will be asked to describe any disability/condition which affects the applicant when undertaking a journey. You will also be asked to provide detail around:

- Any treatments or medication received to help manage the condition;
- Details of health or social care practitioners involved in the diagnosis and ongoing treatment of the condition(s). **(Note that South Gloucestershire Council is unable to contact specialists on your behalf but collates information regarding specialists in order to gain an overview of your condition and how it affects you);**
- What affects the applicant when taking a journey, for example:
 - o Whether they are at risk near vehicles, in traffic or car parks;
 - o Whether they find it difficult to control their actions when taking a journey;
 - o Whether they become extremely anxious or fearful when in public/open spaces;
 - o Whether they have intense responses to overwhelming situations, experiencing for example temporary paralysis or what is often referred to by applicants as a 'meltdown'.
- You are asked to describe what steps or coping strategies are undertaken to try to improve journeys.

6. Why are coping strategies relevant when applying for a Blue Badge under the new criteria?

Under the new Guidance Local Authorities are encouraged to consider what coping strategies are in place for the Applicant and how these are working.

This is similar to the current requirement for information around Mobility Aids where someone has difficulty walking.

If an Applicant has a coping strategy in place which means that they no longer experience considerable difficulty while walking then they may, depending on the exact circumstances, not be eligible for a Blue Badge.

7. Who would we accept supporting evidence from and what type of evidence is needed?

In addition to proof of identity and a photograph, we also require relevant supporting evidence.

The evidence would need to confirm and discuss the applicant's diagnosis and discuss the way in which this impacts on them.

Doctors' letters are not generally appropriate as the evidence should ideally come from a medical professional who is a specialist in the relevant area and has knowledge of how the condition impacts the applicant.

For example, when applying under Non-Visible (hidden) disabilities, it may be appropriate to provide evidence such as a report from one of the following specialists:

- Clinical Psychologist;
- Neurologist; or
- Psychiatrist.

Note that some medical professionals may charge to provide evidence and we are unable to reimburse costs. Where possible you may wish to supply existing reports that you have already been provided with.

8. When will the new application form be ready?

There will be one new application form for Individuals which will cover all of the Blue Badge criteria but will have separate sections for completion where applications are being made under Non-Visible (Hidden) Disabilities criteria.

The new application form will be available in paper format and online from 30th August 2019.

Where an applicant already has a blue badge and is 75 or over and renewing their South Gloucestershire Council blue badge within 3 months of its expiry, there is a separate, simpler form for completion.

There is also a separate application form available for customers who are suffering from a terminal illness and have been issued a form DS1500 by their medical professional.

9. When will South Gloucestershire Council begin to accept and process applications?

We will begin to accept and review applications under the new Non-Visible (Hidden) Disabilities criteria from 30th August 2019, when the new rules come into force.

21st August 2019

Please bear in mind however that we expect a significant increase of applications as a result of the new criteria (up to a 50% increase) and so applications will take longer to review than currently. Please be patient.

10. How to apply

You can pick up a paper copy of our application form from any of our One Stop Shops (Kingswood One Stop Shop, Civic Centre, High Street, Kingswood; Yate One Stop Shop, next to Leisure Centre, Yate; Patchway One Stop Shop, Patchway Hub, Rodway Road, Patchway).

Alternatively you can request a paper application form be sent to you by calling 01454 868004 or emailing contravel@southglos.gov.uk

You can also download a copy of our application form from our website at <https://www.southglos.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/parking/parking-permits-blue-badge/applying-for-a-blue-badge/>; or you can apply online via <https://www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge>

Please be aware that there are certain online scams where third party companies will charge you to apply for a Blue Badge. South Gloucestershire Council does not currently charge for Blue Badges and if you are asked for payment then you should not continue with the application.