

What is a blue badge?



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A Blue Badge (you may call it a disabled badge or something similar) can be issued as part of a nationwide parking scheme. It is designed for people with disabilities that affect their mobility or causes problems that mean they must be near a car (e.g. to get to hospital). There are some instances in which blood cancer patients will automatically qualify for a Blue Badge but having blood cancer does not make you eligible by itself. A Blue Badge is given based on how a disability affects you, rather than because you are disabled; see "Who is eligible?" below.

If you are eligible and decide to apply, your local council will send you a badge to display in the car you are travelling in. One half will show the standard symbol for a disabled person, a serial number, an expiry date and the name of the council which gave you the badge. The serial number is how traffic/parking wardens will know the badge is legitimate, so make sure this is always clearly visible.

The second half of the badge is a clock. You must use this to indicate your arrival time, especially if there is restrictions on the length of time you can park somewhere.

It is a criminal offence to misuse

your own or someone else's blue badge, attracting a fine of up to £1000 and confiscation of the badge. Never borrow someone else's badge and familiarise yourself properly with the rules before using your own Blue Badge.

Who is eligible?

You are automatically eligible if:

- You are registered blind
- You get the higher rate of Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- You scored 8 points or more in the "moving around" section of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application
- You get War Pensioners Mobility Supplement
- received a lump sum payment as part of the Armed Forces Compensation scheme (tariffs 1 to 8), and have been certified as having a permanent and substantial disability

However, you can still apply if you are not in one of the categories above if:

- you have permanent mobility issues, or mobility problems that your doctor expects to last a year or more
- you can't use your arms
- you are applying for a child

over 2 with reduced mobility, or a child under 3 who needs to be near a car for medical reasons

If you want to apply without automatically being eligible, you will need to describe why you think you are eligible, provide medical evidence or possibly attend an assessment with an independent health professional. It is worth getting advice if you are applying in these circumstances.

How long do blue badges last?

They are normally issued for 3 years and you will be reminded to reapply. You will need to give evidence as to why you still need a badge at this point.

If your award of DLA or PIP is for less than 3 years, you will only be given a badge for the length of time you have been given the benefit for. You will then need to reapply for the benefit and for the badge.

How to apply?

You need to apply direct to the local council where you live. You can still use the badge nationwide.

Most councils will have an online form, plus a phone number and an address if you have any issues with the online system. You can only apply directly to the council, even with the help of agencies

like Citizens Advice, so be wary of scams that claim otherwise.

Councils can charge you up to a maximum of £10, which you pay when you apply. You will get a refund if you are not eligible. They can also charge this fee for replacements or when you reapply.

Do I have to be the driver to use the badge?

No, you can use the badge if you are travelling in the car as a passenger. However, it is important that the person who is driving does not use the badge on their own; for example, they cannot use the badge if they are going to the shops on your behalf, you must be in the car and going to the shops too. They may also use it if they are picking you up or dropping you off somewhere but only at the place you are being collected or dropped off.

Never allow someone to use the badge without you present, change the details or copy the badge, as you will lose the badge and may be liable for a fine.

Where can I park?

Unfortunately, there are no universal rules as to where you can park or for how long. However, there are some general principles you can follow:

1. Yellow lines: blue badge holders can park on single or double yellow lines for up to 3 hours, unless there are signs that say "no loading" or there are also yellow marks on the kerb (this signals no loading). Some local authorities allow blue badge parking even in the presence of "no loading" signs but do not assume, always check.

2. On street parking bays with parking meters/pay and display on street: blue badge holders can park for free. You can also park for as long as you like unless signs specifically say that disabled parking is time-limited.

NOTE: this is not the same as residents only/permit holders only parking, you do not have an automatic right to park here. If there is no pay and display meter, you will need to check signs or with the local authority who deals with the permits to see if they allow Blue Badge holders access to these spaces.

3. On-street disabled parking bays: these are for blue badge holders only. You can park for as long as you like unless a sign says

the space is time limited.

NOTE:

On-street and yellow lines rules are different in the London boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea, City of Westminster, Camden and the City of London, and they have their own alternative schemes for disabled people who live or work there. There are also "Red Routes" in London, which you can identify by red instead of yellow lines at the kerbside; each has different rules about Blue Badge parking.

Off street parking is much more variable in concessions for blue badge holders. Most privately-owned car parks (hospitals, supermarkets, town centre) will have spaces for Blue Badge holders only. However, some will still charge for using these bays and so you will need to check signs when you arrive. You may be fined if you assume you can park for free.

An important thing to remember is that a blue badge does not mean you can park outside of highway code rules. You must still park legally and safely, even where others are not allowed. For example, do not park:

- On pedestrian crossings or on
- the zig zag lines either side.

- Near schools or other places where parking is banned with zig zag lines
- On private roads unless you have the owners permission
- Bus/taxi/cycle lanes or bus stops (unless they have hours where anyone can use them)
- Clearways (roads where no stopping at all is allowed)
- Where there are double white lines in the centre of the road, even if only on one side. This is because others must be able to safely overtake you.
- Where you would break general highway code rules, e.g. near or opposite a junction, narrow roads, too close to others parked opposite, on a pavement or across dropped kerbs.
- Where your parking would prevent emergency vehicle access

Can I park for free?

If on the street or on yellow lines (within the rules above), then yes. Otherwise, always check first.

Are there any other benefits to a blue badge?

In London, you are exempt from the congestion charge as a Blue Badge holder, subject to

registering the car you will use with Transport for London before you enter the congestion charge zone. There is a £10 fee for this, and you can add up to 2 cars.

You may also be exempt from tolls on roads or bridges, check before travelling.

If you have trouble parking at home (for example, you live in an area where parking is not restricted for anyone), you may be able to apply for a disabled parking bay outside your home. The bay will not belong to you; spaces can only be designated for all blue badge holders, not just for yourself. These bays can either be mandatory (i.e. only blue badge holders can use them) or advisory spaces, meaning others can use them legally but it raises awareness of the fact that you need the space. They will also only be painted where it is safe and legal for you to park. Contact your local council for full details.

You can also use your badge in other European Union countries; the benefits each country, town or city offers can vary, so always check before you travel. This benefit may not apply after the Brexit, when the UK is due to leave the European Union. There are no arrangements for benefits of a badge in other countries, but they may exist on a local level; always

check with local authorities before parking.

What if my application has been refused?

There is no official appeal system, as there is for welfare benefits. Each council will have a blue badge department, who you can write to or call if you feel there is a reason for a review of their decision. They may review it if:

- You can show your mobility problems have become more serious
- You feel all the relevant facts were not considered at the time of application

You should be prepared to provide additional evidence in support of the review, and it may be helpful to seek advice from a third party.

Are there alternatives to the blue badge scheme?

If you are not eligible for a blue badge, disabled people are eligible for other help in using the transport system.

1. Road Tax concession:

If you own a car, that is used only by yourself or driven by someone else just for you to get around, and you are in receipt of DLA, PIP or other related benefits, you may be exempt or get a 50% reduction from vehicle excise duty. This is

also known as road tax. You need to apply directly to the DVLA for this.

2. Disabled persons bus pass:

In England, Scotland and Wales, you apply for these from your local council. It entitles you to free, off-peak (after 9am) travel on buses throughout the country.

In Northern Ireland, there are different passes depending on your disability and whether you get welfare benefits. You apply to Translink, the Northern Irish public transport company, and the discount on tickets varies.

3. Disabled persons railcard

This entitles you and one person accompanying you to a third off rail fares in England, Scotland and Wales (you need to apply for the Translink cards described above in Northern Ireland). You are eligible if you receive disability benefits (such as attendance allowance, personal independence payment etc.) or if you have epilepsy, a visual impairment or hearing impairment.

Further help:

- <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/sick-or-disabled-people-and-carers/help-for-disabled-travellers1/> - **Citizens Advice** can provide advice on individual circumstances

in addition to their online information

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-blue-badge-scheme-rights-and-responsibilities-in-england/the-blue-badge-scheme-rights-and-responsibilities-in-england> - this document outlines what you can use the Blue Badge for, as well as what you can't do with it and the fines for misuse
- <https://www.gov.uk/get-blue-badge> - enter your postcode to be sent straight to your council blue badge page
- <https://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/> - apply here or find out more about who is eligible for a railcard
- <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-disabled-bus-pass> - enter your postcode to be sent straight to your council bus pass page
- <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/bus-and-coach-travel/free-bus-travel-and-concessions> - use this for information on public transport help in Northern Ireland

If you have any further questions about the Blue Badge system, you can contact our Patient Advocacy team. They are available Monday to Friday from 9:00am – 5:00pm. If you would like to speak to them, you can:

- Call our helpline free of charge on 08088 010 444
- Send them an email at advocacy@leukaemiacare.org.uk

Please note that our Patient Advocacy team are unable to provide:

- Detailed medical advice or recommendations
- Legal advice
- Advocacy for a course of action which is contrary to the aims and objectives of Leukaemia Care.