

PE1576/A

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Transport Policy**

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Ned Sharratt
Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Date: 11 Dec 15

Dear Ned,

I note the Public Petitions Committee's welcome interest into the issue of extending the eligibility of the Blue Badge Scheme to include children with Autism and Downs Syndrome (PE1576) and I write to update you with information on the deliberations and outcome of the Working Group that was set up to consider an extension to the eligibility criteria.

The Working Group which was set up by Transport Scotland is made up from representatives of disability organisations, local authorities and healthcare professionals. It has been considering the information gathered through a Call for Evidence on extending the eligibility criteria for the blue badge scheme to include 'people, who as a result of a diagnosed mental disorder, have little or no awareness of danger from traffic'.

The analysis of the responses to the Call for Evidence suggested there was an appetite for the scheme to be extended. However there was broad consensus that there were significant challenges in defining who would be eligible, setting an appropriate threshold and the practical implementation of the extension.

The Working Group therefore had the considerable task of identifying how an extension could work in practice and has considered a range of proposals. After much deliberation, the Working Group felt that it was unable to put forward a recommendation that would result in a permanent change to the scheme as it needed to get the balance right between allowing people in the most need to get a badge without overwhelming the scheme.

However, the group was able to suggest that a pilot scheme would allow the impact of change to be monitored and ascertain how to effect the change on a permanent basis. The intention is to lay an SSI in this Parliamentary Session which will allow a

pilot to commence across all 32 local authority areas in Scotland in April 2016 to incorporate those with cognitive impairments into the Blue Badge Scheme.

The group has decided on two routes to a badge. The first will see a badge issued automatically if the applicant meets specific criteria and the second will mean that local authorities will assess the evidence provided, firstly via a desk based assessment and then potentially via a face to face assessment, if required.

Ahead of the implementation of the extension, Transport Scotland officials will liaise with local authority administration staff, Independent Mobility Assessors and disability organisations in drawing up supporting guidance and materials to assist with the rollout of the pilot.

Analytical colleagues within Transport Scotland will co-ordinate the evaluation of the pilot. The findings will help us take future considerations on how we can effect a permanent change to the scheme.

I hope that the Committee finds this information useful and Transport Scotland will be happy to provide subsequent future updates on the above matters, as the Committee deems necessary.

Yours sincerely

Graham Thomson
Road Safety and Blue Badge Policy Team Leader
Transport Scotland