
Report To:	Inverclyde Community Health & Care Partnership Sub Committee	Date:	12 January 2012
Report By:	Corporate Director Inverclyde Community Health & Care Partnership	Report No:	CHCP/07/2012/BM
Contact Officer:	Head of Health & Community Care	Contact No:	01475 715365
Subject:	Scottish Government Blue Badge Reform		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Inverclyde CHCP Sub Committee of the forthcoming reform of the Blue Badge Scheme scheduled to begin on 1st January 2012. This follows a consultation period involving all Local Authorities concerning the eligibility criteria for badges, design matters and issues of security. At the time of the consultation it was understood that all Local Authorities would adhere to the new policies. These reforms will now ensure that there is consistency across England, Scotland and Wales.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The aims of the reform are to ensure that the Blue Badge Scheme is responsive and effective for those who require the use of a badge for the necessity of mobility independence and to improve their quality of life. The reforms strive for greater consistency and encourage best practice in the administration of the scheme with the introduction of a national database along with a central printing and distribution agency. The Blue Badge Improvement Service (BBIS) will give local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales an opportunity to work together and share services. The Department for Transport, on behalf of the local authorities has carried out procurement for a supplier to develop and deliver BBIS. Northgate Information Solutions, in partnership with Payne Security has been chosen.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Sub-Committee are asked to note the pending changes to the Blue Badge scheme and details to the ongoing planning for implementation.

Robert Murphy
Corporate Director Inverclyde Community Health & Care Partnership

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Since the scheme was established in 1971 the number of badges on issue has increased significantly. Several factors have contributed to this - increasing numbers of older people, more people (adults and children) living longer with significant disabilities, rising vehicle use as well as changing perceptions of disability, mobility and independent living.
- 4.2 It was felt that some of the current practice relating to the delivery of the schemes had built up over time and there was a lack of consistency. This led to the decision to carry out a consultation exercise in summer/autumn 2010 in which Social Work Services and Inverclyde Council on Disability were involved.
- 4.3 The reform consists of a number of projects which when implemented together should help to improve operational efficiency and improve customer service throughout United Kingdom.
- 4.4 Currently the badges are administered at the Centre for Independent Living. Application forms are available on the Inverclyde web site and from local offices. The majority of applicants visit the Centre for Independent Living and can be assisted to complete the application. Where applicants are in the automatic categories their documentation is checked and the badge processed. Where the application is under the discretionary category they are screened by the Team Leader – Physical Disability who decides if further information is required or if an assessment is needed. The decision to issue or refuse a badge lies with the issuing Authority and applicants are given the reason for refusal in writing.
- 4.5 There are presently 5312 badges on issue and approximately 1700 new applications are received annually. The material cost of each badge including the time clock, information leaflet, postage etc is £1.28. This does not include administration time or the time screening the applications.
- 4.6 The new system will be operational from 1st January 2012. Applications for renewals can be processed from November 2011. All badges from January will be the new style whether a first application or renewal.
- 4.7 The new badges will cost £4.60 per badge. A facility is available to fast track badges at an additional cost of £2.45. Given the current number of badges being issued the projected annual cost will be £7820 which will be met from existing budgets.
- 4.8 The current charge of £2.00 per badge for 3 years will not change although legislation permits for a charge up to the maximum of £20.00
- 4.9 An on line application form will be available as at present, although it will then be passed to the local authority for verification of the documents, screening and assessment for eligibility. The photograph will require to be scanned and sent with the application. Any monies received by Northgate from the on-line applications will be held in a Merchant Account for the local Authority. Invoices will be sent four weekly for the badges produced for Inverclyde CHCP.
- 4.10 Although there will be the facility for on-line applications it is anticipated that the majority of applicants will continue to visit the Centre for Independent Living for assistance with this process as at present.
- 4.11 The Blue Badge Improvement Service will provide:
- Secure printing, personalisation and distribution of the new badge.
 - Central database of all blue badges on issue.
 - An on-line application form.
 - Managed service administration and support.
 - A secure web-based service.
- 4.12 The central database and single secure print service will deliver the following benefits:
- Fraud prevention to ensure that multiple applications are not made and technologies which will be incorporated in the new badge.

- A single supplier means more security in supply, storage and distribution of the badges.
- Easy enforcement checks by any officers in the UK on any badge issued.

4.13 To progress these changes the following action has been or will be progressed:

- A short life working group was formed involving representatives from the appropriate agencies and council sections. Information Technology has been involved and prepared for the changes.
Northgate will provide a data set and will make a sample badge available for training staff.
- Information will be given to the local press and will be in the national media. Templates are being given to standardise the information being given.
- Information will be given to relevant Voluntary Organisations.
- Briefings will be required for all staff who are involved in the assessment process or the administration of the scheme.
- An appeals process in line with the Code of Practice for all local Authorities will be drawn up.
- Any financial implications of the changes to the Blue Badge Scheme will be monitored on an ongoing basis by Inverclyde CHCP.

5.0 PROPOSALS

5.1 Sub committee members are asked to note the pending changes to the Blue Badge scheme and the ongoing work to prepare for implementation.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Legal: National Government Directive

6.2 Finance: Additional cost of £4420 will be met within existing Budget.

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments

6.3 Personnel: None

6.4 Equalities: None

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 Inverclyde CHCP representation on National Implementation Group

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 The Scottish Government's Reform of the Blue Badge Scheme - March 2011
Blue Badge Improvement Scheme - Dept of Transport - May 2011
The Blue Badge Scheme in Scotland - Guidance for Blue Badge Holders - April 2011