



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

6 APRIL 2010

FINAL REPORT OF THE SOCIAL CARE AND ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL: BLUE BADGE PARKING SCHEME

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To present the findings of the Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel's review of the Blue Badge Parking Scheme.

AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

2. The overall aim of the Scrutiny investigation was to consider breaches relating to the Blue Badge Scheme as well as to assess the current assessment process for applicants who apply for a blue badge under the discretionary criteria.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

3. The panel concentrated their investigation around the following questions:
 - (a) What is the current process for assessing blue badge applicants who do not meet the automatic qualifying criteria?
 - (b) Is the enforcement action taken in response to any misuse of blue badges identified appropriate?
 - (c) Can any lessons be learned in respect of enforcement from the local authorities awarded blue badge 'Centre of Excellence' status by the Department of Transport?

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

4. Members of the Panel met formally on 10 December 2009, 14 January, 3 February and 25 February 2010 to discuss/receive evidence relating to this investigation and a detailed record of the topics discussed at the meetings is available from the Committee Management System (COMMIS), accessible via the Council's website.
5. Members met with the Executive Director of Social Care and the Parking Solutions Manager who provided the Panel with an overview of the way in which the scheme operates and the type of enforcement action currently undertaken in Middlesbrough

when misuse of a blue badge is identified. Information from three of the eight local authorities awarded Blue Badge 'Centre of Excellence' status was also received. In addition, the Assistant Director of Primary and Community Care at the PCT attended a meeting of the Panel to discuss the blue badge assessment process for applicants applying under the discretionary criteria.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL

6. The membership of the Panel was as detailed below:

Councillor P Purvis (Chair), Councillor F McIntyre (Vice Chair), Councillors S Biswas, E Dryden, A Majid, J Walker, M Whatley and E Briggs (co-opted member).

REVIEW REQUEST

7. The Panel heard that initially the issue of the misuse of blue badges was raised via a 'One Stop' enquiry submitted by a Councillor. The Councillor had reason to believe that a blue badge was being repeatedly misused and had recorded the details of the badge and dates / times when the misuse had taken place. The Parking Solutions Team had been informed of the case and had advised that no action could be taken unless a Parking Enforcement Officer had witnessed the misuse as it occurred. Social Care had therefore sent a letter to the holder of the blue badge with a warning about the seriousness and possible consequences of misusing their blue badge.
8. In addition to the issue having been raised by a Councillor the Local Involvement Network (LINK)¹ had produced a blue badge report, in October 2009, which highlighted a number of issues in respect of the blue badge scheme in Middlesbrough.
9. The Panel was informed that the Department for Transport had also issued a Blue Badge Reform Programme in July 2009, which indicated that local authorities are to be given new or amended powers to reduce misuse of blue badges and prevent their abuse. Although the new powers will not be in place until 2011/12 the Council needs to consider whether any steps should be taken to prepare for the implementation of these new / amended powers.
10. The Executive Director advised that the culmination of the above factors had led her to question whether there were any other solutions in terms of enforcement and how other local authorities were addressing the issue of the misuse of blue badges in their area. On 20 October 2009 the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB) agreed that this issue was worthy of consideration and the matter was referred to the Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel.
11. During the course of the first evidence gathering session another element was highlighted as being worthy of consideration. This involved the way in which GP medical assessments are currently undertaken for applicants who apply for a blue badge under the discretionary criteria. It was therefore agreed that this element

¹ LINKs were set up under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and replaced Public Patients Involvement Forums from 1ST April 2008. LINKs aim to give citizens a stronger voice in how their health and social care services are delivered.

would also be considered alongside the issue of enforcement, as part of the Panel's review into the Blue Badge Parking Scheme in Middlesbrough.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

12. The Blue Badge Scheme currently enables severely disabled people to park without charge or time limit in the on-street parking environment, and for up to three hours on yellow lines, unless a loading bay or a restriction is in place. The scheme is designed to help severely disabled people to travel independently, as either a driver or passenger, by allowing them to park close to their destination.
13. Recognising the significant changes that have taken place since the Scheme was introduced in the early 1970s, the Government decided in February 2007 to undertake a review of the Scheme.
14. The resulting 'Comprehensive Blue Badge Reform Strategy' was published in October 2008, and includes a number of commitments to reform and improve the Scheme in order to help enhance the quality of life of disabled people.
15. The main commitments outlined in the strategy are to:

- extend the Scheme to:
 - people with certain temporary mobility problems (lasting at least one year);
 - individuals with severe mental impairments;
 - seriously disabled service personnel/veterans; and
 - more children, under three, with specific medical conditions
- make the assessment process fairer and more consistent across England, by providing local authorities with up to £15 million per year, to conduct improved medical assessments;
- create local authority 'Centres of Excellence' to share good practice and improve the management of the scheme;
- enable local authorities to charge a Badge application fee (which has remained unchanged at £2 since 1983) that more appropriately covers the costs;
- reduce Blue Badge abuse by:
 - providing local authorities with up to £10 million, over the next three years, so that they can establish a system of data sharing to reduce fraudulent misuse of badges;
 - examining the scope for on-the-spot seizure of Badges being used unlawfully by non-Badge holders;
 - improve Badge security features
 - raising awareness of the negative consequences that misuse of the Scheme can have for severely disabled people
- support the British Retail Consortium to do more to tackle disabled parking abuse in their members' off-street car parks.

16. The Government is committed to delivering the commitments included within the reform strategy within five years and a copy of when these changes are expected to happen is detailed at Appendix 1.

Eligibility Criteria

17. The Panel heard that there were two ways in which an individual may qualify for a blue badge.

18. **Automatic criteria**

A person is automatically eligible to receive a badge if they are over two years old and meet at least one of the following criteria:

The individual –

a receives the Higher Rate of the Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance;

b is registered blind; or

c receives a War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement.

19. **Discretionary criteria**

Applicants who do not meet the automatic eligibility criteria may be considered under the discretionary criteria if they are more than two years old and either:

a have a permanent and substantial disability which means they cannot walk, or which makes walking very difficult.

b drive a motor vehicle regularly, have a severe disability in both arms, and are unable to operate all or some types of parking meter (or would find it very difficult to operate them).

20. In terms of the current arrangements for issuing blue badges under the discretionary criteria the Panel heard that in Middlesbrough the applicant's GP is written to as part of the assessment process and asked for a medical opinion. The GP charges a fee for providing this service and that fee is paid for by the Council prior to it reimbursed by Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust (PCT).

21. The Panel heard that in other areas of the UK, however, an independent Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist, employed specifically to undertake such assessments, is used to help determine an individuals' eligibility.

22. The Panel noted that the Department of Transport highlighted in its comprehensive Blue Badge (Disabled Parking) Reform Strategy that the provision of an independent health assessor to assess an individual's eligibility (rather than an applicant's personal GP) offers two primary benefits. Namely, a much fairer and consistent allocation of badges, as well as a reduction in cost. The panel noted that according to national research the average cost of a medical assessment is £29 when using the applicant's GP and £20 when using an independent health assessor.²

23. The Department of Transport's Blue Badge Reform Strategy indicates that the Government's intention over the next few years is to provide local authorities with

² Department for Transport – Comprehensive Blue Badge (Disabled Parking) Reform Strategy (England) and Annex: Impact Assessment, October 2008

up to £15 million per year to conduct improved independent medical assessments. The funding to pay for these independent assessments is set to involve the transfer of existing National Health Service budgets, which are currently being used to determine an individual's eligibility for the blue badge scheme.

24. The Panel was therefore keen to hear the Primary Care Trust's view on how medical assessments are at present commissioned in Middlesbrough and whether the current model is providing the most consistent and cost effective option.
25. The Primary Care Trust (PCT) was asked to provide the average cost of medical assessments in Middlesbrough when using the applicant's GP and what the annual expenditure on these assessments has been in recent years. The Assistant Director of Primary and Community Care at the PCT was invited to attend a meeting of the Panel to provide this information.
26. The Panel was advised that due to the way in which collaborate fee information was collected prior to 2008 the information requested was only available for the last two years, as follows: -

	2008/09	2009/10
Average cost of Medical assessments	£22.24	£24.66
Annual Expenditure	£31, 308	£42,000

27. The Panel was informed that GP's were able to charge whatever fee they felt appropriate and individual GP practices charged different fees for completing medical assessments. It was noted, however, that GP's were prevented from discussing the fees they charged with other GP colleagues. The Panel was advised that the PCT had recently received a letter from a GP practice advising that the cost of medical assessments would be increased in 2010/11 to £35.00 per assessment. The Panel heard that in Middlesbrough GP fees for medical assessments ranged from £23 to £47 per assessment.
28. The PCT was asked for its view on the possibility of funding the appointment of an independent health assessor, for example an Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist to undertake assessments for blue badge applicants, as opposed to reimbursing the costs associated with seeking GP medical opinions. The PCT advised that in respect of this aspect the PCT is keen to commission / implement an assessment service, which is efficient, effective and represents the best value for money.
29. It was emphasised by the Department of Social Care that everyone who applied for a badge did so because they believed they have a genuine need and entitlement. It was highlighted to the Panel that there were in fact exceptionally few cases where a GP did not support their patient's blue badge application. In 2007/8 there were less than 10 such cases, although the annual cost of seeking GP opinions that year was approximately £15,000- £20,000.
30. The Assistant Director of Primary and Community Care at Middlesbrough PCT advised that she had been surprised to learn that so few applications had not been supported when approximately 1,408 medical assessments had been undertaken. It was confirmed that the PCT was fully in support of undertaking a joint piece of work

with the Council to look at this issue and to explore the possibility of alternative assessment models. The PCT expressed the view that it would be important, as part of this work, to understand the reasons as to why less than 1 per cent of blue badge applications had not been supported by the applicant's GP. Had the 1,398 applications approved in 2007/08 been approved correctly or was it a case of GP's viewing the process as a tick box exercise.

31. The PCT queried if the Council was aware as to whether the percentage of applications not supported by GP's in Middlesbrough was similar to that experienced by other local authorities.
32. The panel heard that at a national level a piece of work had been undertaken by the Department of Health's Care Services Efficiency Delivery (CSED) programme to examine the blue badge assessment process. CSED had concluded that GPs rarely altered the final decision on an application, questioning the need for their involvement. It reported that there were also indications that the GP-patient relationship can be comprised and that the GP is not always best placed to assess an individual's eligibility.³ It advised that the removal of GPs from the process eliminates part of the process costs, improves the relationship with health partners and that the use of on site Occupational Therapists allows for a speedier and more effective decision.
33. Under the current assessment process the Panel was informed that in the vast majority of cases the applicant's GP is contacted for a medical opinion and no physical assessment by the GP of the person's ability to walk is undertaken. The Department of Social Care suggested that if OT assessments were adopted in place of seeking GP medical opinions then these could be undertaken at the Independent Living Centre, where potentially other aids could be identified that would help people to be more mobile. All parties agreed that there was benefit in a joint piece of work being undertaken and that the priority was to ensure that people who met the eligibility criteria received a blue badge.
34. In response to concerns regarding the lack of knowledge an independent assessor may have about an applicant, the Panel was reassured that in such cases, the assessor would seek the view of the applicant's GP.
35. The Panel heard that the actual administration of the blue badge scheme currently resides with Mouchel. However, consideration did need to be given to amending the current processes and procedures in order to reduce the delays experienced by blue badge applicants applying under the discretionary criteria, as well as the financial costs incurred.

Enforcement of the blue badge parking scheme – Nationally recognised best practice

36. With regard to best practice in terms of enforcement the Panel heard that in October 2008 the Department of Transport awarded Blue Badge Centre of Excellence (COE) status to eight local authorities. The aim of creating a number of COE's was for those awarded the status to act as beacons of good practice and promote

³ Care Services Efficiency Delivery Programme – Blue Badge Initiative – June 2006, <http://www.rcoe.gov.uk/rce/aio/20055>

improved blue badge administration, assessment and enforcement to other local authorities.

37. The Panel was particularly interested in the issue of enforcement and contact was made with Birmingham City Council (awarded COE status jointly with Coventry), Manchester City Council and Rotherham Borough Council to gain an overview of their current practices and procedures in respect of enforcement activity.
38. The three local authorities contacted provided the Panel with a comprehensive overview of the way in which enforcement activity was undertaken within their local authority. Highlighted below are some of the key measures adopted by the identified 'Centres of Excellence' in order to reduce the misuse / fraudulent use of blue badges in their area.

Manchester City Council

- 3 Civil Enforcement Officers are employed to detect the misuse of blue badges
- A hotline number and online report form is available for members of the public to report suspected misuse
- The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) is used to capture evidence where misuse is identified / the power to inspect is also used
- The Civil Enforcement Officers are fully trained in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) and people are interviewed under PACE conditions
- 234 successful prosecutions to date – fines ranging from £100 to £1000
- 100% successful prosecution rate achieved
- Positive media coverage in the Manchester Evening News
- Blue Badge Enforcement Gallery on Council website – lists the details of those prosecuted for blue badge misuse and the total fine received and costs awarded.

Information supplied by Graham Marsh – Parking Manager
Manchester City Council

Rotherham Borough Council

- 6 plain clothed Civil Enforcement Officers trained in surveillance work on a rota system in identified 'hot spot' areas
- An online and telephone reporting system is available for members of the public to report suspected misuse
- Where misuse is identified the badge holder is contacted at home to verify location
- If the badge holder is at home a Penalty Charge Notice is issued to the vehicle
- The vehicle is removed after the 30 minute observation period and a release fee is then required for vehicle to be returned
- Formal PACE interview is conducted with the perpetrator
- A case file is produced and Legal Services decides whether the perpetrator will be prosecuted
- Following successful prosecution a warning letter is sent to the badge holder
- If three relevant convictions are incurred the blue badge is withdrawn

Information supplied by Martin Beard – Parking Service Manager Rotherham Borough Council

Birmingham City Council

- Respect the Badge campaign launched (see Appendix 2)
- City Council's legal department agreed to take on private prosecutions for blue badge misuse under the Road Traffic Act and Forgery Act
- Prosecution process involves intelligence gathering, observations, penalty charge notices, removal of vehicles, interview and court

Prosecution Criteria - persons who fulfil any of the criteria will go to court: -

- Evidence of persistent misuse i.e. more than one occasion
- Do not admit the offence during interview
- Using a blue badge issued to a deceased person

The following persons may be eligible for a caution letter although the removal fee of (£105) and Penalty Charge Notice would not be cancelled or refunded

- No evidence of previous misuse
- Full admission and remorse shown during interview
- Genuine mistake in the use of the blue badge

- Since April 2009 in excess of 550 misuse offences have been identified
- Summons to attend magistrates court have been issued in 96 cases
- Drivers fined an average of £600 - £700, with costs of £188
- Considerable number of letters in support of the action taken received

Information supplied by Gary Bullock – Principal Enforcement Officer
Birmingham City Council

'Mini blitz' enforcement exercise

39. In addition to hearing examples of best practice from the nationally recognised 'Centres Of Excellence' the Council's Parking Solutions Manager agreed to undertake a 'mini blitz' enforcement exercise in order to gather some recent data on the level of misuse / fraudulent use of blue badges in Middlesbrough.
40. The Panel was advised that under the 2006 Traffic Management Act Parking Enforcement Officers were given the power to inspect blue badges and the aim of the 'mini blitz' exercise was to establish whether a problem did exist in Middlesbrough with people misusing or fraudulently using blue badges.
41. It was noted that there are three offences that can be committed in respect of the Blue Badge Scheme, these are as follows:-
 - Misuse - The legislation that covers blue badge misuse is the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 section 117. This covers anyone who misuses a valid blue badge. An example might be a person who misuses their relative's badge, by parking a vehicle without the badge-holder being present.
 - Fraudulent use - The legislation that covers blue badge abuse is the Fraud Act 2006 section 1. This relates to anyone who uses a blue badge which is not genuine or where the badge has been altered.

- The use of on-street disabled parking bays by non blue badge holders.
42. Prior to receiving the findings of this exercise the Panel was advised that the blue badge scheme does not apply in off street car parks, for example supermarket car parks. It was noted that in privately owned car parks charges and conditions of use are a contractual matter between the car park owner and the motorist. It was noted that nationally the Government is aiming to address this issue by supporting the British Retail Consortium to do more to tackle disabled parking abuse in their members' off-street car parks.
 43. The Panel noted that at present Asda is the only national supermarket chain to fine drivers for parking in a disabled bay without displaying a blue badge. Asda's policy is to ask anyone caught parking in a space to which they are not entitled to move and those who refuse or who seriously abuse the system are fined. The current fine is £60 and the profits are donated to the Motability car scheme for the disabled.
 44. The results obtained from the 'mini blitz' enforcement exercise therefore reflect the level of misuse / fraudulent use of blue badges identified in Council operated on and off street parking bays in Middlesbrough. The 'mini blitz' exercise was undertaken between the 15 December 2009 and 5 January 2010. During that period a total of 258 blue badges were inspected and of those 236 badges were being used correctly (91.5%), with 22 being misused (8.5%) (see Appendix 3). A total of 46 Penalty Charge Notices (PCN's) were also issued during that period to vehicles parked in disabled bays without displaying a blue badge.
 45. It was noted that at the Captain Cook car park an entire level is set aside for disabled parking and during the enforcement exercise everyone parking in a disabled bay on that level was asked to produce his or her blue badge for inspection. The Parking Enforcement Officers had met a number of regular blue badge users over the course of the exercise and their badges were therefore inspected on a number of occasions. The response from the blue badge holders was very positive and they were fully supportive of the Council's efforts to prevent the misuse / fraudulent use of blue badges within the town.
 46. The Panel was advised that during the 'mini blitz' exercise there were very few occasions where it appeared that the driver had intentionally misused a blue badge. In the majority of the cases the driver had misunderstood the rules of the scheme and had been unaware that the holder of the blue badge needed to be in the car in order for the badge to be valid. The Panel was advised in the 22 cases where misuse of a blue badge was identified the driver was informed of the rules of the scheme and issued with a warning. The details of the badge were then passed to Social Services in order that the badge holder could be contacted and advised that his or her badge had been misused.
 47. In terms of enforcing the rules of the scheme the Panel was informed that the regulations allowed for the local authority to refuse to issue a blue badge where it had been identified that the same blue badge had been used three times without the badge holder being present. The Panel heard that the 'mini blitz' exercise had provided an opportunity to educate people on the rules of the scheme and it was emphasised that Parking Enforcement Officers tended not to see those people identified as misusing a blue badge again. The representative from Social Care

confirmed that the Council refused to issue very few badges because they had been identified as being misused on three occasions, with less than 10 refusals per year.

48. The Panel heard that the 'mini blitz' enforcement exercise had been very labour intensive. Parking Enforcement Officers had to be present as drivers pulled into a disabled bay in order to inspect their badges. Officers had been stationed at a number of displayed bays within the town at different times of the day including first thing in the morning to target commuters, as well as later in day to catch shoppers. It was acknowledged that the presence of Parking Enforcement Officers at the Captain Cook and Zetland Car Park may have discouraged some drivers who had been intending to park in a disabled bay from doing so and this could have impacted on the results of the enforcement exercise.
49. The Panel was advised that one of the problems experienced in terms of blue badge misuse was with people using blue badges that were issued to a deceased person. In Middlesbrough Parking Enforcement Officers had recently been provided with access to the de-registered blue badge list to enable the relevant checks to be made when Officers did have concerns about a blue badge being misused. The Parking Solutions Team was now provided with an updated list from Social Care on a monthly basis.
50. Specific reference was made to the levels of misuse / fraudulent use of blue badges encountered by the local authorities identified as 'Centres of Excellence'. The Panel heard that the results of the 'mini blitz' exercise had highlighted that the level of misuse / fraudulent use of blue badges in Middlesbrough was not as widespread when compared with other areas and it was not a major problem.
51. Confirmation was sought on the level of fines incurred by motorists that were caught parking in a disabled bay without displaying a blue badge. The Panel was informed that the Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) for this offence carried a £70 fine, which was discounted to £35 if paid within 14 days. The Panel questioned whether the Council pursued any form of prosecution through the courts against motorists found to be misusing a blue badge, as was the case in the local authorities awarded 'Centre of Excellence' status. The Panel was advised that the Council did not pursue prosecutions but would issue PCN's to motorists found to be misusing a blue badge if they refused to remove the vehicle from the blue badge bay or the yellow line where they had intended to park.
52. The potential financial saving that a habitual offender could achieve by using a blue badge, which belonged to a friend or relative, was highlighted and it was accepted that blue badges were of great financial value in parking terms. The Panel was advised that in cases where misuse of a blue badge was identified the individual was issued with a warning and the badge details were recorded and forwarded to Social Services for a warning letter to be sent to the blue badge holder. If the same blue badge was used on three occasions without the badge holder being present the Council would refuse to issue a blue badge to the holder.
53. In terms of reporting suspected cases of misuse / fraudulent use of a blue badge the Panel heard that at present anyone wishing to report an incident could telephone the Council's contact centre. The Panel heard that at present no online facility was available for members of the public to report suspected incidents of misuse, however, this was something that could be developed. It was highlighted

that the only concern in relation to developing an online reporting system was that often members of the public perceived that an individual who was parking in a disabled bay was not disabled and was misusing a blue badge. Yet the individual was legitimately using the blue badge they had been issued with having met the necessary criteria.

54. The Panel heard that recently some additional powers had been given to the Street Wardens and consideration was currently been given to extending their powers further to address inconsiderate parking. A report would soon be submitted to the Executive in respect of this issue and it was suggested that this would offer another potential solution to addressing the problem of people inconsiderately parking in off street car parks, such as supermarkets and doctors surgeries, without displaying a blue badge.

THE PANEL'S FINDINGS

55. The value of the blue badge can not be underestimated in providing disabled people with the freedom to travel independently and benefit from facilities they may otherwise be unable to access.
56. As a result of the 'mini blitz' enforcement exercise it is clear that most of the misuse of blue badge incidents that occur in Middlesbrough are genuine mistakes. People are under the false impression that they can use the blue badge of a family member or friend if they are shopping or running an errand on behalf of the badge holder. In the majority of the misuse cases identified the individual had been unaware that the blue badge could not be used if the badge holder was not in the vehicle. Educating the badge holder as well as members of their family is therefore key in preventing the misuse of blue badges by family members and friends.
57. The Panel recognised the effective policies and procedures in respect of enforcement that had been implemented at the local authorities awarded 'Centre of Excellence' status by the Department of Transport. However, it was acknowledged that within Middlesbrough the level of misuse / fraudulent use of blue badges was not as widespread when compared with other areas. The Panel did not feel it appropriate for some of the practices adopted elsewhere including the use of RIPA powers to undertake surveillance and arranging for cars to be towed away when a blue badge was identified as being misused to be necessary forms of enforcement at this time.
58. The Panel's recommendation for 'mini blitz' enforcement exercises to be undertaken on a regular basis aims to ensure that the level of misuse / fraudulent use is kept under review and the appropriate level of enforcement is adopted.
59. In terms of the Council's ability to undertake enforcement action in respect of people parking in disabled bays without displaying a blue badge the Panel found that the Council has no powers to take any form of action in off street car parks such as supermarkets. Each of the national supermarket chains has its own policy in place in respect of enforcing the disabled bays it provides. These policies vary from charging drivers a fee if parked in a displayed bay without displaying a blue badge to employing staff to ensure that disabled bays are kept free for disabled drivers. Other supermarket chains take no form of enforcement action and the Council has no powers to undertake enforcement action in private car parks.

CONCLUSION

60. Based on evidence given throughout the investigation the Panel concluded:
- a) That disabled people highly value the benefits offered by the blue badge scheme and the Council has a responsibility to ensure that the scheme is not abused.
 - b) That in line with the Government's Comprehensive Blue Badge Reform Strategy the necessary preparations need to be made to enable the Council to make the switch to independent medical assessments for applicants applying for a blue badge under the discretionary criteria.
 - c) That the level of misuse / abuse of blue badges within the town needs to be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that it remains the case that a reasonable and proportionate enforcement policy is adopted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

61. That the Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive:
- a) That more publicity is needed to ensure that residents and particularly family members and friends of blue badge holders are fully aware of the rules of using a blue badge as well as the negative impact misuse by able-bodied people has on genuine blue badge holders. In addition the rules of the scheme need to be highlighted via posters / adverts at Council operated on and off street disabled parking bays across the town.
 - b) That an annual programme of 'mini blitz' enforcement exercises which focus on preventing the misuse and fraudulent use of blue badges be undertaken and the findings be reported to the Panel.
 - c) That an online reporting mechanism for members of the public to report suspected cases of misuse of a blue badge be developed to further enable incidents of misuse / fraudulent use of blue badges within the town to be detected.
 - d) That in line with the Government's Comprehensive Blue Badge Reform Strategy the Council undertakes a joint piece of work with the PCT to examine the way in which medical assessments for blue badge applicants are currently commissioned. This would be with a view to developing and implementing a move to independent assessments.
 - e) That the Council aspires to develop a service in line with the best practice identified at the nationally recognised Centres of Excellence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

62. The Panel would like to thank the following people for their help with this review: -

Jan Douglas – Executive Director of Social Care
Steve Webster – Parking Solutions Team Manager
Gary Bullock –Principal Enforcement Officer Birmingham City Council
Graham Marsh – Parking Manager Manchester City Council
Martin Beard – Parking Services Rotherham Borough Council
Sue Greaves – Assistant Director of Primary and Community Care – Middlesbrough
PCT

BACKGROUND PAPERS

63. Please see following documentation:-

- Department for Transport – Comprehensive Blue Badge (Disabled Parking) Reform Strategy (England), October 2008
- Department for Transport – Comprehensive Blue Badge Reform Programme High Level Implementation Plan, October 2009
- Care Services Efficiency Delivery (CSED) Programme Report – Blue Badge Initiative, June 2006
- Executive Report – Blue Badge Inspection and Enforcement, 16 January 2007

COUNCILLOR PETER PURVIS CHAIR OF THE SOCIAL CARE AND ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

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