

# Assistant Chief Executive Department Resident Contact Division

## Assessment Policy Concessionary Travel Services

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## Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to clearly set out the nature of each scheme; the steps the Travel Services Team at Croydon Council undertake when assessing applications and making their decisions; and to also give guidance on what to do if you do not agree with our decision.

There are 3 types of Concessionary Travel services that the council undertakes the eligibility assessment for, namely:

- Blue Badges
- Disabled Persons Freedom Passes, and
- London Taxi Card scheme.

## Background to each scheme and the concessions they offer

### Blue Badges

Blue Badges give disabled people who rely on car travel, but face challenges in getting from the car to their destination, the ability to park close-by.

A Blue Badge on your car lets you park closer to shops, stations and other facilities. Blue badge holders are allowed to park free of charge and without time limit in:

- any permitted parking space or paid-for parking bay
- limited-period waiting boxes
- red routes in specially signed and marked spaces.

They can also park free of charge for up to 3 hours on any single or double yellow line, except where there is a:

- loading and unloading ban
- stopping restriction
- footway parking ban.

### Disabled Persons Freedom Passes

A Disabled Person's Freedom Pass allows you to travel on local bus services across England.

In London, as well as the bus network, it also allows you to travel on:

- London Underground
- Docklands Light Railway
- Croydon Tramlink

- National Rail trains after 9:30am (no time restrictions apply on weekends and public holidays).

Please note that we do not assess **Older Persons Freedom Passes** (for people of state pension age). For these, please contact London Councils, for more information please see - [Older Person's Freedom Pass and concessionary fares | Croydon Council](#).

If you are aged 60 or over, you can apply for a 60+ Oyster Card. For more information please see - [60+ London Oyster photocard - Transport for London \(tfl.gov.uk\)](#).

### London Taxi Card Scheme

The London Taxi Card allows eligible disabled people living in Croydon to use licensed black cabs and some public hire vehicles (mini cabs) at reduced fares. We will pay a certain amount towards a number of taxi journeys for you, and you pay the remainder of the fare.

## Legislative Background

### Blue Badges

The Blue Badge (Disabled Persons' Parking) Scheme was introduced in 1971 under Section 21 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. The Department for Transport (DfT) is responsible for the legislation that sets out the framework for the scheme. This includes:

- The prescribed descriptions of disabled people to whom a badge may be issued – e.g. the eligibility criteria
- The national concessions available to badge holders under the scheme
- The period of issue of a badge
- The manner in which a badge should be displayed
- The grounds for refusal to issue a badge
- The grounds to withdraw a badge
- The circumstances in which a badge should be returned to the issuing authority
- The maximum fee that can be charged by local authorities for issuing a badge.

The Local Authority has the responsibilities for the day-to-day administration and enforcement of the scheme. We are responsible for determining and implementing administrative, assessments and enforcement procedures. This policy concentrates on the “assessment” aspect.

### Disabled Persons Freedom Passes

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) was introduced in April 2008 to provide free England-wide off-peak bus travel to eligible older and disabled people. Local buses are the most commonly used mode of public transport, and the purpose of providing free local bus travel England-wide is to ensure that no older or disabled person in England need be prevented from bus travel by cost alone.

The Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007 ('the 2007 Act') provides for a statutory guarantee of free off-peak travel for eligible older and disabled people on local bus services anywhere in England ('the national concession'). Provisions in the 2007 Act have been commenced to enable the national concession to begin on 1 April 2008.

The 2007 Act modifies existing legislation which guarantees free off-peak local bus travel in England only within the area of the local authority in which an eligible person resides.

In London, in conjunction with Transport for London (TfL) and London Councils, the scheme was widened to all forms of public transport provided by Transport for London, namely buses, tubes, trams and trains (with some time restrictions).

Again the DfT have the responsibility for the legislation around the scheme, and the local authorities are responsible for the administration, assessment and some enforcement work within the scheme. This policy concentrates on the "assessment" aspect.

### London Taxi Card

This scheme is not laid down in legislation. Transport for London (TfL) and London Councils jointly created a scheme in recognition that not all disabled people are easily able to use public transport. The London Taxi Card Scheme is a subsidised service providing travel opportunities for those who might find it difficult to access modes of public transport. More information on the scheme can be found on London Council's website - <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/services/taxicard/how-use-your-taxicard/taxicard-fags>.

## Guiding Principles for Assessment of Eligibility

The DfT have issued a set of guidelines for local authorities on the assessment of Blue Badges and Disabled Persons Freedom Passes. Croydon Council's Travel Services Team follows these principles and guidelines when undertaking their assessments. Details can be found on the Gov.UK website.

## Eligibility Criteria for each Concessionary Travel Scheme

Croydon's Travel Service Team have devised a set of Fact Sheets for each eligible disability category for each scheme. These detail:

- The eligibility criteria or tests,
- The types of evidence you would need to provide to support your application
- Other relevant advice in helping you to understand if this is the correct disability category for you to apply under.

These fact sheets can be found on our website, as follows:

- **Blue Badges** - under the section "Before you Apply" - [Who is eligible for a Blue Badge | Croydon Council](#)
- **Disabled Persons Freedom Pass** – under the section "Who is eligible" - [Disabled Person's Freedom Pass | Croydon Council](#)
- **London Taxi Card** – under the section "Who is eligible" - [London Taxicard | Croydon Council](#)

### Discretionary Disabled Persons Freedom Passes

As part of Croydon Council's commitment to support disabled residents to lead more active, happier and healthier lives; and to facilitate social inclusion and participation, we have extended the scheme to provide Discretionary Disabled Freedom Passes to resident's whose disability is very close but does not fully meet the statutory eligibility criteria.

However, these are subject to annual renewal/review (as opposed to usual 5 years), and can be withdrawn at any time. If you qualify for other schemes, such as Older Persons Freedom Pass or 60+ Oyster card, you will not be considered for a discretionary pass. For details of the scheme please see the application form.

## Application Process

On the above links for each scheme, you can find either links to an online form or a downloadable PDF version of an application form.

Alternatively, you can contact us for a paper form to be sent into the post, by providing your full name and address. You can either:

- Email [travel.service@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:travel.service@croydon.gov.uk), or
- Telephone 0208 726 7100, the select Option 1 Parking, then Option 4 Travel Services.

If you are submitting your application or any supporting evidence by email or post, our details are:

- Email [travel.service@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:travel.service@croydon.gov.uk), or
- Post to Travel Services Team, Croydon Council, 3rd Floor, Zone E, Bernard Weatherill House, 8 Mint Walk, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1EA.

Please note that we are not able to assist you in physically completing the form, as we cannot then assess our own work. If you need help, you will need to find support from family, friends, a carer or some community groups may be able to provide assistance.

### Submitting your evidence

All evidence submitted must be current and relevant to your application.

If you are submitting with an online application or via email we request:

- Where possible, if you could provide us with the documents (dated within the last year) in chronological order in one PDF. Or
- If you have taken photographs of documents – that they are sharp in focus, not blurred and in full.
- Do not just send the first page of a letter/document; for example, if sending your PIP (Personal Independence Payment) award we need to see the full award letter, not just whether you received enhanced or standard rate PIP.
- We do not accept appointment letters, so please do not include/send these.

### Photograph of the applicant

We may also require you to provide a current “passport style” photograph, as this will appear on your badge/pass/taxi-card which you may be required to show when using. The photograph must be a close-up, colour digital photograph of your head and shoulders, and have a strong definition between your face and the background. The photograph needs to be a true likeness, without amendment.

We recommend:

- Passport size photograph – in sharp focus and clear
- Taken within one month prior to your application
- Against a **plain** white, light grey or cream background
- Undamaged – free from “redeye”, shadows, reflection, or glare from glasses
- Of the full head and shoulders – without any other person visible, or any covering (unless it is worn for religious beliefs or medical reasons)
- You are facing forwards – looking straight at the camera - with nothing covering the face
- Mouth closed and with a neutral expression
- With eyes open and clearly visible (no sunglasses or tinted spectacles and without hair or spectacle frames obscuring the eyes)
- Be appropriately dressed.

## Processing times

We do advertise the “current processing times” on our website - [Apply for a Blue Badge | Croydon Council](#) to help manage expectations.

When we say “processing time” – we mean, for the people we are assessing today, how long have they waited since submitting their application.

Ordinarily, we would only fast-track an application on the basis of a diagnosis of a terminal condition or of cancer. All our applicants have disabilities, both physical and hidden, and to be fair to all residents we assess applications in strict order of receipt. It would not be appropriate for us to say one person’s disability is more worthy than another’s and assess people out of turn.

We do receive a high volume of applications each year. Our processing times will vary depending on the level of demand coming into the service, and on occasion due to the resources on the team.

Our advertised “current processing times” on our website are regularly updated to give residents a guide as to potential wait times for a decision. These processing times can go up or down throughout the year.

## Assessment Process

Applications are logged on the date they are received and are assessed in strict date order – see section 7 above. We assess in line with the guidelines set by the Scheme owners – i.e. DfT or London Councils.

We assess your identify, residency and eligibility based on the evidence submitted with your application. Each application form details what evidence you can submit to prove your identity, your address, and your eligibility.

- We check your **proof of identity** – to confirm that you are who you claim to be and that you are the person who may be entitled to the scheme due to your disability.
- We check your **proof of residency** – as we can only approve applications for people who live in Croydon. If you do not live in Croydon, you will need to apply to the local authority you pay your Council Tax to.
- We check your **proof of eligibility** - there are strict guidelines on who is eligible for each scheme, and as well as considering your personal statement

on your application, we must see evidence (e.g. diagnosis letters, current treatment etc.) to confirm you meet the stipulated guideline on eligibility. **Note:**

- Please refer to our fact sheets (see section 5) for guidance on suitable evidence to provide
- It is your responsibility to obtain any supporting information / documentation required
- We must seek supporting evidence – we cannot accept evidence from your GP as the sole source of supporting evidence
- Letter of support from your GP will cost you money, and we are not able to accept them as evidence.

## Potential decisions following our initial assessment of your application

	Decision	What happens
Sufficient information to make a decision	Approve	Blue Badge – request the £10 fee, and when received order your badge.  For others – order your pass / taxi card.
	Refuse	We will issue you with a decision letter confirming our rationale. You have the right of appeal – see section 10 below.
Insufficient information to make a decision	Request further information	We will write to you to request the further information we require to complete our assessment.
	Request a telephone assessment	Our Expert Assessor may require to speak/see you in order for us to conclude our assessment. They will provide you with full details of the assessment process, once an appointment has been made.
	Request a face-to-face assessment	

## What to do if you do not agree with our decision

We will write to advise you if we do not feel you are eligible for the scheme you have applied for. The letter will confirm the reasons for declining your application.



In our letter we will confirm that you have the right of review/appeal and how you can exercise that right.

Full details of our Appeals Policy can be found here - [Concessionary Travel Service Appeals Policy | Croydon Council](#)

## Complaints about the service you have received

If you are not happy with the decision, you should exercise your right of appeal as detailed in section 10 above. A complaint about a decision is not the appropriate route, as the complaint process will review the conduct and process followed and will not be able to change the decision made.

If you have an issue, or you have tried reporting your problem but it has not been resolved, then you can register an official complaint and we will look to resolve the issue for you. Any complaint will be responded to within 20 working days.

Full details of the complaints procedure and policy can be found here - [Making a complaint | Croydon Council](#)

## Renewal applications

### Blue Badges

Blue Badges are issued for up to 3 years, or in line with the expiry date of any qualifying benefits, whichever is sooner.

3 months prior to the expiry of your existing badge, we will contact you in writing to remind you to renew your badge. You should follow the same process as if applying for a new badge. However, renewal applications are generally assessed shortly after receipt, and are not subject to current processing times.

### Disabled Persons Freedom Passes

Disabled Persons Freedom Passes are issued to the 31 March in the 5<sup>th</sup> year from being approved/issued. We will review your case, in the 12 months before it is due to originally expire, from our own records to see if we can automatically renew your pass. If we are not able to, we will write to you to request either additional information or a full application.

If your pass was awarded due to a qualifying benefit or reviewable health condition (e.g. epilepsy etc.), which has an expiry date before the expiry date of your existing freedom pass, we will need to undertake a reassessment of your eligibility shortly after your qualifying benefit/health condition review was due to expire. Again, if we

can verify from internal record we will, if not, we will write to you to request either additional information or a full application.

Please note, that if your pass is replaced within the original 5-year period, we must reassess your eligibility in line with the original expiry date, as eligibility must be reviewed at least 5 yearly. Again, if we can verify from internal record we will, if not, we will write to you to request either additional information or a full application.

### London Taxi Card

Taxi Cards are issued for 10 years. London Councils administers the scheme, and they will contact you before expiry of your existing card with instruction on how to renew.

## Lost/Stolen/Damaged badges/passes/taxi-cards

### Blue Badges

Please note that there is a £10 replacement fee, unless you have reported a stolen badge to the police and have a crime reference number.

The process is to complete a form that can be found online here - [Report changes, lost or stolen badges | Croydon Council](#) where you can download a form to print off.

If you are not able to download the form, we can arrange for a paper copy in the post, just provide your full name, date of birth and address, and email those details to us or call (contact details in Section 6), and we can post out the form to you.

Once we receive back the completed form, we can start the process to order you a replacement.

### Disabled Persons Freedom Pass

London Councils deal with requests for replacement passes. Please note that there is a £14 replacement fee, unless you have reported a stolen pass to the police and have a crime reference number.

The process is to complete a form that can be found online on London Councils' website - [Change of details, lost, stolen or damaged pass | London Councils](#)

Alternatively, you can call London Councils on 0300 330 1433.

### London Taxi Card

London Council's deal with requests for replacement cards. Please note that there is a £10 replacement fee, unless you have reported it to the police and have a crime reference number.

The process is to complete a form that can be found online on London councils' website - [Replacing your Taxicard | London Councils - Localgov Drupal](#)

Alternatively, you can call London Councils on 0300 330 1433.

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