



CÒMHDHAIL ALBA TRANSPORT SCOTLAND

THE USE AND VALUE OF THE BLUE BADGE SCHEME



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Transport Scotland 2012

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all of the people who took the time to take part in this study. Everyone contributed in an enthusiastic, open and honest way, giving us a real insight into the attitudes and experiences of Blue Badge holders.

We would also like to thank the wide range of organisations, groups and individuals that helped us to make links with Blue Badge holders across the country.

Finally, the Research Advisory Group for the study provided us with valuable advice, support and expertise. Thank you.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report sets out findings from mixed methodology research exploring the views of Blue Badge holders. The research comprised a large scale telephone survey of 812 Blue Badge holders and nine focus groups. Transport Scotland commissioned ODS Consulting, working in partnership with Research Resource to undertake the research. The work took place between March and August 2012. The research findings will help to inform the Blue Badge scheme to be improved and developed.

The UK Blue Badge scheme was set up in the 1970's (originally as the Orange Badge scheme). It operates across the UK, providing parking concessions for on-street parking for disabled people – travelling either as drivers or passengers. It allows Badge holders in Scotland to park without charge or time limit in the on-street parking environment; including single and double yellow lines (unless a loading ban is in place).

The scope of the Blue Badge Scheme has expanded beyond the provisions of the original Act of Parliament regarding on-street car parking concessions and has been adopted by some operators of off-street car parks (in supermarkets, hospitals and other places) as a way of meeting their obligations to disabled people under the Disability Discrimination Act and the Equality Act, 2010. Many of the comments in this report relate to the use of off-street disabled parking.

The Blue Badge scheme is managed by local authorities. Badges may be issued without assessment by the local authority if the applicant:

- receives the higher rate of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (HRMC DLA); or
- receives the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement; or
- has received a lump sum benefit under article 15(1)(a) of the Armed Forces and Reserve Forces (Compensation Scheme) Order 2011 tariff levels 1-8 (inclusive); or
- is registered blind or holds a Certificate of Vision Impairment signed by a Consultant Ophthalmologist.

Badges may be issued following assessment by the local authority if the applicant:

- regularly drives a vehicle and has a severe disability in both arms and is unable to operate, or has considerable difficulty in operating, all or some types of parking meter; or
- has a permanent and substantial disability which causes the person to be unable to walk, or virtually unable to walk; or
- is unable to walk or virtually unable to walk by reason of a temporary but substantial disability which is likely to last for a period of at least 12 months beginning with the date on which the badge is issued; or
- is a child under three who requires to be accompanied by bulky medical equipment or kept near a motor vehicle so that they can be treated for their condition.

Methods

Telephone survey

We sought to undertake a telephone survey of 800 Blue Badge holders from across Scotland. Currently there is no national database of Blue Badge holders and we therefore identified Badge holders from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS)¹. This national survey, undertaken annually, asks whether the householder or someone else in the household is a Blue Badge holder. We identified 1,623 individuals to contact, and from these successfully interviewed 812, demonstrating a response rate of 50%.

Focus groups

We undertook nine focus groups, consulting with 67 participants in total. The focus groups were designed to supplement the information gathered in the telephone interviews in terms of:

- current use of the Blue Badge;
- views on the administration and management of the Blue Badge scheme;
- misuse of Blue Badges;
- links with other transport provision; and
- future use of the Blue Badge.

Participants were recruited for four of the groups from people who participated in the telephone interviews (and indicated a wish to take part). Participants in the five remaining groups were chosen to reflect groups of people who were unlikely to be represented in the geographically based groups. They included a group of:

- Blue Badge holders living in a rural area;
- Blue Badge holders living in one of the 15% most deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland;
- Blue Badge holders from an ethnic minority background; and parents of children with disabilities who are Blue Badge holders.

Research findings

- Respondents used their Blue Badge mostly for shopping and medical appointments. Focus group participants spoke mostly of parking in off-street disabled person's parking bays, such as supermarket car parks, hospital car parks or shopping malls. Where on-street parking was used, it tended to be single yellow lines.
- There was consensus that there was a general lack of Blue Badge parking space provision. This was most noticeable in hospital car parks as well as with on-street provision in town centres.
- Telephone respondents indicated that the value of the Badge was that they could park closer to their destination and take benefit from the wider parking bays. While these were also mentioned as benefits by the focus group participants; for them, the greatest value of the Badge was securing their independence and ability to 'get out and about' allowing a certain quality of life.

¹ Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey, 2009

- Without the Blue Badge, most people agreed that they would go out less often. Some went so far as to say they would be ‘housebound’ without their Blue Badge and for one participant it allowed her to continue working. Parents said that they would be especially put off from travelling with children without their Badges.
- The vast majority felt that they had a good understanding of the rules and restrictions of using their Blue Badge. However some debated the rules on where the badge allowed you to park. For example, there were contradictory views as to whether parking on a double yellow line was allowed.
- Misuse of the Blue Badge scheme was perceived as a significant issue; particularly the use of spaces by people without a Badge

Suggestions for improvements

During the course of conducting the qualitative research, participants offered suggestions as to how they thought the Blue Badge scheme should operate. These are as follows:

Photograph: A number of participants suggested that the photograph that appears on the Blue Badge should be displayed while parking. Currently the photograph on the Badge is not displayed as Blue Badge holders must display the expiry date on their Badge. Participants suggested that if the photograph were to be displayed; this would cut down on fraudulent use of the Badge. However, some participants did not agree with this suggestion, claiming that displaying the photograph could alert others to a ‘vulnerable’ person or infringe the Blue Badge holder’s right to privacy.

Cost of the Blue Badge: The cost of the Blue Badge varies by local authority. Each authority decides the charge for the Badge; which varied from being free to £20 for use for three years. Participants at the groups indicated that the charge of £20 still demonstrated value for money, when compared to the cost of parking charges. However, there was concern at the discrepancy between authorities. Some participants called for a universal cost to be set so that no one was paying more for the Badge than others.

Clearer rules and regulations: Some participants commented that their own knowledge of the Blue Badge scheme was good – but traffic wardens and the police did not understand the rules of where parking was allowed. Several participants had received parking tickets – despite parking within the rules of the scheme (on yellow lines or without parking tickets, but displaying the Blue Badge).

Disability awareness training: Participants called for more training for police and traffic wardens. Similarly, participants spoke of their negative experiences on public transport where bus drivers were not perceptive to the needs of the disabled person. Two participants spoke of having fallen over on the bus as it moved off before they were seated – despite having asked the driver to wait. Disability training for bus drivers was suggested.

Penalties for misuse: Participants discussed their perceptions of misuse of the Badge, which they agreed was a problem. This was more so the misuse of disabled parking spaces by people without a Blue Badge, than misuse of the Badge itself – although some participants believed that the fraudulent use of Badges was also an

issue. Stricter penalties were thought to be necessary including clamping, towing of vehicles or points on the offender's driving licence.

More effective enforcement of the Scheme: Participants believed that the Blue Badge scheme could be better enforced – through more training for traffic wardens. There should be more enforcement officers in private off-street car parks such as supermarkets and shopping centres where it was perceived there was little monitoring of Blue Badge spaces. As a result, this was where most of the misuse was occurring.

1. INTRODUCTION

About This Report

- 1.1 This report sets out findings from mixed methodology research exploring the views of Blue Badge holders. The research comprised a large scale telephone survey of 812 Blue Badge holders and nine focus groups. Transport Scotland commissioned ODS Consulting, working in partnership with Research Resource to undertake the research. The work took place between March and August 2012. The research findings will help to inform the Blue Badge scheme to be improved and developed.

Research Context

- 1.2 The UK Blue Badge scheme was set up in the 1970's (originally as the Orange Badge scheme). It operates across the UK, providing parking concessions for on-street parking for disabled people – travelling either as drivers or passengers. It allows Badge holders in Scotland to park without charge or time limit in the on-street parking environment; including single and double yellow lines (unless a loading ban is in place).
- 1.3 The scope of the Blue Badge Scheme has expanded beyond the provisions of the original Act of Parliament regarding on-street car parking concessions and has been adopted by some operators of off-street car parks (in supermarkets, hospitals and other places) as a way of meeting their obligations to disabled people under the Disability Discrimination Act and the Equality Act, 2010. Many of the comments in this report relate to the use of off-street disabled parking.
- 1.4 The Blue Badge scheme is managed by local authorities. Badges may be issued without assessment by the local authority if the applicant:
- receives the higher rate of the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (HRMC DLA); or
 - receives the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement; or
 - has received a lump sum benefit under article 15(1)(a) of the Armed Forces and Reserve Forces (Compensation Scheme) Order 2011 tariff levels 1-8 (inclusive); or
 - is registered blind or holds a Certificate of Vision Impairment signed by a Consultant Ophthalmologist.
- 1.5 Badges may be issued following assessment by the local authority if the applicant:
- regularly drives a vehicle and has a severe disability in both arms and is unable to operate, or has considerable difficulty in operating, all or some types of parking meter; or
 - has a permanent and substantial disability which causes the person to be unable to walk, or virtually unable to walk; or
 - is unable to walk or virtually unable to walk by reason of a temporary but substantial disability which is likely to last for a period of at least 12 months beginning with the date on which the badge is issued; or

- is a child under 3 who require to be accompanied by bulky medical equipment or kept near a motor vehicle so that they can be treated for their condition.
- 1.6 Local authorities can also issue Blue Badges to organisations that are responsible for the care and transport of people who fall into the above categories regularly. As at March 2011, there were approximately 270,000 to 280,000 Blue Badges in circulation in Scotland. The vast majority of Blue Badges are issued to individuals, with around 1.5% issued to organisations. Blue Badges can be used across the UK, and in some parts of the European Union. They can be used in slightly different ways in different countries – and there are some differences in entitlements between Scotland, England and Wales.
- 1.7 The Scottish Government has been exploring how the Blue Badge scheme can be improved and developed since 2009. It set up a Reform Working Group to explore issues such as eligibility criteria, enforcement and administration, and consulted on the group's recommendations during 2010². It has also explored issues around the misuse of the Blue Badge scheme³, and has analysed the process of applying for a Blue Badge across Scotland.
- 1.8 Following the 2010 consultation, the Scottish Government has been working closely with the Department for Transport and Welsh Government to reform and modernise the Blue Badge scheme to create a more consistent and unified scheme across the UK. The Blue Badge Improvement Service, a common service improvement project delivered under contract across the UK, was introduced on the 1 January 2012 and now provides an online application form and secure printing and distribution of the new badge from a central point. All Scottish local authorities have signed up to this new service which also provides a central database of all new badges issued with key information on badge holders. This will improve enforcement of the Blue Badge scheme.
- 1.9 Recent reforms to the Blue Badge scheme have included the new badge design with sophisticated anti-fraud technologies, tightened eligibility criteria and the introduction of mandatory independent mobility assessments as a means of determining the eligibility of applicants, where eligibility is unclear. Independent mobility assessments have replaced assessments by an applicant's own GP and will provide greater consistency of practice across the country.
- 1.10 There is, however, very little evidence in Scotland about how Blue Badge holders use their Badges and what benefits they get from them. Transport Scotland wished to explore how people in Scotland use their Blue Badges, and what difference it makes to their lives.

² Scottish Government, Blue Badge Reform: A Consultation Document, July 2010

³ Scottish Government Social Research (2007) – Transport Research Series "Tackling the Abuse of Off-Street Parking for People with Disabilities in Scotland"; Edinburgh, Scottish Government

Research Aims and Objectives

- 1.11 The overall aim of the research was to explore Blue Badge holders' views on using their Badge and the value the Badge gives them.
- 1.12 The specific objectives were to explore:

Blue Badge holders' transport needs

- Who ought to qualify for a Blue Badge?
- What should a Blue Badge make possible that is not possible for other road users? (i.e. what should a Blue Badge do?)
- Are the needs of all Blue Badge holders the same – e.g. rural/urban, children/working age adults/pensioners?

The use of the Blue Badge

- How it is used (or not used), e.g. as a driver or a passenger?
- If and how it enhances people's lives?
- What type of activity it is used for: e.g. education; work; leisure; retail; visiting family & friends; medical appointments etc.?
- How it fits into disabled people's lives?
- Experiences of Organisational Blue Badges (as well as their own personal Blue Badge)?

Blue Badge as one element of transport provision for disabled people

- How does it relate to other aspects of provision e.g. relationship with:
 - National Concessionary Travel Scheme; (Bus)
 - Community use/ Demand Responsive Transport;
 - Ferries concessionary scheme; and
 - Disabled parking.

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 This section sets out our methodology for undertaking the research which involved a telephone survey, supplemented by focus groups.

Telephone Survey

- 2.2 We sought to undertake a telephone survey of 800 Blue Badge holders from across Scotland. Currently there is no national database of Blue Badge holders and we therefore identified Badge holders from the Scottish Household Survey (SHS)⁴. This national survey, undertaken annually, asks whether the householder or someone else in the household is a Blue Badge holder.
- 2.3 Based on 2009 published data, the Scottish Government was able to identify a total of 1,623 individuals that were Blue Badge holders and had given their permission to be re-contacted for further research.⁵
- 2.4 We sent an introductory letter to all of the 1,623 individuals for whom we had contact details. This letter detailed the purpose of the research, how individuals had been recruited and explained that an interviewer would attempt to call them to undertake an interview by telephone. The letter also noted that if special communication needs were required (for instance 'type talk' facilities) or if individuals wished to set up an appointment we would be able to facilitate this.
- 2.5 We interviewed a total of 812 respondents who were either a Blue Badge holder themselves or had a Blue Badge holder in their household, providing data accurate to plus or minus approximately 3.5% (based upon a 50% estimate at the 95% confidence level).
- 2.6 The telephone survey questionnaire (Appendix 1) was designed to find out how the Blue Badge is used and the contribution the Badge makes to people's lives. It covered the following key topics:
- getting a Blue Badge;
 - how and why the Blue Badge is used;
 - the value of the Blue Badge scheme;
 - restrictions and enforcements; and
 - about the Blue Badge holder.
- 2.7 Table 2.1 shows the age and gender profile of telephone respondents compared to the SHS data.

⁴ Scottish Government, Scottish Household Survey, 2009

⁵ This number was smaller than anticipated so we maximised the response rate from this population, as opposed to drawing a sample of potential respondents.

Table 2.1: Age and gender response profile

Age and Gender survey response profile compared to SHS data			
	Demographic	SHS data (%)	2012 Blue Badge Survey (%) ⁶
Gender	Male	43	41
	Female	57	59
Age	Under 16	Not known	3
	16-24	2	1
	25-44	8	4
	45-59	21	17
	60-64	12	11
	65-74	25	32
	75-84	24	25
	85+	9	8

2.8 We weighted the data by local authority area to ensure that the results were proportionately representative of the SHS local authority profile.

Table 2.2: Local authority response profile for telephone survey

Local Authority	SHS data (%)	2012 Blue Badge Survey (%)
Aberdeen City	3	3
Aberdeenshire	5	3
Angus	2	2
Argyll & Bute	2	3
Clackmannanshire	1	1
Dumfries & Galloway	4	4
Dundee City	3	2
East Ayrshire	3	4
East Dunbartonshire	2	2
East Lothian	2	2
East Renfrewshire	1	1
Edinburgh, City of	7	5
Eilean Siar	<1	3
Falkirk	3	2
Fife	8	8
Glasgow City	9	7
Highland	4	5
Inverclyde	2	2
Midlothian	2	3
Moray	2	2
North Ayrshire	3	3
North Lanarkshire	7	6
Orkney Islands	< 1	3
Perth & Kinross	3	2
Renfrewshire	4	5
Scottish Borders	2	2
Shetland Islands	<1	3
South Ayrshire	2	1
South Lanarkshire	7	5
Stirling	2	2
West Dunbartonshire	2	3
West Lothian	3	3

⁶ Percentages in tables have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Columns may not add up to 100% because of rounding or where multiple responses to a question are possible.

Focus Groups

- 2.9 We held nine focus groups and conducted three depth interviews with Blue Badge holders or the parents of Blue Badge holders. The focus groups were designed to supplement the information gathered in the telephone interviews in terms of:
- current use of the Blue Badge;
 - views on the administration and management of the Blue Badge scheme;
 - misuse of Blue Badges;
 - links with other transport provision; and
 - future use of the Blue Badge.
- 2.10 In total, sixty-seven participants gave their views. We recruited participants for four of the groups from people who participated in the telephone interviews (and indicated a wish to take part). Participants in the five remaining groups were recruited through organisations such as Senior's Forums and ethnic minority day centres, based on achieving a geographic spread and diversity and ensuring that there were enough willing participants to support a group discussion.
- 2.11 We identified four organisations to assist in the recruitment of participants in the remaining groups. These were chosen to reflect groups of people who were unlikely to be represented in the geographically based groups. They included a group of:
- Blue Badge holders living in a rural area;
 - Blue Badge holders living in one of the 15% most deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland;
 - Blue Badge holders from an ethnic minority background; and
 - parents of children with disabilities who are Blue Badge holders.
- 2.12 We also held a shorter focus group with six children who were Blue Badge holders. Their parents also participated in one of the groups.
- 2.13 In addition we undertook three depth telephone interviews with parents of children with disabilities who were either unable to attend a focus group or where there were insufficient numbers of people to hold a focus group and they wished to contribute.
- 2.14 Overall we held focus groups with people living in seven local authority areas.

Table 2.3: Location and characteristics of focus groups

Local Authority	Reason Chosen	Source	No. of Attendees
Aberdeenshire	Rural area	Existing group	10
Edinburgh	Parents of disabled children	Existing group	6
Edinburgh	Disabled young people	Existing group	6
Glasgow	Ethnic minority background	Existing group	7
West Dunbartonshire	Area of deprivation	Existing group	7
Edinburgh		Recontacts from survey	13
Renfrewshire		Recontacts from survey	5
North Lanarkshire		Recontacts from survey	5
South Ayrshire		Recontacts from survey	5
Dumfries and Galloway	Parents of disabled children	Telephone interview	2
West Dunbartonshire	Parent of disabled child	Telephone interview	1

- 2.15 There are higher rates of Blue Badges among women in comparison to men. This is because women tend to live longer than men. Therefore we invited more women to participate in group discussions than men. However, the final participant mix is more biased towards men than women (38 men and 29 women).
- 2.16 We know from the SHS data that the majority of Blue Badge holders are 60 years of age and over (70% of those surveyed) and a quarter are aged between 70 and 79 years. For the groups recruited from the re-contact information, we were able to take their age into consideration during recruitment. Where existing groups were contacted; we had no control over the age of participants, other than to ask for 'a mix of ages' as far as possible. Overall, where identifiable, we were able to speak to 23 participants who fell into the 60-64 age band or below and six young people (aged 12-14 years).
- 2.17 Table 2.4 provides a profile of participants by gender and age.

Table 2.4: Participant Profile

Gender	Number	%
Men	38	57
Women	29	43
Age		
< 16	6	9
17-24	1	1
25-34	0	0
35-44	5	7
45-54	7	10
55-64	10	15
65-74	25	37
75-84	6	9
Not given	7	10

3. CURRENT USE OF THE BLUE BADGE

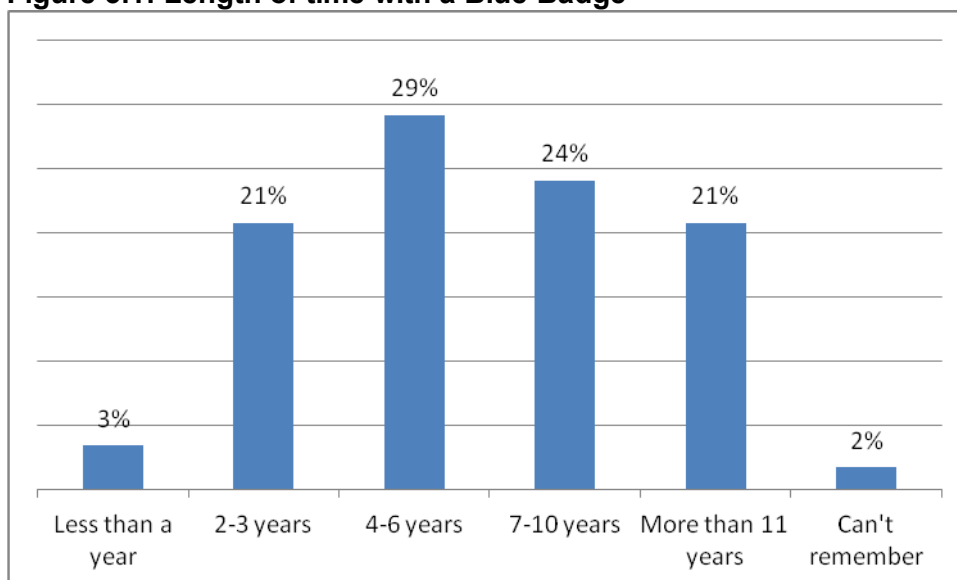
Introduction

3.1 Both the telephone survey and the groups opened with a short session exploring participant use of the Blue Badge. This allowed us to gather important and relevant information, while easing participants into the research with some relatively simple, broad questions. This section sets out our findings from the research on these issues.

Length of time with a Blue Badge

3.2 The telephone survey identified that 24% have had their Blue Badge for less than three years, 29% between four and six years, 24% between seven and 10 years and 21% for longer than 11 years. The remaining two per cent of respondents were unsure.

Figure 3.1: Length of time with a Blue Badge



3.3 The focus groups also revealed a similar spread of people including those who were new to the Blue Badge scheme, having had their Badge for only a matter of months; and those who had held a Blue Badge for over 20 years.

3.4 The focus groups identified four participants who had held their Blue Badge for one year, or less, and nine participants who had had a Blue Badge for over 20 years; the longest being 26 years.

'I've had a Blue Badge since they were first introduced as Orange Badges.'
(Both driver and passenger, female, 55-64, area of deprivation)

How people initially found out about the Blue Badge Scheme

- 3.5 GPs were the most common way for people to find out about the Blue Badge. The telephone survey responses indicate that 50% of those interviewed said this was how they had found out about the Blue Badge scheme. The vast majority of focus group respondents agreed; stating that they had been recommended to the Scheme by their doctor.⁷

'My GP told me I would be better off with a Badge after my heart attack.'
(Both driver and passenger, male, 65-74, small town)

- 3.6 One parent commented that she had first heard of the Scheme from another parent of a disabled child, while others had found out about the Scheme through their Occupational Therapist or through Social Work.

'My Occupational Therapist told me about it – she thought I could benefit from the Badge because of my wheelchair.'
(Passenger, female, 45-54, small town)

- 3.7 All of the participants from the ethnic minority focus group said that their GP had alerted them to the Scheme. This group felt that the Scheme was well advertised and that people were aware of it.

Application process

- 3.8 Focus group participants discussed the application process. Views were that the ease of the application process was dependent on the individual's circumstances. For example, participants commented that if you were applying for a Blue Badge while in receipt of the Higher Rate of the Mobility Component (HRMC) of Disability Living Allowance (DLA); then the form was simple and could be completed easily. However, if you were not receiving HRMC DLA the application required evidence of the applicant's current medication and a reference from a GP. This was thought to be a long and arduous process.

'There were sixteen pages to complete as part of the application process.....it was like the Spanish Inquisition.'
(Driver, female, 75-84, area of deprivation)

- 3.9 The focus groups revealed that four participants in total had received help completing their application form. This included assistance from Social Work, Citizen's Advice Direct, the Advice Works and a club for people with visual impairments.

⁷ Before BBIS was introduced, the systems for receiving a Blue Badge often pointed people to their GP to get a prior supporting letter.

- 3.10 Participants from the ethnic minority focus group discussed whether there was a need for the application form to be available in languages other than English. The participants felt that this would only be beneficial if the form could also be completed and processed in a language other than English.

'If the form is available in other languages.... it doesn't matter because you have to fill it out in English. If it was in the Punjabi language and (local authority) could read it and process it, then that would be beneficial.'

(Driver, male, 55-64, ethnic minority focus group, urban area).

Re-applications

- 3.11 Currently the Blue Badge is valid for up to three years. The vast majority of focus group participants had held a Blue Badge long enough to have been through a re-application process. There were mixed views about whether this was a simple process. Some described the process as 'tedious', and other views ranged from 'easy' to 'quite difficult' – again, dependent on their level of DLA, if any.

- 3.12 There were two examples of parents whose children held a Blue Badge, but who had had this withdrawn by the local authority because of a change in their eligibility for HRMC DLA, meaning they no longer qualified. One of these parents was actively appealing the decision; while the other had decided not to renew it, because he felt it placed too much pressure on his GP.

'I felt like I was constantly asking my GP to do me favours and write letters of recommendations.'

(Parent, male, area of deprivation)

- 3.13 Another parent had experienced difficulties supplying a suitable photograph of her child for use on the Badge. As her child is in a wheelchair, this parent found it difficult to provide a standard 'passport' style photograph as it was 'impossible' to get their child into the photo booth. She had tried to use existing photographs of her child – cut to size, but these were rejected and as a result, this parent had not renewed her Blue Badge. Other parents had experienced similar problems where photos were rejected because the child was smiling, or could be seen being 'propped up' in the photograph. It should be noted that the Blue Badge application form requires a "passport sized" photograph, and not necessarily a "passport style" photograph. Local authorities should accept any photograph as long as it is of a standard size. Our research has shown that some parents (and perhaps local authorities) have misunderstood the requirement of the application.

'I had to prop her up in the photo booth and had my arm round her waist to keep her upright, but they (photos) were sent back because they were not regulation.'

(Parent, female, 45-54, small town)

Reasons for being issued with a Blue Badge

3.14 The telephone survey collected information about the reasons why the Blue Badge had been issued. Over two-thirds of respondents (69%) indicated that this was because of their difficulty walking; the criteria under which a Badge is issued. However other conditions such as arthritis (23%) and heart problems (20%) were also mentioned as the perceived reasons for having a Blue Badge.

Table 3.1: The reason Blue Badge holder issued with a Blue Badge

Q3 What is the reason you/ the Badge holder have been issued with a Blue Badge?	
Unweighted base: n=812⁸	%
Difficult/ impossible to walk	69
Arthritis	23
Heart problem/ stroke	20
Asthma, breathing difficulties	14
Cancer	4
Multiple sclerosis	4
Blind	3
Osteoporosis	1
Alzheimer's/ Dementia	1
Learning difficulty/ behavioural problem/ Autism	1
Accompanied by medical equipment	<1
Diabetes	<1
Brain issues (i.e. surgery)	<1
Disable - refused to give further details	<1
Parkinson's Disease	<1
Epilepsy	<1
Cerebral Palsy	<1
Prefer not to say	<1
Other	3

How the Blue Badge is used

3.15 Telephone survey respondents and focus group participants were asked whether they used their Blue Badge mostly as the driver, the passenger or a combination of both. Our analysis found that almost half of the telephone respondents (48%) said that they used the Badge as a passenger, with just over a third (35%) being the driver.

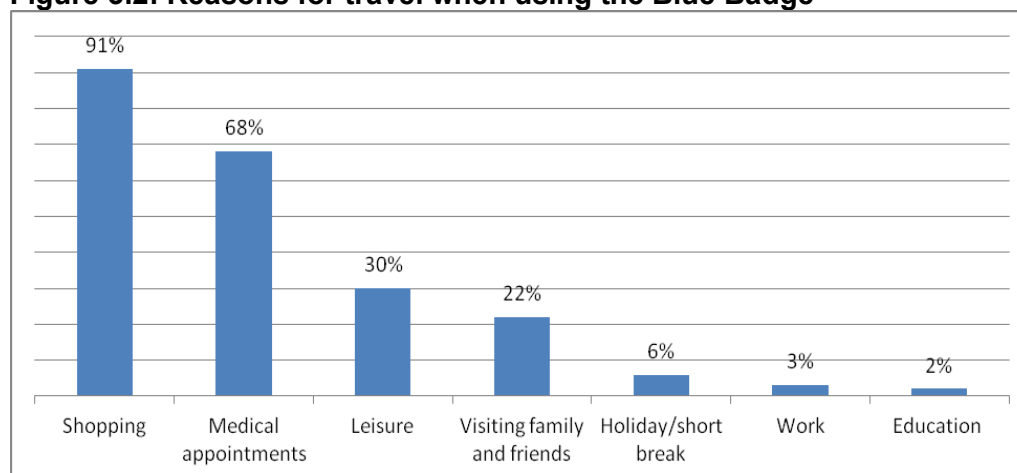
⁸ The total number of respondents to each question is shown either as 'unweighted base' or 'n=xxx'. Where the base or 'n' is less than the total number of respondents, this is because respondents may be routed past some questions if they were not applicable.

- 3.16 Focus group participants tended to be the driver with the Blue Badge. Two-thirds of participants (67%, 45 participants) said they were usually the driver, compared to 19% (13 participants) who were always the passenger. Nine participants (13%) could be either the driver or passenger.
- 3.17 Some of the focus group participants who used a wheelchair stated that they were always the passenger. They relied on friends or family to use their own cars to drive. One participant with visual impairments said that she had a designated carer who was also her driver.
- 3.18 However, many people said that they always took their Badge with them if they were a passenger in another car. This sparked some debate as recipients of the new Blue Badge spoke of being asked to specify three vehicles in which they might travel. Their understanding was that if the Blue Badge was used in a vehicle other than the three specifically registered against the Blue Badge, then the Badge would not be valid. The Blue Badge application form *does* allow applicants to specify vehicles in which the Badge will be used – but this is not compulsory.
- 3.19 Of the 45 participants who identified themselves as the driver with the Blue Badge; 17 were either a parent or carer of the Blue Badge holder. These participants were always the driver for the Blue Badge holder.
- 3.20 Nine focus group participants commented that they could be either the driver or the passenger. Some of these participants had partners who were also Blue Badge holders and as such took turns to be driver or passenger.

Reasons for travel

- 3.21 Our analysis found that 91% used their Blue Badge for shopping and two-thirds (68%) used their Blue Badge for medical appointments. These were also the most commonly mentioned reasons for travel in the focus groups. The small numbers of respondents undertaking work and education reflects the age profile of Blue Badge holders who tend to be older and therefore not in work or education.

Figure 3.2: Reasons for travel when using the Blue Badge



Where parking when using the Blue Badge

3.22 The telephone survey found that those who used their Blue Badge for education, work and shopping were more likely to park in off-street disabled parking bays than other parking locations. And those who used their Blue Badge for leisure or medical appointments were more likely to use on-street disabled parking bays.

Table 3.2: Parking locations when using Blue Badge

Q10 Where do you park using your Blue Badge when travelling for...?															
	Base	Yellow lines (single or double)		On street parking metered bays		On street disabled persons' parking bays		On street parking		Off street disabled persons' parking bays		Off street not in disabled parking bay		Other	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Education	15	1	5	1	5	5	30	2	12	10	67	1	7	0	0
Work	19	1	6	1	4	7	35	3	13	10	47	3	14	0	0
Leisure	234	8	3	5	2	156	64	12	5	117	48	8	3	1	0
Shopping	741	9	1	2	0	144	19	22	3	664	90	23	3	2	0
Medical appointments	549	13	2	6	1	324	59	19	3	273	50	31	6	2	0
Other	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	88	0	0	0	12

3.23 Focus group participants spoke mostly of parking in off-street disabled parking bays, such as supermarket car parks, hospital car parks or shopping malls. Where on-street parking was used, it tended to be single yellow lines although some participants would park on a double yellow line if it was safe.

Main travel times

3.24 The telephone survey asked respondents whether they were likely to travel during the week or at the weekend for the reasons identified in the previous question. This showed that the majority of respondents who used their Blue Badge for education or work did so during the week. On the other hand, when travelling for leisure, shopping purposes and medical appointments the majority of respondents said they did not travel on a specific day for these reasons for travel.

Table 3.3: Travelling during weekdays or weekends

Q8 When do you mainly travel? Is this mainly during or on a weekday, or weekends?				
	Base	% Weekdays	% Weekends	% No usual day of travel
Education	15	90	5	5
Work	19	72	0	28
Leisure	234	8	6	86
Shopping	741	21	8	71
Medical appointments	549	35	4	61
Other	5	43	0	57

- 3.25 Some of the parents of children with Blue Badges commented that their children were collected to and from school by a specially adapted bus, and therefore they tended to only use the Badge afterschool or at weekends when taking the children to activities.
- 3.26 An observation was made at two discussion groups both in urban areas, that it became more difficult to park on the street on a Sunday when restrictions for parking on single yellow lines were relaxed.
- 3.27 The research then went on to explore whether there was a particular time of day when Blue Badge holders tended to travel. From the telephone survey, the majority of those who used their Blue Badge for travelling to work said they travelled in the early morning (60%). However for leisure, shopping and medical appointments the majority said the time of day varied. Those who used their Blue Badge for education tended to travel between the hours of 9am and 5pm.

Table 3.4: Particular times of travel

Q9 And is there a particular time of day or times of day when you normally travel for...?															
	Base	Early morning (7am-9am)		Late morning (9am - 12noon)		Early afternoon (12noon - 3pm)		Late afternoon (3pm - 5pm)		Early evening (5pm - 7pm)		Evenings after 7pm		No main time of travel/ varies	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Education	15	3	19	5	36	4	25	6	36	1	6	0	0	4	28
Work	19	13	60	4	21	2	10	3	12	3	12	0	0	5	26
Leisure	234	5	2	19	8	19	8	2	1	4	2	8	3	194	79
Shopping	741	5	0	99	13	91	12	17	2	12	2	4	1	529	71
Medical appointments	549	8	2	56	10	44	8	11	2	2	0	1	0	450	82
Other	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	100

- 3.28 Focus group participants agreed that there was no consistent time of the day for using their Blue Badges. Two participants used the Blue Badge daily to park at work, while another used the Badge to drop her children off at school. These drivers were travelling in the early morning and again in the afternoon or evening.
- 3.29 Two groups of participants commented on the volunteering work they undertake which requires them to use the Badge in the evenings. Others used the Badge in the evenings for special occasions or for trips to the theatre, or cinema.

‘Sometimes I’d use it at night if there was somewhere special to go.’

(Driver, male, 55-64, ethnic minority focus group, urban)

Frequency of using the Blue Badge

3.30 The telephone survey found that those who used their Blue Badge for education were most likely to use their Badge between four and seven times per week (59%). On the other hand, those who used their Blue Badge for work, leisure and shopping were most likely to use their Badge two or three times per week (45%, 39%, and 48%, respectively). Those who used their Badge for medical appointments did so less frequently (less than once per week, 57%).

Table 3.5: Number of times Blue Badge is used in a week

Q11 On average how many times do you use the Blue Badge in a week when travelling for...?											
	Base	Less than once per week		Once		2-3 times		4-7 times		More than 7 times	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Education	15	2	13	1	7	2	12	9	59	2	10
Work	19	1	5	3	13	10	45	6	27	2	10
Leisure	234	30	12	50	20	95	39	46	19	24	10
Shopping	741	54	7	192	26	356	48	103	14	36	5
Medical appointments	549	312	57	127	23	63	11	28	5	19	4
Other	5	1	37	0	0	0	5	1	22	1	36

3.31 The focus group discussions touched on how often Blue Badge holders were using their Badge. Not everyone used their Blue Badge on a daily basis. Some used it only a few times a week – most notably to attend hospital or other medical appointments.

'I go to a clinic three times a week for about three hours at a time.'

(Carer, male, 55-64, urban)

3.32 Some participants however claimed to be using the Badge in some capacity every day.

'I never have it (the Blue Badge) off my windscreen.'

(Driver, female, 55-64, small town)

'For me, it's 24/7.'

(Driver, male, 45-54, small town)

Length of time parking using the Blue Badge

3.33 Our analysis found that the length of time parked using the Blue Badge varied according to the reason for travel.

3.34 Survey respondents and focus group participants who were working could be using their Badge to park for up to seven hours at a time. In the focus groups, this included both a private office car park, but another was on-street.

- 3.35 The telephone survey found that respondents who used their Badge for shopping or for medical appointments were most likely to park for between 30 and 60 minutes. Focus group participants undertaking these activities indicated they would park for longer – typically between one and two hours.
- 3.36 Some focus group participants who had received their Blue Badge recently had a timer issued with their Badge. This was to restrict their parking in certain locations to three hours maximum. Currently these time restrictions are only applicable in England. The timers prompted discussions in four of the groups about whether there should be time restricted parking for disabled people. Some felt the restrictions were unnecessary, while others were not fazed by having a time limit on their parking and felt that three hours was enough time to undertake most tasks.

'Why should there be time restrictions? If you want to shop, or meet a friend for lunch....it's going to force people to restrict what they do.'

(Carer, female, 55-64, small town)

'It depends on the mobility of the individual as to whether the time limit is restrictive.'

(Carer, male, 75-84, small town)

Distance travelled with the Blue Badge

- 3.37 Focus group participants commented on using their Blue Badges to travel further afield. England was mentioned as a destination, as was mainland Europe and two parents stated they had used the Blue Badge in America⁹. The majority of participants however had used the Badge in Scotland, and predominantly in their local area.

Lack of Blue Badge spaces

- 3.38 There was a consensus generally among focus group participants that there are not enough Blue Badge spaces available. This was most notable in private car parks. Specifically mentioned were that some hospitals had a lack of disabled parking spaces.

'[Hospital] does have a shortage of spaces.'

(Driver, male, 65-74, small town)

'Disabled parking at the hospital is insufficient and too far away from the entrance.'

(Driver, male, 65-74, urban)

- 3.39 There were two examples from participants in different groups who had telephoned the hospital from the car park to cancel their appointments as they were unable to find a disabled parking space. Others spoke of their frequent

⁹ There are no reciprocal Blue Badge arrangements with countries outside Europe.

frustrations at being late for hospital appointments because of difficulties finding a suitable disabled parking bay.

3.40 There were several examples from different locations, where the disabled passenger had to be 'dropped off' at the destination while the driver then went to look for a regular parking place because of a lack of spaces.

3.41 The parents spoke of often having to drop off their children at hospitals while they found a parking space. They did not always feel comfortable doing this.

'I've had to drop her off and leave her with the receptionist at the hospital while I find a space. It's not too bad now that she's older, but when she was young; it was a nightmare.'

(Parent, female, 35-44, urban)

3.42 In supermarkets, some participants mentioned that if they found there were no Blue Badge spaces available; they would park in a 'parent and child' space as they were perceived to be of a similar width to a disabled parking space. This allowed more room to manoeuvre in and out of the car.

'If there are no Blue Badge spaces left, then I use the parent and child spaces because they are often closer to the door and just as wide.'

(Passenger, female, 65-74, rural)

3.43 Others had examples of going out for the day, and not being able to find a disabled parking space and having to return home without getting out of the car.

'We went to St Andrew's for the day, but we drove round and round and eventually gave up and came home again. We never got out of the car.'

(Driver, male, 65-74, small town)

Summary

3.44 The research included people who were new to the Blue Badge scheme; having their Badges only a matter of months, as well as those who had held a Blue Badge for over 20 years.

3.45 GPs were the most common way of finding out about the Blue Badge scheme. The ease of applying to the Scheme varied depending on whether the applicant was in receipt of the Higher Rate of the Mobility Component of DLA (HRMCDLA). Where this was the case, the form was easy to complete; but without this HRMCDLA component, the application form required evidence of the applicant's disability.

3.46 Our analysis found that almost half of the respondents (48%) said that they used the Badge as a passenger, with just over a third (35%) being the driver. However, focus group participants tended to be the driver, rather than the passenger (67% and 13% respectively).

- 3.47 Telephone survey analysis found that 91% of people used their Blue Badge for shopping and two-thirds (68%) for medical appointments. These were also the most commonly mentioned reasons for travel in the focus groups.
- 3.48 Focus group participants spoke mostly of parking in off street disabled parking bays, such as supermarket car parks, hospital car parks or shopping malls. Where on-street parking was used, it tended to be single yellow lines although some participants would park on a double yellow line if it was safe.
- 3.49 There was no consistent time of day or day of the week when Blue Badge holders used their Badges – it was dependent on the reason for their journey. Some commented that using the Badge was more difficult at weekends due to the reduced parking restrictions on single yellow lines and the increased volume of traffic.
- 3.50 There was consensus among both telephone and focus group participants that there was a general lack of Blue Badge parking space provision. This was most noticeable in hospital car parks as well as on-street provision in town centres.

4. VALUE OF THE BLUE BADGE

Introduction

- 4.1 Participants were asked to discuss the benefits of having a Blue Badge and the difference it has made to their lives. The discussion then focused on what the participants' circumstances would be without the Badge and the impact this could have on them.

The benefits of having a Blue Badge

- 4.2 Those taking part in the telephone survey were asked about the two most important aspects of having a Blue Badge. Three-quarters of respondents (75%) said that being able to park closer to their destination was the most important 'benefit' of the Badge. The second most important aspect was wider parking bays (36%).

Table 4.1: Most important aspects of having a Blue Badge

Q16 What aspects of having a Blue Badge are most important to you?				
Unweighted base: n=812	Top		Second	
	No.	%	No.	%
The comfort it allows	15	2	39	5
Park for free/ financial benefits	10	1	17	2
Park closer to my destination	610	75	116	14
Saves time/ convenience	37	5	140	17
Peace of mind	29	4	82	10
Wider parking bay	54	7	290	36
Independence	54	7	124	15
Saves money	1	<1%	2	<1%
Other	4	1	4	1

- 4.3 Disabled participants in the focus group discussions were most likely to say that independence was the most important aspect of the Blue Badge. They stated that having the Badge allowed them to remain mobile and enabled them to get out of the house.

'The Blue Badge enables me to get out and about more.'

(Driver, female, 65-74, rural)

'The Badge keeps you independent – and for longer.'

(Driver, male, 45-54, small town)

- 4.4 Linked to the idea of independence was that the Blue Badge helped contribute towards a better quality of life, ensuring that participants were able to get out and about.

'What a difference it makes to get out; to be part of the community and this leads to better health.'

(Driver, female, 75-84, area of deprivation)

- 4.5 One participant commented that the Badge had helped to restore her confidence after suffering a stroke. She was now able to get out of the house and do things on her own.

'It has given me confidence to go out by myself and to drive again.'

(Driver, female, 55-64, small town)

- 4.6 Practical considerations of having the Blue Badge were also mentioned by focus group participants and particularly the parents of disabled children who commented that the wider spaces were important to be able to get wheelchairs and other medical equipment out of the car.

'The wide space is tremendous for the wheelchair.'

(Driver, female, 75-84, area of deprivation)

'The extra space of the wider spaces means we are not rushed or stressed and this makes a huge difference.'

(Parent, female, small town)

- 4.7 The location of the Blue Badge spaces, closer to the final destination was also mentioned as a benefit of having the Badge.

- 4.8 Others felt a 'peace of mind' knowing that they would (in most cases) be able to find a disabled parking space and therefore the Blue Badge took the stress out of driving.

'You're not stressed because there is a better chance of getting a space.'

(Carer, male, 75-84, small town)

- 4.9 The majority of focus group participants did not mention any particular financial benefits of the Blue Badge, although it was discussed in two groups. One group stated that the Blue Badge was more convenient than having to pay at a meter. And another group discussed the savings that could be made from not having to pay to park the car as well as the savings from road tax exemption (for those in receipt of certain benefits).

'A couple of times a month into town is all it takes to rack up a cost in parking.'

(Both driver and passenger, male, 65-74, small town)

Value for money

4.10 Focus groups discussed the cost and value for money of the Blue Badge. We found that charges for the Blue Badge varied by local authority area. In our focus group locations, participants indicated that Badges were issued for three years at the following cost:

- South Ayrshire and North Lanarkshire – the Badge is free
- West Dunbartonshire - £2.50
- Edinburgh, Glasgow and Renfrewshire - £20.

4.11 The participants were divided in their views over the payment for a Blue Badge. Some people felt that the Badge should be free; particularly for those on DLA or other benefits.

4.12 Others felt that the one off payment for the Blue Badge demonstrated good value for money considering the potential cost of parking without the Blue Badge.

'For me to park normally; it would cost me more than £20 in three years.'
(Driver, male, 75-84, rural)

'It's better to pay for it than go without.'
(Driver, female, 55-64, rural)

4.13 Two participants (from separate focus group discussions) felt strongly that if there was to be a charge for the Badge that the cost should be the same across all local authorities.

'I think that all councils should charge the same –it's totally unfair that all Badges are a different price.'
(Driver, male, 65-74, small town)

'There is nothing wrong with the Blue Badge scheme – it's the best scheme the Government ever thought of but the disparity in costs between local authorities is ridiculous.'
(Driver, male, 45-54, small town)

4.14 The consultation on Blue Badge reform¹⁰ that took place in July 2010 asked about the cost of a Blue Badge. The consultation asked whether people felt it should be mandatory for all local authorities to charge a fee of £20 for every application? Respondents to the consultation opposed this proposal. The most common reason given for opposition was that disabled people could not afford the charge.

4.15 Comments from several of the focus groups indicated that some participants believed the Badge should be a reduced price for those receiving benefits. However, others felt that this type of 'means testing' would create 'another

¹⁰ Scottish Government, Blue Badge Reform: Consultation Analysis Report, 2010

layer of bureaucracy’ and if there was to be a charge for the Badge; it should be the same for everyone.

‘There should be a set rate and rules for all Blue Badges –it shouldn’t be different by authority.’

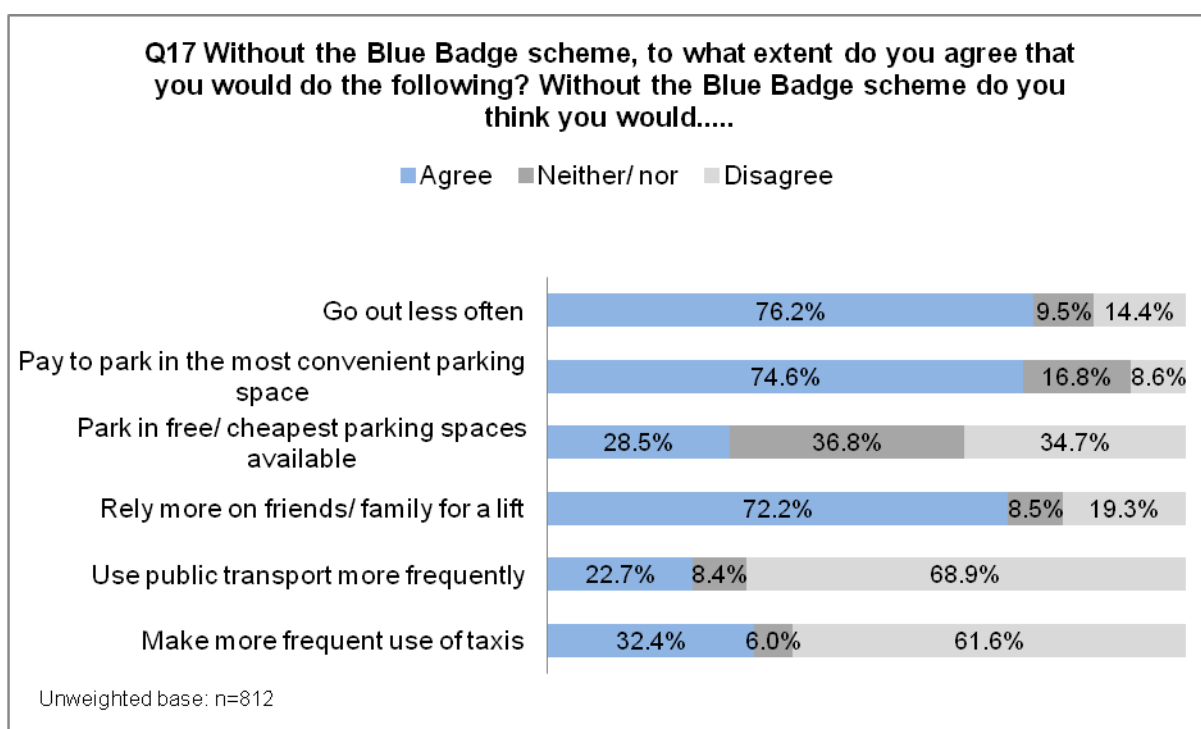
(Driver, male, 65-74, small town)

Circumstances without the Blue Badge

4.16 Telephone respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with various statements about the Blue Badge scheme. This revealed that:

- over three-quarters (76%) agreed they would go out less often without a Blue Badge;
- three-quarters (75%) would pay to park in a convenient parking space; and
- 72% would have to rely on friends and family to drive them if they did not have a Blue Badge.

Figure 4.1: Circumstances if without a Blue Badge



4.17 Focus group participants agreed with the findings from the telephone survey. Several indicated that without their Blue Badge, they would not go out as often; or for some, they would not go out at all.

‘I could not go out the house without my Badge –it’s amazing.’

(Driver, female, 65-74, rural)

'I would be housebound without it.'

(Passenger, female, 65-74, area of deprivation)

- 4.18 Parents in the group we spoke to said that not having a Badge was a 'deterrent' to going out. This was because of the inconvenience of having to manoeuvre into a normal parking space. Many of the parents had specially adapted cars with ramps for wheelchairs and found that these could be difficult to park without the extra width of a disabled space.
- 4.19 Focus group participants were strongly against the idea of having to rely on other people to drive them if they found themselves without a Blue Badge. One participant said this was 'an infringement' of her 'human rights' as relying on others put strains on relationships and did not help to retain her independence.
- 4.20 Others commented that it could become difficult to rely on friends and family – particularly when this could potentially become a regular request.

'People have no time for you – and you don't want to be a burden.'

(Driver, male, 65-74, ethnic minority focus group, urban)

The Use of Public Transport

- 4.21 The telephone survey revealed that over three-quarters (76%) of respondents had a free bus pass or concessionary travel pass. Despite this, only 23% of respondents thought that using public transport was an alternative if they did not have a Blue Badge.
- 4.22 Focus group participants stated that public transport was not really a viable alternative to travelling in a car with a Blue Badge. Firstly was the issue of spontaneity. Participants said that journeys on public transport had to be pre-arranged with the bus or train company.

'You can't just decide you want to go somewhere – you have to book the ramp in advance.'

(Both driver and passenger, female, 55-64, area of deprivation).

- 4.23 Secondly, participants indicated the issue of bus drivers and staff on trains not being 'disability aware'. There were three examples from different focus groups of disabled passengers asking the bus driver not to move off until they were seated – in two of these examples, the bus drove away and both participants had fallen on the bus.

'I don't like the bus; I'm a bit shaky; I ring the bell and then they jam the brakes on to see how far they can throw you down the bus.'

(Driver, male, 65-74, small town)

'I find bus drivers to be impatient and rude. I ask them not to drive away until I've sat down, but this never happens. I've fallen a few times.'

(Driver, female, 55-64, rural)

- 4.24 Financial implications were mentioned as a third reason why public transport – or specifically taxis in this case could not be a viable alternative to using a Blue Badge. This was particularly a problem in rural areas. Participants here spoke of spending more than the cost of the Blue Badge to undertake one trip by taxi.

'A round trip from home to the shops was £34.'

(Driver, male, 65-74, rural)

'My son had to spend £70 in a taxi to and from Aberdeen because the bus refused to take him because he had not called ahead to tell them he would be using his wheelchair on the bus.'

(Parent, female, 45-54, rural)

- 4.25 The unreliability of public transport also put people off from travelling – having to wait long periods of time or having to change trains or buses because of breakdowns were all 'stressful' situations for Blue Badge holders and their carers.

'Buses are exhausting and are not flexible enough in the routes they take.'

(Driver, male, 65-74, urban)

- 4.26 Similarly, finding a space for a wheelchair on buses or trains was thought to be very difficult – especially at busy times. Examples were given of the disabled spaces on trains being used for luggage storage, or parents with prams getting priority over the disabled bays on buses.

Summary

- 4.27 Telephone respondents indicated that the value of the Badge was that they could park closer to their destination and benefit from the wider parking bays. While these were also mentioned as benefits by the focus group participants; for them, the greatest value of the Badge was securing their independence and ability to 'get out and about' allowing a certain quality of life.
- 4.28 Without the Blue Badge, most people agreed that they would go out less often. Three-quarters (76%) of the telephone respondents said this, and there was similar feeling among the focus group participants. Some went so far as to say they would be 'housebound' without their Blue Badge and for one participant it allowed her to continue working. Parents said that they would be especially put off from travelling with children without their Badges.
- 4.29 Public transport was not perceived as a viable alternative to the Blue Badge. Having to plan ahead to ensure suitable arrangements were in place put people off and took the spontaneity out of travelling. Others were put off by the unreliability of public transport and having to negotiate on and off the bus, often without assistance.

5. RESTRICTIONS AND ENFORCEMENTS

Introduction

- 5.1 The research asked about the rules and restrictions of using a Blue Badge and what the penalties should be for misuse. This section of the report details the findings from the telephone survey and the focus group discussions (including the mini group with young people).

Blue Badge booklet

- 5.2 Telephone survey respondents were specifically asked if they have, or were aware of the Blue Badge Users booklet which is distributed with the Badge giving details of how and where it can be used. Over three-quarters (78%) of respondents indicated that they either had, or were aware of the booklet. Three focus group participants spontaneously mentioned the booklet during the discussions.

Understanding of rules and restrictions

- 5.3 Ninety-two per cent of survey respondents felt they had a good understanding of the rules and restrictions of using their Blue Badge.
- 5.4 Focus group participants however, debated the rules on where Blue Badge holders were able to park. For example, there were contradictory views expressed by a number of participants, as to whether Blue Badge holders could park on double yellow lines.

'No one can park on a double yellow line.'

(Both driver and passenger, male, 65-74, small town)

'You can park on double yellow as long as there is no sign about a loading bay and you're not blocking an entrance.'

(Driver, male, 65-74, small town)

'If you're parked on a double yellow line you have to display the clock to show how long you intend to park.'

(Driver, male, 65-74, small town)

'A single yellow is ok, but no one can park on a double yellow line.'

(Driver, male, 55-64, ethnic minority focus group, urban)

- 5.5 Three discussion groups commented that they felt they understood the rules about parking; but that some traffic wardens and police did not. Eight participants had received a ticket for parking on a single or double yellow line while displaying their Blue Badge.

'I understand where I can park – but they [traffic wardens] don't.'

(Driver, male, 65-74, small town)

5.6 One participant gave an example of arguing with a traffic warden about parking on a double yellow line. This participant used the booklet that accompanied the Blue Badge to show the warden that he was entitled to park there.

5.7 Also causing confusion was the introduction of a 'clock timer' with Badges issued in the last few months. These timers restrict parking to three hours but are only applicable in England. There was confusion among participants if these were to be used for on street parking, or, as some people suggested, were for use only in England and Wales.

'The timer lets you park on a double yellow line for up to three hours.'
(Driver, male, 55-64, rural)

'The timer lets you park for three hours; you'll get a ticket if you're in a Blue Badge space, but the timer has run out.'
(Driver, male, 55-64, ethnic minority focus group, urban)

'I renewed the Badge and got a clock – but it's only for use in England.'
(Both driver and passenger, male, 65-74, small town)

5.8 Two focus group participants who had used their Scottish issued Blue Badge in England and had been given a parking ticket because they had not displayed their 'clock timer' – despite not being issued with one. Another participant had been lent a clock from his local authority for use during a holiday in England.

5.9 Those participants who had held their Badge for a number of years did not have, or were unaware of, the introduction of a timer.

5.10 Focus group participants spoke of sometimes not being aware whether certain locations were 'Blue Badge friendly' and there were examples of people 'taking the chance' and parking without knowing whether there were restrictions in place. One example was a parent who parked in a loading bay on a Sunday, when the bay was not in use – but who received a parking ticket.

'Often I just park and wait to see if I get a ticket.'
(Parent, male, 35-44, urban)

'I'm never really sure where I can park, but I tend to try it once to see if I can get away with it, and if so; I'll come back.'
(Parent, female, 35-44, urban)

5.11 Focus group participants and telephone respondents (82%) indicated that there were places they avoid driving to or visiting because of parking restrictions with the Blue Badge scheme.

5.12 Just under 1 in 5 of the telephone survey respondents (18%) indicated that there were some places they avoided driving to or visiting because of restrictions with the Blue Badge Scheme. In the focus groups, some people,

including several of the parents said that they tried to avoid on-street parking because of the difficulties in getting a wheelchair and ramp from the back of the car into the street.

'I avoid parking on single or double yellow lines – it is impossible to get the wheelchair and ramp out the back if someone parks close by – even with the 'leave three metres' sticker on the back.'

(Carer, female, 65-74, small town)

- 5.13 Aberdeen City has a Green Badge scheme (although this scheme has no legislative basis). This is available to people living in the local authority area who find it difficult to use other designated city centre spaces. The Green Badge allows access to certain specially reserved kerbside spaces in this city centre. Eligibility for a Green Badge is for those who find it difficult to use other designated parking facilities for people with disabilities. The Green Badge spaces allow for getting out from a vehicle either by a side ramp or tail lift. Kerbs have been lowered at every Green Badge location¹¹.
- 5.14 Green Badge holders may park for a maximum period of three hours in the specially designated spaces. This is regulated by the use of a windscreen parking disc which must be displayed to show the time of arrival.
- 5.15 Participants in the neighbouring rural local authority area who frequently travelled to the city centre were confused about the introduction of the Green Badge spaces and who could park in them. One participant had received a ticket for parking in a Green Badge space while displaying her Blue Badge. There was concern from participants in this rural area that the Green Badge spaces now took priority over a Blue Badge space.

'Now the Blue Badge spaces are even further away.'

(Driver, male, 75-84, rural)

Designated disabled parking bays

- 5.16 Eight participants taking part in the focus groups revealed that they had a designated disabled parking bay outside their home. Disabled parking bays are allocated by local authorities where it is considered that the circumstances warrant such action. The parking bay was not intended however to be for the sole use of a particular individual, although some local authorities did allocate the bays in this way. Disabled parking bays may legitimately be used by any Blue Badge holder, despite the perception of these participants who believed the bay was for their own use.
- 5.17 One participant spoke of having to liaise with Social Work for six months in order to get the disabled parking bay. Since it has been installed outside his house, he has been unable to use it as his neighbour (also a Blue Badge holder) parks in it for days at a time.

¹¹ www.aberdeencity.gov.uk

'There is no marking indicating who the bay is for...so it can be used by other Blue Badge holders. It's ridiculous that I can't use my own parking bay.'
(Driver, male, 65-74, ethnic minority focus group, urban)

- 5.18 Another focus group participant with a disabled parking bay outside her house was the parent of a child who had recently had her Blue Badge status withdrawn. This meant that without the Blue Badge, she could, and had been given, a parking ticket for parking her car in her 'own' designated parking space. This space still had her house number painted on it.
- 5.19 These eight participants believed that recently the rules of parking bays had changed, and where it used to be that the disabled parking bay was assigned to their particular address; this was no longer the case. Participants indicated that 'their' disabled bays could now be used by any Blue Badge holder.

'Anyone can park in a Blue Badge parking bay – it's not fair.'
(Parent, female, 35-44, small town)

- 5.20 The change in the rules about disabled parking bays is that they are now enforceable.¹² Disabled bays have always been capable of being used by any vehicle displaying a valid badge. Any designation of a particular car or house number using the bay was a local arrangement with the council with no legal backing.

Using the Blue Badge if the disabled person is not in the car

- 5.21 Focus groups discussed the issue of carers using the Blue Badge when the holder was not in the car. The rules state that this is not allowed. There were mixed views with some people claiming that they continued to use disabled bays, if carrying out tasks on behalf of the disabled person (even if they were not in the car). Others firmly believed that if the Blue Badge holder was not present – there was no need to take up a Blue Badge space.

'I use it a lot of the time, even when my partner isn't with me. If I'm the carer; then it's allowed.'
(Driver, male, 65-74, rural)

'They're allowed to use the Badge if they are shopping for you. It says so in the book.'
(Driver, female, 55-64, small town)

- 5.22 One disabled participant indicated that even if he was present in the car, but was not getting out; then he would park in a normal space – not a disabled space.

'If I'm not getting out of the car then I'm not entitled to use the space.'
(Driver, male, 75-84, rural)

¹² Disabled Persons Parking Places (Scotland) Act, 2009

- 5.23 Parents also commented that they would hand the Blue Badge over to childminders, or carers so that the Badge ‘accompanies the child’ as it was for their benefit; not the benefit of the driver.

Misuse of the Blue Badge

- 5.24 Over three-quarters (76%) of the telephone survey respondents indicated that they had ‘regularly or sometimes’ experienced misuse of the Blue Badge scheme. Seventeen per cent however said that they had never experienced it.
- 5.25 Telephone survey respondents who had witnessed misuse of the Badge reported that this was most likely in a supermarket or private shopping mall car park (92%).
- 5.26 Focus group participants gave many examples of people misusing disabled parking bays. Again, this tended to be in supermarket or private shopping mall car parks. One focus group believed that the misuse of Badges (either fake or stolen Badges) was a problem. The majority of focus group participants felt that people parking in disabled parking spaces without displaying a Blue Badge was a serious problem.
- 5.27 The focus group participants perceived that often it was ‘young, professionals’ who were the ‘worst offenders’ as well as those with expensive cars who used the wider disabled bays to ensure no one damaged their cars. Also noted for misusing spaces were taxi drivers and ‘young mothers’.

‘They think it’s their God given right to park wherever they want.’

(Passenger, female, 65-74, area of deprivation)

‘Taxi drivers reverse into the spaces and sit and wait for a pick up.’

(Carer, male, 75-84, small town)

- 5.28 Participants had been active in challenging people who parked in disabled spaces. Some had asked people to move their cars, while others had double parked people into the space so they could not leave; left messages on windscreens; or uploaded photographs of the offending car to the internet in a bid to ‘name and shame’.

‘I park behind them and deliberately take twice as long. There’s nothing they can do because they are in the wrong.’

(Driver, male, 55-64, rural area)

‘I watched a woman pull into the disabled space in front of me; when I challenged her, she just ignored me and walked off, so I left a note on her windscreen in lipstick.’

(Parent, female, 35-44, urban)

'I have stickers that I stick to their windscreens that say 'you have parked in a disabled bay without a Blue Badge. I am reporting you.' It's supposed to be a deterrent – and the stickers are a nightmare to get off.'

(Driver, male, 45-54, small town)

- 5.29 The young people we spoke to from the Whizz Kidz project in Edinburgh had strong views about people parking in disabled spaces without a Blue Badge. They had decided to launch their own campaign to raise awareness of the need for disabled spaces for disabled people.

'It makes me angry; it's not our fault we need to use the spaces.'

(Young female, 14 years)

'It's annoying because they don't really need it.'

(Young female, 13 years)

- 5.30 Their campaign slogan was entitled *'If you ain't Blue; this space ain't for you'* and was being used on posters and leaflets to be distributed around the local area.

Lending the Blue Badge to others

- 5.31 The vast majority of telephone survey respondents said that they had never been asked by anyone to borrow their Badge. Two per cent (or 15 individuals) said that they had lent their Badge to someone else. One focus group participant indicated he had been asked to photocopy his Badge so a family member could also use it – but he refused. Lending the Badge to others is an offence and could result in a £1,000 fine.

- 5.32 Focus group participants agreed that they were 'too fearful' to lend their Badges to others, in case they were caught and the Badge subsequently withdrawn.

'I wouldn't lend my Badge to anyone – it's £1000 if you get caught.'

(Driver, male, 75-84, small town)

- 5.33 The Blue Badge was viewed as something of value, that was to be looked after and would be very much missed if it was withdrawn.

Enforcement of the Blue Badge Scheme

- 5.34 One third of telephone respondents indicated that they agreed the Blue Badge scheme is adequately enforced while 50% disagreed that the Scheme was being enforced.

- 5.35 Focus group participants also had mixed views about whether the Scheme was adequately enforced. No-one had ever heard of anyone being prosecuted for misusing a Badge. Those parking on the street on single or double yellow lines found that they did encounter traffic wardens – but that the wardens did not understand the rules and restrictions of the Scheme.

Participants called for better education of the Blue Badge scheme for traffic wardens.

'I parked on the street and had the Badge on display – but I got a ticket because I didn't put any money in the meter.'

(Driver, female, 65-74, small town)

- 5.36 Several participants had been issued with parking tickets for not displaying their Badge correctly. They felt that the Scheme was being enforced and although receiving a ticket – were glad that vehicles were being checked.
- 5.37 Privately owned off-street car parks, such as supermarkets or shopping centres had different levels of enforcement. Some participants said their local shopping centre had introduced a warden who could check Blue Badges, while others said that there were no checks on the parking at all – which they felt led to the widespread misuse of the spaces.

'Supermarkets should be doing more to enforce the parking Badge, but they don't want to upset their shoppers.'

(Driver, male, 45-54, small town)

Penalties for misuse

- 5.38 The participants discussed what they felt would be appropriate punishments for those misusing disabled parking bays. Suggestions included:
- fines;
 - clamping;
 - towing; and
 - penalty points.
- 5.39 One participant also suggested that the supermarket chain should be fined as it is their statutory duty to ensure that the disabled parking bays they provide are able to be used for that purpose.

'Enforce it so it hits their pockets – the same as for a parking fine.'

(Driver, male, 65-74, small town)

'There is a law in the Disability Discrimination Act that states that anyone who provides disabled bays is responsible to make sure those spaces are used by disabled people.'

(Passenger, female, 45-54, small town)

Eligibility to the Blue Badge Scheme

- 5.40 Eighty-eight per cent of telephone survey respondents indicated that they thought that the entitlements of the Blue Badge scheme were appropriate. Those who felt it was not appropriate suggested that there should be stricter rules and enforcements (29%) and that some people get a Badge who do not need it (21%).
- 5.41 Focus group respondents believed a Blue Badge should be given to anyone with a physical disability and those with mobility problems. Some participants mentioned that those with learning disabilities should also automatically qualify for a Blue Badge.
- 5.42 Focus group participants thought that the Blue Badge should not be based on age. Participants in the ethnic minority focus group indicated that they knew of many people who were still driving into their 90s who had no mobility problems. They felt that entitlement should be based only on mobility.
- 5.43 Some participants indicated they felt strongly that the current eligibility was too lenient. It was suggested that anyone with a good relationship with their GP could be given a Blue Badge.
- 5.44 The focus group participants were able to recite examples of people they knew who had been given a Blue Badge for reasons, they perceived to be unfair. These included obesity, alcoholism, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

'They got a Blue Badge from their GP because their child has behavioural problems – but he doesn't really need it.'

(Parent, female, 45-54, urban)

- 5.45 The group of parents of disabled children commented that there was 'ambiguity' surrounding the criteria for eligibility – particularly for children under three years old.
- 5.46 There were some complaints from parents and other participants that they had had to be examined by a GP, nominated by their local authority rather than their own GP, before being allocated a Blue Badge. Participants felt inconvenienced by this.

'We had to see a GP that was assigned by the local authority, which was a total waste of time. Surely your own GP knows the situation better.'

(Parent, male, 45-54, urban)

Temporary Badges

- 5.47 In addition to the perception that people were awarded Badges who did not need them; was the idea that a Badge could be awarded for longer than was necessary. Some participants knew of others who had been awarded a Blue Badge which was valid for three years – despite having a temporary mobility

issue, such as a broken leg, or recovering from surgery. The Blue Badge Scheme does issue temporary badges for up to one year to applicants who are unable to walk, or virtually unable to walk because of a “temporary but substantial” disability which is likely to last for a period of at least 12 months but less than three years. This is unique to Scotland.

- 5.48 Five of the focus groups discussed this issue spontaneously. The majority agreed that the introduction of a temporary Blue Badge would be a good idea; one that comes with an expiry date and is distinct in colour from the ‘Blue’ Badge.
- 5.49 Parents felt that if a temporary Badge was ‘one less thing to worry about’ for their children; then it should be rolled out.
- 5.50 Only one participant voiced their objection – stating that a Blue Badge should only be for those with long term mobility issues.

Stigma with using a Blue Badge

- 5.51 Focus group participants spoke about the issue of stigma, and the problems associated with being a Blue Badge holder but not ‘looking like a disabled person’. One young participant in her 30s spoke of being challenged regularly while dropping her children off at school.

‘They see me with a buggy and I get looks for parking in a disabled space. I don’t look like the type to have a Blue Badge.’

(Parent, female, 35-44, rural)

- 5.52 Participants agreed that there is a ‘stigma’ about having a Blue Badge and that people expect you to be older or in a wheelchair. Another young participant told of how she had been challenged – predominantly by older people for parking in a disabled space.

‘My response was...’I don’t have a blue rinse; but I do have a Blue Badge.’

(Driver, female, 55-64, rural)

- 5.53 Another participant spoke of how he often felt ‘guilty’ for getting out of the car with his wife, who had a Badge based on her heart condition. He was convinced that ‘someone will think I’m at it.’

‘To look at us we look like a perfectly healthy couple.’

(Carer, male, 75-84, small town)

- 5.54 Parents also had experiences of being challenged for not ‘looking disabled’ – despite having their disabled children in the car, and in some cases ‘wheelchairs clearly visible’. They felt they had to ‘prove’ they were entitled to park in disabled spaces, while some commented that they drove adapted cars with ramps and questioned why anyone would then challenge them. These parents commented that another benefit of the Blue Badge was its ability to prove the need for the space.

'Other drivers scrutinise you and your children to see that there is a genuine disability.'

(Parent, female, small town)

What Blue Badge holders should be able to do

- 5.55 Focus group participants were asked what Blue Badge holders should be able to do; where they should be allowed to park; and what the restrictions of use should be. Participants agreed that they should be able to use the Badge anywhere as long as they were not causing an obstruction.

'Anytime we need it – as long as we're not abusing it; no double yellow lines or in dangerous places.'

(Both driver and passenger, female, 55-64, area of deprivation)

Suggested improvements to the Blue Badge Scheme

- 5.56 During the course of conducting the qualitative research, participants offered suggestions on how they thought the Blue Badge scheme should operate. These are as follows:

- **Photograph:** Participants suggested that the photograph that appears on the Blue Badge should be displayed while parking. Currently the photograph on the Badge is not displayed as Blue Badge holders must display the expiry date on their Badge. Participants suggested that if the photograph were to be displayed; this would cut down on fraudulent use of the Badge. However, some participants did not agree with this suggestion, claiming that displaying the photograph could alert others to a 'vulnerable' person or infringe the Blue Badge holder's right to privacy. In addition, some parents indicated that they had experienced difficulty in providing a 'passport style' photograph because they could not get their children into a photo booth. However, the application asks for a 'passport sized' photograph; which could be any photograph, cut to a standard size. It would be beneficial if this subtle difference could be communicated to Blue Badge applicants and local authorities, who had rejected some photographs unnecessarily because they were not 'passport style'.
- **Cost of the Blue Badge:** During the course of our qualitative research we discovered that the cost of the Blue Badge varies by local authority. Each authority decides the charge for the Badge; which varied from being free in North Lanarkshire and South Ayrshire, to £20 in Renfrewshire, Edinburgh and Glasgow. This was for use for three years. Participants at the groups indicated that the charge of £20 still demonstrated reasonable value for money, when compared to the cost of parking charges. However, there was concern at the discrepancy between authorities. Some participants called for a universal cost to be set so that no one was paying more for the Badge than others.

- **Clearer rules and regulations:** The telephone survey identified that the majority of people felt they understood the rules and regulations of parking with a Blue Badge. However, the focus group discussions revealed discrepancies in peoples' understanding of the Scheme. Particular issues of contention included whether parking on a double yellow line was allowed; and whether there were restrictions on the length of time that a Blue Badge allowed you to park. The introduction of a 'clock timer' had also confused participants as to whether this was for use on double yellow lines – or only in England as some participants suggested.
- **Disability awareness training:** Some participants commented that their own knowledge of the Blue Badge scheme was good – but some traffic wardens and police did not understand the rules of where parking was allowed. Several participants had received parking tickets – despite parking within the rules of the Scheme (on yellow lines or without parking tickets, but displaying the Blue Badge). Participants called for more training for police and traffic wardens.
- **Customer Service:** Participants spoke of their negative experiences on public transport where bus drivers were not perceptive to the needs of disabled people. Two participants said that they had fallen over on the bus as it moved off before they were seated – despite asking the driver to wait. Disability training for bus drivers was suggested.
- **Penalties for misuse:** Participants discussed their perceptions of misuse of the Badge, which they agreed was a problem. This was more so the misuse of disabled parking spaces by people without a Blue Badge, than misuse of the Badge itself – although some participants believed that the fraudulent use of Badges was also an issue. Stricter penalties were thought to be necessary including clamping, towing of vehicles or penalty points on the offender's driving licence.
- **More effective enforcement of the Scheme:** Participants believed that the Blue Badge scheme could be better enforced – through more training for traffic wardens. There should be more enforcement officers in private off-street car parks such as supermarkets and shopping centres where it was perceived there was little monitoring of Blue Badge spaces. As a result, this was where most of the misuse was occurring.

Summary

- 5.57 The vast majority of telephone survey respondents (92%) felt that they had a good understanding of the rules and restrictions of using their Blue Badge. However focus group participants debated the rules on where the Badge allowed you to park. For example, there were contradictory views as to whether parking on a double yellow line was allowed.
- 5.58 Also causing confusion was the introduction of a 'clock timer' which restricts parking in England. Some participants were under the impression this timer was also in use in Scotland.

- 5.59 Participants commented that although they believed they had a good understanding of the rules – they did not think that traffic wardens or police understood the Scheme sufficiently. Several participants had received parking tickets despite displaying their Badges correctly.
- 5.60 There were some participants who continued to use the Blue Badge even when the Badge holder was not present, if carrying out tasks on their behalf. Others firmly believed that if the Blue Badge holder was not present, there was no need to take up a Blue Badge space.
- 5.61 Over three-quarters (76%) of the telephone respondents had experienced misuse of the Blue Badge scheme. The main problem being people parking in disabled spaces without displaying a Blue Badge.
- 5.62 Participants agreed that they were ‘too fearful’ to lend their Badges to others, in case they were caught and the Badge subsequently withdrawn. Others indicated they felt it was just ‘wrong’ to lend their Badges to others.
- 5.63 The participants suggested a range of suitable penalties for misuse of the Blue Badge scheme such as fines, clamping, or towing vehicles, or issuing points on their driving licence.
- 5.64 Eighty-eight per cent of telephone respondents thought that the current qualification criteria for a Blue Badge were appropriate. Those who disagreed with the criteria suggested that it needed to be stricter to stop those who do not really need a Badge from getting one. Participants in the focus groups spoke of people receiving a Blue Badge for reasons they believed were unfair (these included obesity, alcoholism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder).
- 5.65 There was also the issue that individuals could be awarded a Blue Badge for longer than was necessary; for example being issued with a Badge valid for three years for a temporary mobility issue, such as a broken leg. Participants suggested the introduction of a temporary Badge that comes with an expiry date and is distinct from the ‘Blue Badge’, however temporary Badges for up to one year, already exist.
- 5.66 Focus group participants commented that they felt the Scheme was being informally enforced by members of the public who ‘scrutinised’ them as they parked in disabled spaces. Several participants had been challenged by ‘older people’ who suggested that they were ‘too young’ or ‘too healthy’ to need to use a Blue Badge space. Parents spoke of using their Blue Badge as ‘proof’ of their need for the space.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Key Findings

Current Use of the Blue Badge

- 6.1 The research comprised a mix of those who used the Blue Badge predominantly as the driver, those who used it as the passenger and those who could be either driver or passenger.
- 6.2 The Blue Badge was used by different people to undertake different tasks. This included shopping and medical appointments as the main reasons for travel, but participants had also used the Badge for work, education and leisure activities.
- 6.3 The location where the Blue Badge was used for parking was dependent on the reason for travel. The research found that people used their Badge to park in both off-street private car parks and disabled bays, as well as on-street parking such as at single or double yellow lines. This indicates how the scope of the Blue Badge Scheme has expanded beyond the provisions of the original Act of Parliament regarding on-street parking concessions and has been adopted by some operators of off-street car parking as a means of meeting their obligations to disabled people.
- 6.4 There was no real consistent time of day or day of the week when research participants used their Blue Badge – it was all dependent on the reason for the journey they were making. Some participants suggested it became more difficult to park at the weekends – particularly on-street because of relaxed parking restrictions on single yellow lines, as well as the general increases in traffic.
- 6.5 Focus group participants in particular commented on their perceptions that there was a lack of disabled parking spaces. In Aberdeen City this had been compounded by the introduction of Green Badges (for those who have difficulty parking in Blue Badge spaces). Lack of spaces was mentioned in some hospitals and most city centre areas.

The Value of the Blue Badge

- 6.6 The benefits of a Blue Badge were clear. The telephone respondents picked up on the practical aspects of the Badge, in that it allowed individuals to park closer to their destination and gave them extra space to manoeuvre in and out of their car. Focus group participants agreed with these benefits, but suggested that the most valuable aspect of the Blue Badge was to retain a sense of independence and allow people to 'get out and about' and to maintain a certain quality of life.
- 6.7 Financial benefits of the Blue Badge were not high on the list of priorities for the people we spoke to, although some participants mentioned the savings made from parking charges as a benefit. Far more important was the value for money that the Badge represented. At most, the Badge cost £20 –

although some participants received the Blue Badge for free. This was thought to demonstrate reasonable value for money when compared to the potential cost of parking. There were strong views however that the cost of the Blue Badge should be uniform across all local authority areas.

- 6.8 The value of the Badge was also demonstrated in the numbers of people who said that they would go out less often, if they found themselves without their Blue Badge. Some suggested that they would be 'housebound' without it; and one participant indicated the Badge helped her to maintain employment. Parents also commented that the Badge was a 'catalyst' to going out and they would be limited without it.
- 6.9 Public transport was not thought to be a viable alternative to using a Blue Badge. Participants commented on the inflexible nature of public transport and the difficulty in using it. Most frustrating with public transport was the need to plan their journey in advance to allow preparations to be made (for example, ramps to be put in place and the necessary staff on hand to assist).

Restrictions and Enforcements

- 6.10 Our analysis of the survey found that the vast majority of Blue Badge holders believed they understood the rules and regulations of its use. Focus group participants agreed that they understood – and yet there were contradictory views expressed about whether participants could park on double yellow lines. People were also confused about the use of 'clock timers' recently issued with the Badge for use in England.
- 6.11 While Badge holders felt they understood the Scheme; they commented that this was not replicated by those who should be enforcing it. Participants felt that some police and traffic wardens had an insufficient understanding of the Scheme. There were examples of individuals receiving parking tickets despite parking within the rules of the Blue Badge scheme.
- 6.12 There were also mixed views on whether the Blue Badge can be used when the Badge holder was not present. Some participants said that they used disabled bays while carrying out tasks on behalf of the Blue Badge holder, and some Badge holders encouraged their family members to do this. Others firmly believed that if the Blue Badge holder was not present, then there was no need to take up a Blue Badge space.
- 6.13 Misuse was commonly experienced by Blue Badge holders. This included the misuse of disabled parking bays more so than misuse of the Blue Badge through forgery or theft (although one group of focus group participants thought this was a problem). Common 'offenders' who misused disabled bays were suggested as taxi drivers, young mothers, and those with 'expensive cars' who liked the wider spaces to safeguard their vehicles.
- 6.14 Participants discussed what they felt would be appropriate punishments for parking in a Blue Badge space without a Badge. These included parking fines, clamping, towing the vehicle, and penalty points on the offender's driving licence.

- 6.15 People with physical disabilities and mobility problems should be eligible for a Blue Badge. Another suggestion included individuals with learning disabilities. Participants thought that the Badge should be distributed on a 'case by case' basis with individual situations considered by GPs and the local authority. Some people suggested the eligibility criteria were too lenient, making it easy for people who had a good relationship with their GP to be awarded a Badge.
- 6.16 Participants spoke of the 'stigma' that surrounds being a Blue Badge holder and the public's perception that the Badges are for 'older people' and 'those in wheelchairs'. Several participants – including parents of disabled children spoke of being scrutinised by members of the public when using disabled spaces to see if 'there is a genuine disability'.
- 6.17 Overall the Badge was highly valued by the Blue Badge holders. People were very protective of their Badge and were fearful of losing it through misuse or lending it to others. It was viewed by some as their ticket to independence and helped them maintain a quality of life. It would certainly have an impact on each of the participants if they were to find themselves without it.

APPENDICES

Appendix One – Telephone survey questionnaire

Appendix Two – Focus group discussion guide

Project number	P483
Project name	Blue Badge Scheme Survey

INTERVIEWER INTRODUCTION:

Good morning/ afternoon, my name is ****. I am calling from an independent research organisation called Research Resource. We have been commissioned by the Scottish Government through its agency Transport Scotland to carry out some research with Blue Badge holders in order to help them understand the use and value of the Blue Badge scheme. Please can I speak to the Blue Badge holder? The survey should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Is this a convenient time to complete the survey?

NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: PLEASE BE AWARE THAT RESPONDENT MAY REFER TO THEIR 'BLUE BADGE' IN ANOTHER WAY, FOR EXAMPLE, AS AN 'ORANGE BADGE' OR 'PARKING STICKER'.

AS NECESSARY: We identified you/ your child as a Blue Badge holder through your participation in the Scottish Household Survey. When you responded to the Scottish Household Survey you gave permission to be re-contacted for follow up research.

ADD IF NECESSARY

- The research is being conducted under the Code of Practice of the Market Research Society, which means that all of the answers you give are strictly confidential and anonymous. Participation in this survey is voluntary. You can say if there are any questions you do not wish to respond to and we will move on to the next one.
- The responses of all people taking part will be combined into a statistical report.
- You should have received a letter letting you know we are carrying out this research and that you will be contacted.
- If you wish to check that Research Resource is a bona fide research organisation you can contact Lorna Shaw at Research Resource on 0141 641 6410 or Graeme Beale at the Scottish Government.

READ OUT TO ALL

Firstly I'd like to check that you can participate in the research.

SQ1 Are **you** currently a Blue Badge holder?

Yes	1	Go to Q1
No	2	Go to SQ2

SQ2 Are you the parent or carer of a Blue Badge holder?

Yes, parent of a Blue Badge holder	1	Go to Q1
Yes, carer of a Blue Badge holder	2	Go to Q1
No	3	THANK AND CLOSE

[INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF RESPONDENT IS A PARENT OR CARER OF A BLUE BADGE HOLDER, THEY SHOULD ANSWER ON BEHALF OF THE BLUE BADGE HOLDER]

Getting a Blue Badge

For how long have you/ the Badge holder had a Blue Badge? [INTERVIEWER NOTE: PLEASE ENSURE THIS IS THE TOTAL LENGTH OF TIME WITH A DISABLED BADGE RATHER THAN TIME SINCE RENEWAL]

Less than 1 year	1	Go to Q2
2-3 years	2	
4-6 years	3	
7-10 years	4	
Longer than 11 years	5	
Can't remember	6	

How did you/ the Badge holder initially find out about Blue Badges?

GP/ Doctor	1	Go to Q3
Family member	2	
Internet	3	
Other (please specify)	4	
Can't remember	5	

What is the reason you/ the Badge holder have been issued with a Blue Badge?
[INTERVIEWER: PROBE FOR A FULL RESPONSE]

		Go to Q4
Prefer not to say	2	

Do you consider the current qualification criteria to be appropriate?

Yes	1	Go to Q6
No	2	Go to Q5
Not sure	3	Go to Q6

If no, how would you change the current criteria?

--

How and why the Blue Badge is used

Do you/ the Badge holder use the Blue Badge as the driver, the passenger or both?

[SELECT ONE ONLY] NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT IS PARENT OR CARER OF BLUE BADGE HOLDER, PLEASE CODE PASSENGER

Driver	1	Go to Q7
Passenger	2	
Both	3	

What type of travelling are you/ the Badge holder doing when using the Blue Badge? [MULTI]

FOR EACH TYPE OF TRAVELLING DONE WHEN USING THE BLUE BADGE, PLEASE ASK THE FOLLOWING, RECORDING RESPONSE IN THE GRID BELOW AND USING THE CODE FRAMES:

Thinking of when you travel for [INSERT TYPE OF TRAVEL], when do you mainly travel? Is this mainly during on a weekday, or weekends? SINGLE

And is there a particular time of day or times of day when you normally travel? MULTI

Where do you park using your Blue Badge when travelling for? MULTI

On average how many times do you use the Blue Badge in a week? SINGLE

On average, how long are you parking for? SINGLE

Q7 – Type of Travelling		Q8 – Mainly travel				Q9 – main times of travel per travel method							Q10 – where parked						Q11 – No of times used in last 2 weeks						Q12 – Length of time parked for							
Education	1	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Work	2	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Leisure	3	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Shopping	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Medical appointments	5	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Visiting friends and family	6	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Other (please specify)	7																															

FOR EACH TYPE OF TRAVEL, PLEASE ASK THE FOLLOWING. INSERT APPROPRIATE RESPONSE CODE FOR EACH QUESTION.

Code frame	Q8 When do you normally travel?	Q9 – main times of travel per travel method	Q10 – where parked	Q11 – no of times use	Q12 – length of time parked
1	Weekdays	Early morning (7am-9am)	Yellow lines (single or double)	None	Up to 10 mins
2	Weekends	Late morning (9am -12noon)	On street parking metered bays	Once	10-30 mins
3	No usual time of travel	Early afternoon (12noon – 3pm)	On street disabled persons' parking bays	2-3 times	30-60 mins
4		Late afternoon (3pm – 5pm)	Off street disabled persons' parking bays (supermarkets, hospitals)	4-7 times	1-2 hours
5		Early evening (5pm – 7pm)	Railway stations	8-14 times	2-3 hours
6		Evenings after 7pm	Other (please specify)	More than 14 times	More than 3 hours
7		No main time of travel/ varies			It varies

Do you/ the Badge holder have a free bus pass or concessionary travel pass?

Yes	1	Go to Q14
No	2	
Not sure	3	

Do you/ the Badge holder also use any of the following methods of travel?

How often, on average, would you say you/ the Badge holder use this method of transport? [ASK FOR EACH METHOD OF TRANSPORT USED]

	Q14 – Methods used SELECT ALL THAT APPLY	Q15 – Number of times method of transport used					
		More than 5 times per week	Between 3 and 4 times per week	Once or twice per week	Every couple of weeks	2 to 3 times a month	Less than once a month
Community Transport/ dial a bus [NB may also be known as Dial a Ride or Demand Responsive Scheme]	1	1	2	3	4	5	6
Local bus service	2	1	2	3	4	5	6
Taxi / Taxicard scheme	3	1	2	3	4	5	6
Rail	4	1	2	3	4	5	6
Do you use any other methods of travel? (If yes, please specify)	5	1	2	3	4	5	6
No other methods used	6						

IF NO OTHER METHODS USED, GO TO Q16

The Value of the Blue Badge Scheme

What difference has the Blue Badge scheme made to you/ the Badge holder? [DO NOT READ OUT, CODE ALL THAT APPLY, PROBE FULLY]

I/we would not be able to leave home without it	1	Go to Q17
It gives me/us freedom to leave home when I/we want to	2	
It allows me to take up employment	3	
It results in financial savings	4	
It allows me/us access to places I/we couldn't otherwise get to	5	
It makes me/us feel safer when travelling	6	
It allows me/us to get out of the car more easily	7	
Other (please specify)	8	

What aspects of having a Blue Badge are most important to you? I'm going to read out a list of things that may be important to you in having a Blue Badge. Can you tell me what is most important and then second most important to you in having a Blue Badge. If the most important aspect to you of having a Blue Badge is not in the list please just let me know and I can take a note of it. [READ OUT ALL BEFORE CODING REPLIES. SELECT ONE PER COLUMN – ROTATE LIST]

	Most important	2 nd most important	
The comfort it allows	1	1	Go to Q18
Park for free/ financial benefits	2	2	
Park closer to my destination	3	3	
Saves time/ convenience	4	4	
Peace of mind	5	5	
Wider parking bay	6	6	
Independence	7	7	
Other (please specify)	8	8	

Without the Blue Badge scheme, to what extent do you agree that you would do the following? For each statement please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree. Without the Blue Badge scheme do you think you would.....

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither/nor	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Make more frequent use of taxis	1	2	3	4	5
Use public transport more frequently	1	2	3	4	5
Rely more on friends/ family for a lift	1	2	3	4	5
Park in free/ cheapest parking spaces available	1	2	3	4	5
Pay to park in the most convenient parking space	1	2	3	4	5
Go out less often	1	2	3	4	5

Restrictions and Enforcements

Do you have or are you aware of the Blue Badge Users booklet?

Yes	1	Go to Q20
No	2	

Do you think you have a good understanding of the rules and restrictions of using a Blue Badge?

Yes	1	Go to Q21
No	2	
Don't know	3	

Are the entitlements of the Blue Badge scheme appropriate?

Yes	1	Go to Q23
No	2	Go to Q22
Don't know	3	Go to Q23

What entitlements would you like to see given to Blue Badge holders?

--

Are there any places you avoid driving to or visiting because of restrictions with the scheme?

Yes (please specify) PROBE FULLY	1	Go to Q24
No	2	

Have you experienced misuse of the Blue Badges/disabled parking spaces by non-disabled people?

Yes, regularly	1	Go to Q25
Yes, sometimes	2	
Yes, but rarely	3	
Yes, but only once	4	
No, never	5	Go to Q26

Where have you seen this misuse of the Blue Badge or disabled parking spaces by people who are not disabled?

Supermarket car park	1	Go to Q26
On street parking bay	2	
Hospital car park	3	
Parking on yellow lines	4	
Other (please specify)	5	

How big a problem is this for Blue Badge holders?

A major problem	1	Go to Q27
A minor problem	2	
Not a problem	3	
Don't know, never experienced	4	

To what extent do you agree the Blue Badge scheme is adequately enforced? Do you....

Strongly agree	1	Go to Q28
Agree	2	
Neither/ nor	3	
Disagree	4	
Strongly disagree	5	

Has anyone asked to borrow your/ the Badge holders Badge?

Yes	1	Go to Q29
No	2	Go to Q30

If yes, did you/ the Badge holder give it to them?

Yes	1	Go to Q30
No	2	

About the Blue Badge Holder

[INTERVIEWER: READ OUT] This final section of the survey asks some factual questions about the Blue Badge holder. These will be used only for analysis purposes to understand the characteristics of Blue Badge holders.

Are you / the Badge holder?

Male	1	Go to Q31
Female	2	

What age are you/ the Badge holder?

16 or under	1	Go to Q32
17-24	2	
25-44	3	
45-59	4	
60-64	5	
65-74	6	
65-84	7	
85 and over	8	

How would you describe the Blue Badge holder's (you/ your child) ethnicity?

White Scottish	1	Go to Q33
White other British	2	
White Irish	3	
Gypsy/ traveller	4	
Polish	5	
Any other white background	6	
Mixed or multiple ethnic background	7	
Indian, Indian Scottish or Indian British	8	
Pakistani, Pakistani Scottish or Pakistani British	9	
Bangladeshi, Bangladeshi Scottish or Bangladeshi British	10	
Chinese, Chinese Scottish or Chinese British	11	
Any other Asian background	12	
Caribbean, Caribbean Scottish or British	13	
African, African Scottish or British	14	
Any other black background	15	
Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British	16	
Any other group (please write in below)	17	

What is the Blue Badge holder's (you/ your child) employment status?

Full time employment (more than 35 hrs pw)	1	Go to Q34
Part time employment (16-34 hrs pw)	2	
Part time employment (under 16 hrs pw)	3	
Unemployed/Seeking Work	4	
Unemployed/Not seeking work	5	
Not working due to health condition	6	
Looking after home/ family	7	
Carer	8	
Retired	9	
In further/ higher education	10	
School	11	
Pre School	12	
Other (please write in below)	13	

What is your annual household income?

£5,000 or under	1	Go to Q35
£5,001-£10,000	2	
£10,001-£20,000	3	
£20,001-£30,000	4	
£20,001-£40,000	5	
£40,001-£50,000	6	
£50,001-£60,000	7	
Over £60,000	8	
Prefer not to say	9	

What is your/ the Badge holders postcode?

As part of this research, we will be speaking with Blue Badge holders directly to gather more in-depth feedback about their experiences of the Blue Badge Scheme. We will be organising a series of focus group discussions with Blue Badge holders. Would you be interested in taking part in a focus group discussion?

Yes	1	COMPLETE DETAILS BELOW
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE

(A focus group brings together between 6 and 8 people in a local venue for around an hour and a half to discuss similar topics to those we have covered today).

If yes, interviewer to collect contact details, (ensure confidentiality, details will be destroyed on completion of this research)

Name

Daytime contact telephone number

Email

Local Authority area

A researcher will be in touch in the next few weeks with further information about being a focus group participant.

[INTERVIEWER: CLOSE INTERVIEW BY READING OUT STATEMENT]

'Thank you very much for your help. Can I assure you once again that the information you have given will be treated as absolutely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of genuine market research.'

Blue Badge Focus Group Discussion Guide

90 minutes

Introductions (5 minutes)

Facilitator introduces research and reminds participants about confidentiality and anonymity. Ask all participants to introduce themselves and give brief intro to their Blue Badge history.

- Name
- Local to the area?
- How long had a Blue Badge?

1. Current use of a Blue Badge (20 minutes)

Facilitator to find out the types of usage of the Blue Badge and the circumstances in which a Blue Badge is used

- Are you the driver or the passenger or both?
- When using your Badge is it mostly for Social/Pleasure/Business?
- When are you travelling - Daytime, weekends, evenings?
- Where do you use your Badge? Off street parking (supermarkets, hospitals), on street (single or double yellow lines)
- How frequently are you using the Badge - daily, weekly, less often?
- What sort of distances are you travelling when you use the Badge? Is it travelling in your local area, or do you use it to travel further away?
- On average how long are you parking for - 30mins, over an hour, more?
- How did you find out about the Blue Badge scheme?
- Do you think the scheme is well promoted? (How could it be improved?).
- How easy was it to apply for a Badge in the first instance? (Renewals?) Any issues with language barriers when completing the form?

2. Value of the Blue Badge (25minutes)

- What are the benefits of using the Blue Badge scheme?
- What difference has the Blue Badge scheme made to you? (health, quality of life, financial savings, etc)
- Without this scheme, what would your circumstances be? (would you still be able to drive/get out of the house/work, etc)
- Without the Blue Badge scheme do you think you would.....(make more use of public transport, of taxis, rely on friends and family, park in free/cheapest space/pay to park in most convenient space, go out less often).

(Activity) – Ask participants to establish the important elements of the Blue Badge scheme and to rank them in order as a group, using flash cards For example: What are the important elements of the Blue Badge scheme? Which is the most important to you? Rank in order of importance...e.g. free parking, convenient to get a space, allows independence.

- Do you also use public transport? (probe: concessionary bus travel, ferries, dial-a-bus?) - what are your experiences? How does it compare to using a Blue Badge? (probe independence, convenience, etc)

3. **Misusing the Badge (15 minutes)**

- Have you come across examples of people misusing their Blue Badges? In what circumstances were people misusing their Badge? What should the punishments be?
- Is the Blue Badge scheme adequately enforced?
- Aware of rules regarding lending your Badge to friends or family? (ever been asked to lend your Badge to someone else? What happened?)
- Does anyone have their own disabled parking bay outside of their house? (probe: how long had it for, is it for their sole use? Does it make a difference?)

4 **Future use of the Badge (20 minutes)**

- What are the restrictions of use? Do you feel like you have a good understanding of these?
- Do the restrictions have any impact on your personal use of the Badge?
- Are there any places you avoid because of restrictions with the scheme?
(Activity) – split participants into smaller groups and ask them to discuss and feedback on:
- **What should Blue Badge holders be entitled to do – where and when should Blue Badge holders be able to use it? Who should qualify for a Blue Badge? Any restrictions on entitlement? Are the current criteria fair?**

5 **Thank and close (5 minutes)**

- Any other final comments from participants.

Facilitator to thank participants and remind them their comments will remain anonymous. Remind participants this information will be aggregated with other focus group participant comments to inform a report for Transport Scotland.

Further copies of this document are available, on request, in audio and large print formats and in community languages (Urdu; Bengali; Gaelic; Hindi; Punjabi; Cantonese; Arabic; Polish).

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This document/publication is also available on our website at www.transportscotland.gov.uk

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An agency of
Buidheann Ie



Published by Transport Scotland, October 2012

ISBN: 978-1-908181-60-2 (web only publication)

APS Group Scotland
DPPAS13545 (10/12)

