

BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS
AND LONG COVID



What is a Blue Badge?

Feedback on Blue Badge applications

How to apply for a Blue Badge

People who may get a Blue Badge

Providing information about ME/CFS or
Long Covid

The assessment process

BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS AND LONG COVID



Blue Badge Applications was written by **Dr Charles Shepherd**, Trustee and Hon. Medical Adviser to The ME Association.

DISCLAIMER

We recommend that the medical information in this leaflet is discussed with your doctor. It is not intended to be a substitute for personalised medical advice or treatment. You should consult your doctor whenever a new symptom arises, or an existing symptom worsens. It is important to obtain medical advice that considers other causes and possible treatments. Do not assume that new or worsened symptoms are solely because of ME/CFS or Long Covid.



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BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS AND LONG COVID

KEY POINTS

- People with ME/CFS and Long Covid should be able to obtain a Blue Badge if their condition causes significant difficulty with mobility and means that they cannot walk very far and is not steadily improving.
- Feedback to the MEA indicates that many people are now obtaining a Blue Badge. However, there are others who are being refused even though they appear to meet the qualifying criteria.
- There are two main routes to obtaining a Blue Badge. First is through automatic entitlement if you meet one of the specific criteria listed below (e.g. have a score of 8 points or more in the mobility component of PIP). Second is through a route where a decision is made on the information you supply and sometimes an interview with a health professional.
- If you aren't automatically entitled to a Blue Badge, it's important to supply as much information about why you have problems with walking along with supportive information from your doctor and the MEA 'To Whom It May Concern' letter.
- If you are refused you can ask for a review.

The information below applies to the situation in England. Most of it also applies to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is therefore important to check your own government website information on Blue Badges if you live in one of these regions.



People with ME/CFS and Long Covid should be able to obtain a Blue Badge if their condition causes significant difficulty with mobility and means that they cannot walk very far and is not steadily improving.

BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS AND LONG COVID



Having a Blue Badge helps people with disabilities or health conditions, including ME/CFS and Long Covid, park closer to their destination when they are using a car, or are a passenger in a car.

WHAT IS A BLUE BADGE?

Having a Blue Badge helps people with disabilities or health conditions, including ME/CFS and Long Covid, park closer to their destination when they are using a car, or are a passenger in a car.

A Blue Badge costs up to £10 in England and £20 in Scotland. It's free in Wales. They usually last up to 3 years.

The information below provides all the necessary information on how to apply for a Blue Badge. Much of this information also applies to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. So do look at your own government website if you live in one of these regions to check there are no variations. Some local councils also make what can be unhelpful or inaccurate statements about the eligibility criteria from Blue Badges – especially in relation to ME/CFS.

FEEDBACK ON BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

Feedback to the MEA indicates that, while many people with ME/CFS have been successful in obtaining a Blue Badge, there are others who should be able to obtain one have been refused.

We recently sought feedback on MEA Facebook from people who had applied for a Blue Badge within the past two years. The majority of people who

responded (32/43 – almost 75%) had successfully obtained a Blue Badge – either on applying or on a review of their application. This is a significant change from previous discussions – where people have often reported that they have not been able to obtain a Blue Badge.

BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS AND LONG COVID

HOW TO APPLY FOR A BLUE BADGE

You can apply for a Blue Badge for yourself, on behalf of somebody else, or an organisation that transports people that need a Blue Badge

If you live in England, Scotland and Wales, you can apply for or renew a Blue Badge on-line here:

<https://meassociation.org.uk/9mpk>.

There's a different way to apply if you are in Northern Ireland.

Some councils also let you apply on a paper form – contact your local council to check. You have to apply through your local council - your doctor can't help you get a Blue Badge. Your local council might also arrange an appointment to visit you - they'll let you know if you need this.

You must reapply for a Blue Badge before your current one expires.

If you're replacing a lost, stolen or damaged blue badge, and it is not expiring in the next 3 months, you need to apply using a different method.



PEOPLE WHO AUTOMATICALLY GET A BLUE BADGE

You should be able to automatically qualify for a Blue Badge if you have ME/CFS or Long Covid, and at least one of the following applies:

- you receive the higher rate of the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance
- you receive a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) because you cannot walk more than 50 metres (a score of 8 points or more under the 'moving around' activity of the mobility component)
- you are registered blind (severely sight impaired)
- you receive a War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement
- you have received a lump sum benefit within tariff levels 1 to 8 of the Armed Forces and Reserve Forces (Compensation) Scheme and have been certified as having a permanent and substantial disability that causes inability to walk or very considerable difficulty in walking
- you receive the mobility component of PIP and have obtained 10 points specifically for descriptor E under the 'planning and following journeys' activity, on the grounds that you are unable to undertake any journey because it would cause you overwhelming psychological distress

If you have any score other than 10 points under descriptor E, in the 'planning and following journeys' activity of PIP you may still be eligible for a Blue Badge, but you do not automatically qualify. This includes if you have a higher score of 12. You will have to provide evidence to demonstrate your eligibility which will be assessed as part of your application.

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FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS AND LONG COVID

PEOPLE WHO MAY GET A BLUE BADGE

You may be eligible for a badge if you have ME/CFS or Long Covid and one or more of the following applies:

- you cannot walk at all
- you cannot walk without help from someone else or using mobility aids
- you find walking very difficult due to pain, breathlessness or the time it takes
- walking is dangerous to your health and safety
- you have a life-limiting illness, which means you cannot walk or find walking very difficult and have a SR1 form
- you have a severe disability in both arms and drive regularly, but cannot operate pay-and-display parking machines
- you have a child under the age of 3 with a medical condition that means the child always needs to be accompanied by bulky medical equipment
- you have a child under the age of 3 with a medical condition that means the child must always be kept near a vehicle in case they need emergency medical treatment
- you are constantly a significant risk to yourself or others near vehicles, in traffic or car parks
- you struggle severely to plan or follow a journey
- you find it difficult or impossible to control your actions and lack awareness of the impact you could have on others



Your local council will decide if you are eligible for a badge. They cannot start the assessment process until they have all the necessary evidence. It may take 12 weeks or longer to assess your application.

- you regularly have intense and overwhelming responses to situations causing temporary loss of behavioural control
- you frequently become extremely anxious or fearful of public/open spaces

Your local council will decide if you are eligible for a badge. They cannot start the assessment process until they have all the necessary evidence. It may take 12 weeks or longer to assess your application. If they decide that you are not eligible and you think that they did not take account of all the facts, you can ask them to consider your application again.



BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS AND LONG COVID

PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT ME/CFS OR LONG COVID

Problems with walking have to be caused by a substantial and what is termed a long-term disability. If you need to provide more information about how ME/CFS or Long Covid affects your mobility and your ability to walk, you should then describe your condition in as much detail as you can.

Please note that Blue Badge assessments are not always satisfactory when it comes to fluctuating conditions like ME/CFS where walking ability may well fluctuate on a day-to-day basis.

Try to estimate how far you can normally walk without help. If you're not sure, think about how many parked buses you could walk past before you'd start to feel pain or need a rest. One bus is about 11 metres long - so if you can only walk past half a bus, you can only walk about 5 metres. Write this on your form.

If you can't work out the distance, write down how many steps you can take without help instead.

Tell your council how long it takes you to walk this distance, and how you walk - for example if you need to take small steps or shuffle.

Describe how walking makes you feel, for example if in addition to causing muscle fatigue and weakness it causes you severe pain or makes you breathless, so you have to sit down and rest. You should also describe how undue activity can cause post-exertional malaise/symptom exacerbation and how one of the key aspects of managing ME/CFS and Log Covid is avoiding any activity that provokes PEM.

If you have severe cognitive dysfunction - problems with memory, concentration, information-processing - this should be taken into account if it affects your ability to plan or carry out a journey.



You should also refer to information on fatigue and PEM and symptom management in the NICE guideline on ME/CFS:

Debilitating fatigue that is worsened by activity, is not caused by excessive cognitive, physical, emotional or social exertion, and is not significantly relieved by rest.

Post-exertional malaise/symptom exacerbation after activity in which the worsening of symptoms is often delayed in onset by hours or days; is disproportionate to the activity and has a prolonged recovery time that may last hours, days, weeks or longer.



BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS AND LONG COVID



To prove your identity, you can provide a copy of either your birth or adoption certificate, passport, driving licence, marriage or civil partnership certificate, divorce or dissolution certificate.

DOCUMENTATION THAT YOU WILL NEED TO APPLY FOR A BLUE BADGE

You will need to provide:

- proof of identity
- proof of address
- a recent head-and-shoulders digital photo
- your national insurance number (if you have one)
- contact details (phone number, email and postal address)

To prove your identity, you can provide a copy of either:

- birth or adoption certificate
- passport
- driving licence
- marriage or civil partnership certificate
- divorce or dissolution certificate

To prove your address, you can provide a copy of either:

- a recent council tax bill
- a recent letter from a government department such as Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- driving licence
- a recent letter from a school (if you are under 16)

BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS AND LONG COVID

If you are applying without one of the benefits listed below, the application will need to be assessed by your local council.

PROVIDING PROOF OF BENEFITS

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

You will need to know the scores from the mobility assessment and the award end date (if applicable). You will also be asked to provide proof of the PIP award. This would be the three pages from the letter from DWP, which clearly shows:

- entitlement to PIP (front page)
- assessment scores (second to last page)
- mobility scores (last page)

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

You will need to know which rate of the mobility component you receive and the award end-date (if applicable). You will also be asked to provide proof of the DLA award. This should be the most recent letter from DWP, which clearly shows:

- mobility rating
- certificate of entitlement to DLA
- the date of the letter



PROOF OF ELIGIBILITY WITHOUT ANY OF THE ABOVE BENEFITS

If you are applying without one of the above benefits, the application will need to be assessed by your local council. Not surprisingly, this is where it gets more complicated and you may need to get help from your Local Citizen's Advice Bureau.

To help assess the application, you will be asked to provide extra information depending on the answers you give when you are checking eligibility.

If you cannot walk or find walking difficult or you have a non-visible (hidden) condition, you will be asked to provide details of any:

- relevant medication that is taken
- relevant treatments that you receive or are due to receive
- healthcare or associated professionals that have been involved with the treatment of your condition



BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

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PROOF OF ELIGIBILITY *(continued...)*

You will be asked if you want to upload supporting documents. This could be prescriptions, diagnosis letters or correspondence between professionals that treat your condition.

You can also include the 'To Whom It May Concern' letter that the MEA has produced to support a Blue Badge application.

<https://meassociation.org.uk/tlbb>

If you cannot walk or find walking difficult, you will also be asked questions around how your condition affects your walking.

If you have a non-visible (hidden) condition, you will also be asked questions around how journeys between your vehicle and destination are affected by your condition.

Describe how walking makes you feel. For example if, in addition to causing muscle fatigue and weakness, it causes you severe pain or makes you breathless, so you have to sit down and rest - as outlined in the Providing Information on ME/CFS or Long Covid section.



HOW TO PROVIDE THE DOCUMENTS

When you are applying online, you'll be able to upload a photo or scan of:

- proof of benefit
- proof of address
- proof of identity
- supporting documents

You can also upload a recent digital photo. Just make sure the photos or scans are good quality and include all the relevant information.

If you are applying on a mobile or tablet device, you can take a photo of the required documents and upload within the application itself.

You can choose not to upload the documents when you're applying. If you do you'll need to supply copies of the documents to the local council.

Instead, if you receive one of these benefits, you can still apply and your application will be assessed by your local council.



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FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS AND LONG COVID

IF YOU ARE APPLYING BY POST

Send copies of your documents rather than originals, in case your application gets lost in the post.

You need to get the copy of your proof of identification checked by a professional person, like a solicitor - this is called 'certifying a document'. Some professional people might charge to certify a document.

They should sign the copy and write on it:

- the words 'This copy is a true likeness of the original'
- their name, address and occupation
- the date

You might be asked to do a mobility assessment. A health professional will look at your ability to carry out a range of mobility activities.



THE ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

It can take several weeks for your application to be processed. You should contact your council if you haven't heard back within 12 weeks.

You might be asked to do a mobility assessment. A health professional will look at your ability to carry out a range of mobility activities. They will tell your council whether they think your health condition or disability limits your ability to move around enough for you to need a badge.

You also might be asked to send in extra information or speak to a member of the council. Your council will tell you in writing if this is the case.



BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS AND LONG COVID

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR APPLICATION IS REFUSED

If you have been refused a Blue Badge, you can ask for the decision to be reviewed by the council. It's worth doing this if you can't walk more than 80 metres - about the length of seven double-decker buses.

You will need to respond to your decision letter from the council which will explain in writing why they refused your application.

All councils have slightly different review processes - for example, some will include a form with your letter to be completed and returned, and others will ask you to write your own letter. It's best to follow their instructions.

You can get help with writing your response from your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau.

When requesting a review of the decision you will need to explain why the reasons listed on your letter are wrong.

Go into as much detail as you can and include any details you might have missed the first time. For example, if you have mobility problems, explain why it's difficult for you to walk very far to get from your car to a shop.

Include scans, copies or photographs of any evidence you have, for example:

- a letter from your doctor, physiotherapist or another medical expert
- proof of your address, such as energy or council tax bills - if your local council needs proof that you live in the area
- proof of your identity with your picture on it, such as a passport - if your council doesn't believe you're the person you say you are

When you'll get a response will depend on your local council - you can phone and check if you need to know how long it will take.



You can make a complaint if your council refuse to review their decision, or if you're unhappy with the way your application has been dealt with. All councils have slightly different complaints processes - you can find out more on their website.

If you are not happy with the response to your complaint, you can write to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman who will take another look at your application, and decide whether your council made the wrong decision.

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Website: <https://www.lgo.org.uk>



BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS AND LONG COVID

WHEN AND WHERE CAN YOU USE A BLUE BADGE

You can only use your badge when:

- you're driving
- you're travelling in a car as a passenger
- someone is picking you up or dropping you off, and they need to park close to where you need to go

If someone else is driving you, you must let them know the rules - otherwise the council can ask for your badge back.

You can't use your Blue Badge everywhere - some areas have different parking schemes for disabled people. For example, there are different schemes in different areas of London.

Your Blue Badge usually lets you park for free:

- on streets with parking meters or pay-and-display machines for as long as you need to
- in disabled parking bays on streets for as long as you need to, unless a sign says there is a time limit
- on single or double yellow lines for up to 3 hours unless there's a 'no loading' sign

Some councils let badge holders park even if there's a 'no loading sign'.

If you're a Blue Badge holder, you can ask your local council for a disabled parking space near your home. This is usually free but councils have different rules about who can apply for a space.

You might have to pay for parking if you're parking in a private car park, for example at a supermarket or hospital. You'll need to check the signs in the car park.



If someone else is driving you, you must let them know the rules - otherwise the council can ask for your badge back.

Having a Blue Badge doesn't let you park anywhere - you still have to follow the usual parking regulations. For example, you can still get a fine if you park somewhere that endangers people, like outside a school or near a junction.



BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS AND LONG COVID

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION ON BLUE BADGE ELIGIBILITY FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS

Back in 2012 the Countess of Mar, who chaired the 'Forward ME' Group of national charity representatives, tabled a question that asked the Government:

Why, in the guidance related to Blue Badge eligibility, conditions including myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) are expressly identified as not being "in themselves a qualification for a badge"; and to what other medical conditions this guidance relates.

In a written answer supplied on 15th May 2012, Lord Attlee (who held a number of Lords' speaking briefs for Government departments including the Department for Transport) replied:

Eligibility for a Blue Badge is set out in the governing regulations. These are the Disabled Persons (Badges for Motor Vehicles) (England) 2000, as amended. Since the 1980s, the regulations allow people to apply to local authorities for a badge through two main routes: "without further assessment" and "with further assessment". Under the "with further assessment" category, a person may be eligible for a badge if they have a permanent and substantial disability which means they are unable to walk or have very considerable difficulty walking.

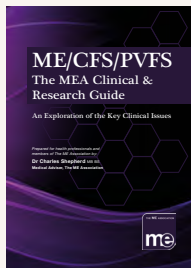
It is for the relevant local authority to make decisions on whether or not a person is eligible for a badge. To help ensure consistency, the Department for Transport issues non-statutory guidance to local authorities on the factors that should be taken into account when they are making an assessment

The guidance is intended to explain that eligibility for a badge under the "with further assessment" criteria is not condition-specific. Local authorities should take into account the effect of a person's condition on their ability to walk. The guidance gives examples of conditions like myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) and mental and cognitive impairments like autism and dementia. In these cases, people might be eligible for a badge if their condition means they are unable to walk or have very considerable difficulty walking. They might, however, not be eligible if their ability to walk is unaffected.



BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS AND LONG COVID



Use this QR code to link to the MEA's Clinical and Research Guide, **ME/CFS/PVFS: An Exploration of the Key Clinical Issues (The Purple Book)**.

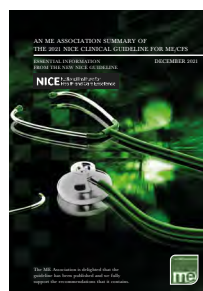
FURTHER INFORMATION

■ MEA 'To Whom It May Concern' letter - written by the MEA to support a Blue Badge application:

<https://meassociation.org.uk/tlbb>

■ NICE guideline on ME/CFS: Recommendations relating to disability aids and appliances:

1.8.8 For people with moderate ME/CFS or severe or very severe ME/CFS, consider providing or recommending aids and adaptations (such as a wheelchair, blue badge or stair lift) that could help them maintain their independence and improve their quality of life, taking into account the risks and benefits.



NICE Guideline on ME/CFS: An ME Association Summary

This booklet lets you know what to expect from the NHS and social care services with regard to symptom recognition, diagnosis, management, referral, and ongoing care and support.

<https://meassociation.org.uk/9d0l>



BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS AND LONG COVID



“Thank you for producing such a helpful magazine. The standard is consistently high and each edition is interesting and varied. I need all the help I can get and this magazine is consistently encouraging, realistic, and helpful.”



THE ME ASSOCIATION

Changing attitudes and improving lives...

■ **COMMUNITY:** We provide a safe and welcoming community for people affected by ME/CFS and Long Covid who come together and benefit from sharing their experiences. We provide membership, an essential support service, excellent website resources and we host engaging discussions on the most popular social media channels. Knowing that you are not alone can be a great comfort and we are happy to answer your questions and share helpful tips.

■ **MEMBERSHIP:** We put the interests of members at the heart of everything we do. Your subscription means that we can support more people, campaign effectively and fund medical research. Members receive the exclusive ME Essential magazine which carries the latest news, medical information, personal stories, and feature articles. [Join us today](#).

■ **SUPPORT:** ME Connect is the charity's support and information service. We listen and we understand. All our staff and volunteers have knowledge and understanding of these medical conditions. We provide a personalised service and we're here when you need us most. You can contact us via our telephone support line (this is a FREEPHONE number) or by email. Please see back page for more details. You can also join ME Connected (Discord online community). To view the ME Connect telephone support line opening hours, please visit: <https://www.meassociation.org.uk/me-connect>

■ **INFORMATION:** We produce reliable and timely information written by topic experts and have the [largest range of free literature covering all aspects of life with ME/CFS and Long Covid](#). We can show you how to recognise and manage symptoms, get an accurate diagnosis, a referral to specialists, and to obtain the healthcare that you deserve. We also provide an [e-newsletter](#) and free access on the website to [Medical Matters](#) and other relevant information.

■ **RESEARCH:** We fund medical research via the [Ramsay Research Fund](#) and are especially interested in research that can find diagnostic markers, causes, and treatments. We support the UK ME/CFS Biobank and the Manchester Brain Bank, and have invested over £2m in medical research in the last 10 years.

■ **MEDICAL EDUCATION:** We arrange training for healthcare professionals, offer a medical magazine called ME Medical, and are working with the Government, NHS, Royal Colleges of Medicine, and Local Authorities to implement the recommendations of the 2021 NICE Clinical Guideline on ME/CFS – the successful result of 14 years lobbying and hard work.

BLUE BADGE APPLICATIONS

FOR PEOPLE WITH ME/CFS AND LONG COVID



“The MEA is doing exactly what it said it would by providing support, actively lobbying for recognition, improvements to health and social care, and funding biomedical research.”

The ME Association
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Gawcott
Buckinghamshire
MK18 4DF

Tel: 01280 818963

Email: admin@meassociation.org.uk

Registered Charity
Number 801279

THE ME ASSOCIATION

Changing attitudes and improving lives...

■ **LOBBYING:** We campaign to raise awareness and bring about positive change. We believe in collaboration and work with the NHS and social care services, the Department of Health and Social Care, the British Association of Clinicians in ME/CFS (BACME), Forward-ME, the ME Research Collaborative (MERC), DecodeME, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on ME, Physios4ME, the Chronic Illness Inclusion project (CII), Hidden Disabilities Sunflower, and Long Covid initiatives.

■ **HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE:** The charity works with healthcare providers to successfully implement the NICE Guideline recommendations on ME/CFS and Long Covid to ensure that everyone receives the very best healthcare, wherever they live in the UK. We want well-trained healthcare professionals providing excellent services because timely intervention can lead to better health outcomes and improved quality of life.

■ **DONATIONS:** In order to help more people and invest in medical research we depend on your generosity. If you feel able to make a donation or want to raise funds in other ways, please get in touch with the fundraising team: fundraising@meassociation.org.uk or you can [make a direct donation via the website](#).

WHAT ARE ME/CFS AND LONG COVID?

We answer key questions about these medical conditions and compare similarities and differences. You'll also find the NICE Guideline reproduced in full in an [easy-to-use database](#).

MEDICAL MATTERS

Medical Matters is an easy-to-use online supplement to the more detailed literature. The same topic experts provide answers to commonly asked questions: <https://meassociation.org.uk/medm>



NHS REFERRAL SERVICES

If you need to locate an ME/CFS specialist service or Long Covid Clinic, then we can help. We have listed all secondary care referral services in an [easy-to-use database](#).





ME CONNECT

The Support and
Information Service for
people affected
by ME/CFS/PVFS
and Long Covid



Freephone
0808 801 0484

For opening hours visit:
meassociation.org.uk/mec

Contact ME Connect
HOW TO GET IN TOUCH:
by phone or email



HERE TO LISTEN

We are here to
listen, validate and
empathise with any
issues you might be
facing.



VITAL SUPPORT

We are here to help
you reach an informed
decision.



SAFE ENVIRONMENT

We provide a safe,
confidential and
understanding
environment where
you can be heard
and understood.

We're here for you!



meconnect@meassociation.org.uk

For all information relating to ME Connect visit: <https://meassociation.org.uk/mec>

meassociation.org.uk