

Appendix A: Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel: Blue Badges

	Recommendation as agreed by Executive: 2021	Update provided	Chair observations / Panel observations
1	<p>That the blue badge process captures the reasons why each application has been accepted to create a knowledge bank for internal reference, training, and consistency. Where necessary, and in line with data protection policy, other teams involved in the process (e.g., Customer Services) should have access to this data to improve their knowledge.</p>	<p>New IT system has been created and 2nd stage user acceptance testing (UAT) is underway. There have unfortunately been some delays in progress and completion of this due to internal and external IT issues found during stage 1 testing.</p> <p>Issues and changes found during current stage 2 UAT have been categorised by Red/Amber/Green with Red being flagged immediately with the developers/builders and Amber being raised via regular issue log sharing. The red issues prevent UAT continuing so have to be resolved immediately. Amber issues are escalated to either internal or external IT support teams for resolution. Once complete testing of the fixes will be required. Planned for week commencing 9th January 2023.</p> <p>Blue Badge letters have been rewritten and signed off by stakeholder group and are now within system and are ready for use.</p> <p>Web pages have been redesigned and are ready to be shared with the key stakeholder group for review and sign off. These requirements will be implemented by digital services on instruction and reflect the new system and enhanced customer experience</p> <p>Process/data capture – the system now gathers data throughout the application management process and data can be pulled from the system. The final IT work package will be to create report templates based on</p>	<p>It was acknowledged the majority of the intended changes had been undertaken and themes about blue badge applications were better understood by the team.</p> <p>Panel members believed Phase 1 of the new system would enable an automated way for experts and customer services to be able to assist with less complex assessments, which would meet recommendation 1. Delays to the implementation of the IT system were challenged by Panel members and reassurances were received that the IT system would be implemented shortly. It was noted other teams would have access to data only if they really needed it, to comply with GDPR.</p> <p>Panel members agreed recommendation 1 had been completed, but noted the IT system was not 'live' yet.</p>

		<p>management and governance requirements and build into the system. Requirements spec with development team internally and at Netcall. To be implemented by end January 23.</p> <p>Customer services are becoming part of the blue badge process and so will have access to the system. They will also have training to use the system and to improve their knowledge of the overall process. To be implemented prior to go live.</p> <p>Library services already provide in person support to those who need it as well as access to IT equipment for those wishing to make Blue Badge applications. They too will have training and access to the system and data to improve their knowledge. Training to be to be implemented prior to go live.</p>	
2	<p>That the assessment process includes a greater understanding of psychological, medical and neurological conditions with access to expert knowledge for complex, and sometimes rare, conditions.</p>	<p>Process implementation phase 1 and 2 (Please see slides 2 & 3 in appendices document.)</p> <p>Phase 1 implementation: Initial application assessment will be completed automatically by the system – this is based on responses selected but will follow on to an audit style check.</p> <p>The system will then automatically send the application on to the subject matter expert</p> <p>Assessment desktop (Non-complex and complex) – by SME team</p> <p>Phase 2 implementation – after 6 months of phase 1 (Please see slides 2 & 3 in appendices document.)</p>	<p>Panel members thought the most impactful change was that relevant Subject Matter Experts (i.e. psychologists/senior occupational therapists) were now involved in decision-making for all applications. For example, this meant dedicated therapists with expertise in autism were utilised in order to better understand someone’s condition and whether a blue badge would help to meet their needs.</p> <p>Panel members agreed recommendation 2 had been completed.</p>

		<p>Customer services could be provided access to training and knowledge to become SMEs for 'easy' cases.</p> <p>'Complex' cases would still be assessed by SME's specific to the condition(s).</p> <p>Phase 1 to be implemented January 23</p>	
3	<p>That the blue badge process confirms that the appropriate psychological, medical or neurological evidence and expertise have been considered before a final refusal decision is made, enhancing the objective scrutiny of refusals that is already in place.</p>	<p>New system allows for assessment of both visible and non-visible conditions and enables a holistic assessment. System and operating practices have been designed to enable a joint assessment review by the relevant SME's.</p> <p>Appeals – these will be assessed by SME's team specific to the reason for the blue badge. Appeals are being completed by independent SME within the council.</p>	<p>It was noted appropriate expertise was now considered and subject matter experts were also involved in appeals.</p> <p>Correspondence was reviewed swiftly to ensure it was more compassionate and continue to audit responses.</p> <p>Panel members agreed recommendation 3 had been completed.</p>

4	<p>That the review of the blue badge application form considers the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Some conditions cross the visible/non-visible criteria; the form should remove any barriers to a holistic assessment of an individual. 2. Some conditions 'fluctuate' (the impact on a journey isn't consistent day to day); the form should recognise this and use an appropriate questioning style. 3. Ensure data protection doesn't create any barriers to swift and simple progress. 4. Use technology to make a complex form smart and simple, e.g. an online form where subsequent questions are tailored depending on responses. 5. An online form providing explanatory notes and examples of the sort of evidence required. 6. An online process that provides progress notifications to applicants, giving confidence that all their evidence has been reviewed. 7. Form must be easy to start, look at, save, and return to. 8. Ensure all accessibility needs and alternate methods are considered, and sufficient support is provided to complete the form, e.g. by Customer Services. 	<p>Forms and process</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New system allows for assessment of both visible and non-visible conditions and enables a holistic assessment. System and operating practices have been designed to enable a joint assessment review by the relevant SME's. 2. Yes. The system and process reflect the government standard of applying 'more often than not'. 3. DPIA covers data protection and (actions). 4. Yes – Completed and UAT testing has been completed with any issues currently being resolved. 5. Yes – Completed and ready for go live. 6. Yes – Completed and ready for go live. 7. Yes. This has been designed for the customer journey. 8. Customer services will be able to assist anyone who requires support via the phone and libraries services already do and will continue to offer support face to face at libraries. 	<p>It was noted the form had been redesigned to take account of feedback Panel members had received during the review. This included changes to the form and processes so that the team could process fluctuating and hidden conditions more comprehensively.</p> <p>Panel members were pleased the form had been integrated into the system but recognised it was not available until further testing to ensure accessibility had been undertaken. It would 'go live' in line with the IT system.</p> <p>Every decision letter that as sent to residents now included a feedback form.</p> <p>Consideration was being given to accessibility including training up library staff to help people applying as well as working with Social Navigators and the voluntary sector.</p> <p>Panel members agreed recommendation 4 had been completed.</p>
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5	<p>That the blue badge team hold engagement sessions with relevant organisations to increase understanding of the blue badge process in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors so organisations can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better manage expectations about the process and outcomes • better support people who are eligible for a blue badge. 	To be undertaken post go live.	<p>Engagement sessions would be held post 'go live' with the IT system but Panel members were reassured this was part of the implementation of the IT system plan.</p> <p>Panel members requested wider user testing with customers of the service. It was agreed the team would explore other testing opportunities by working with Councillors and the voluntary sector, to find volunteers to be part of the testing.</p> <p>Panel members agreed recommendation 5 had been completed.</p>
6	<p>The following recommendation is outside the departmental review and are made to the Executive for future activities:</p> <p>That the Executive requests a review to ensure that blue badge refusal letters are empathetic, easy to understand and demonstrate to applicants that all their evidence has been considered.</p>	<p>Website wording and pages have been redesigned. Not yet shared for review.</p> <p>Letters have been amended and updated to reflect these requests and shared for review.</p>	<p>It was noted Blue Badge template letters had been redrafted following a review and would integrate into the new IT system. The letters were now more person centred and used plain English.</p> <p>Panel members agreed recommendation 6 had been completed.</p>
7	<p>The following recommendation is outside the departmental review and are made to the Executive for future activities:</p> <p>That the Executive Director creates local guidelines that explain the approach to assessing blue badges in Bracknell Forest. The local guidance should be clear how Bracknell Forest Council uses its website and application form to provide and collect information (reflecting any changes because of recommendation 4), and how it considers evidence from a wide range of professionals and trusted organisations.</p>	The website has been updated (ready to go live) to reflect a more customer focussed approach in assessing blue badges, including additional clarity about the steps in the process and what information is required, plus a section on busting myths e.g., specific terminology / language needs to be used to be given a blue badge.	<p>It was noted the new design for website and wording had been signed off. Priorities for the business change team were that a 'work around' was not used in the future due to IT systems which did not work properly together.</p> <p>Panel members agreed recommendation 7 had been completed.</p>

	Specific update requested 15.12.22	Update provided	Chair observations / Panel observations
1	<p>The date that the new policy relating to hidden disabilities and the teams undertaking the specialist assessments etc was implemented.</p> <p>Following the implementation of the policy: can you provide an outline of the outcomes of those assessments please for under 18s.</p>	<p>(Please see data slides 6 & 7 in appendices document.)</p>	<p>Panel members agreed this recommendation had been completed.</p>
2	<p>Detail the issues that have prevented the timely implementation of each of the recommendations so that the commission understand exactly why the delays have taken place.</p>	<p>At various points within the project timeline the following reasons have created project delays and prevented timely implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource availability and project prioritisation • Resource absence: project lead absence due to family circumstances • Loss of project leads on 2 occasions due to staff turnover • System design technical issues - using a relatively new system to build solution • Technical issues delaying start of UAT processes <p>(Please see project timeline slides 4 & 5 in appendices document.)</p>	<p>Panel members agreed this recommendation had been completed.</p>

The aims of the Blue Badge project were established in Oct '21 and recorded in the PID. In brief they were to: Improve the applicant experience and support the build of a new solution using the Low-Code platform, ensure robust 'interim' process(es) in place to support continuity of service. Design clear pathways for treatment of applications dependent on grounds raised, better utilising expertise across departments and to design strategic solution (System, Website, Correspondence, reporting etc).