



The Case for Lifelong Blue Badges: **Voices from Lived Experience**

**Findings from a Stakeholder
Survey Conducted in August
and September 2025 by
STAND North Wales CIC**



"The application process causes a huge amount of stress and feelings of and the difficulties we face on a isolation for parents like myself. The mental impact is huge, forcing the reality of my child's lifelong condition daily basis. I have another child who should be in receipt of a blue badge but as of yet, I feel unable to put myself through another application."

"My daughter has a diagnosis of cerebral palsy. It is a life long condition and will never get better. In fact as time progresses her symptoms have worsened as she ages. Recognising lifelong conditions will not only take pressure off of the system and the need to reapply but it will also take the pressure off carers who are already facing unnecessary burdens of paperwork. Lengthy process."

"Due to not receiving the higher rate mobility component of disability living allowance at the time I made an application, I found the process extremely time consuming and emotionally draining. I am a parent carer to three children with lifelong multiple disabilities and on a good day, that is a huge responsibility, both mentally and physically. I initially put off making my application for over two years, as I just did not have the time or mental capacity, to complete the form and gather the necessary evidence needed for the application. When I finally summoned the strength and courage to do so, I found the process difficult. Despite providing a huge amount of evidence, I had to complete a long list of questions, that were already answered in the evidence I provided. As a parent to children with multiple profound, lifelong disabilities, completing the form had a huge effect on my mental health and well-being, as having to write all of the struggles that your child faces on a daily basis, hits hard. As a neurodivergent individual, this caused me to experience a prolonged period of depression and burnout for months afterwards."

"Over complicated form filling. Those dealing with the application not understanding medical terminology, e.g. Aortic Stenosis"

"Daughter is profoundly deaf, non-verbal and autistic. Told if she was blind, she'd get one. Had to fight to explain she doesn't understand road danger. Deafness is a loss of a sense. Sight and sound are both essential when it comes to children and danger."

"Having to prove I have a disability. When I have been disabled from birth and not being trusted."

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1. Overview of the Survey

1.1 Purpose of the survey

This survey was conducted by STAND North Wales CIC to better understand the thoughts, opinions, and experiences of individuals with lifelong diagnoses, and the carers who support them, when applying for a Blue Badge across Wales.

People with lifelong disabilities often face ongoing challenges in accessing the support they need. Despite having conditions that do not improve over time, many are still required to reapply for a Blue Badge every three years.

The survey aimed to gather real-life experiences to inform and strengthen the case for a fairer, more appropriate system for people with lifelong conditions. It supports the petition which began in April 2023, calling for Blue Badge applications to be made lifelong for individuals with permanent diagnoses.

1.2 How the survey was conducted

The survey was created on SurveyMonkey and the link shared with STAND North Wales CIC mailing list. This included all parents, carers and professionals, as well as adults with additional needs that STAND North Wales CIC supports. The survey was shared on our social media channels where we encouraged people to take part and share within their communities. Additionally, this survey was shared by Members of the Senedd.

1.3 Representation within the survey

The survey was live from 15th August to 8th September 2025 — a total of 25 days — and received a total of 636 responses. These included responses from 20 of the 22 counties in Wales, indicating strong geographic coverage. There were also some responses from England, which shows that concerns around the Blue Badge application process are not limited to Wales.

In addition, several participants indicated they lived in Wales but did not specify their county, meaning it is possible that all 22 Welsh counties were represented within the overall response data.

2. Survey Findings

This section presents the key findings from the survey.

Question 1 'Your Name'

A total of 636 people participated in the survey but there were technical issues with 2 responses, and those responses are therefore not included in the findings.

Question 2: 'Your Age'

We have gathered opinions from 634 participants which cover all age brackets.

Age range	Percentage	Number
Under 18	1.10%	7
18–34	7.10%	45
35–54	37.38%	237
55–64	26.18%	166
65+	28.23%	179

Question 3: 'Which county do you live in?'

The survey was shared across Wales, and we received feedback from 20 of the 22 counties. We also received some responses from England, highlighting that this is not solely an issue affecting Wales

Country	Percentage	Number
Wales	92%	581
England	3%	21
The UK	2%	13
Did not answer	2%	12

Question 4: 'Do you have a lifelong diagnosis and require a Blue Badge, or are you a carer for someone who does?'

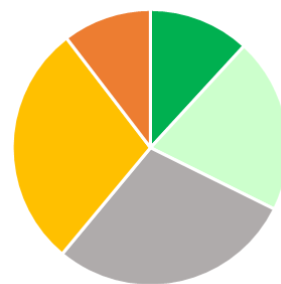
The survey received 634 responses. Of these, 60.9% were individuals with a lifelong diagnosis who require a Blue Badge, and 42.5% were carers for someone with a lifelong diagnosis. Additionally, 6.7% identified as both a carer and a person with a disability. A further 6.79% of responses came from family members or support services who assisted in completing the application process.

Question 5: 'Have you ever applied for a Blue Badge?'

A total of 634 respondents answered this question. The majority 96.21% indicated that they had applied for a Blue Badge with 3.79% saying they had not done so.

Question 6: 'If yes, how would you describe your first application experience?'

Answer choices	Percentage	Number
Very easy	11.83%	75
Easy	20.50%	130
Neither easy nor difficult	28.71%	182
Difficult	28.55%	181
Very difficult	10.41%	66



■ Very easy ■ Easy
■ Neither easy nor difficult ■ Difficult
■ Very difficult

Question 7: 'Were you asked to provide medical proof of a lifelong condition?'

Answer choices	Percentage	Number
Yes, and it was straight forward	41.17%	261
Yes, but it was not straight forward	34.54%	219
No	13.25%	84
Other (please specify)	11.04%	70

Question 8: 'Have you ever been requested to provide further medical proof of a lifelong diagnosis?'

Answer choices	Percentage	Number
Yes	21.61%	137
No	65.30%	414

'Pip assessment/award letter, GP letter. '

'Same questions and growing bundle of supporting documents requested at every reapplication.'

'My father was subjected to medical examinations every three years to see if his amputated leg had regrown.'

'Had to demonstrate degree of disability in the street outside house. Very demeaning.'

'The amount of information I've had to provide again for the same condition that she's had since birth is ridiculous. It is not a medical condition which means we do not see medical professionals about it. So many of the letters we have are very old, the NHS do not issue something as simple as a certificate of having a lifelong medical condition and naming it although that would be very useful.'

Professional supporting with application – 'Supporting letters are always required and can take some time to be obtained which delays claim and adds stress for the client.'

Question 9: 'Have you had to renew your badge even though your disability hasn't changed?'

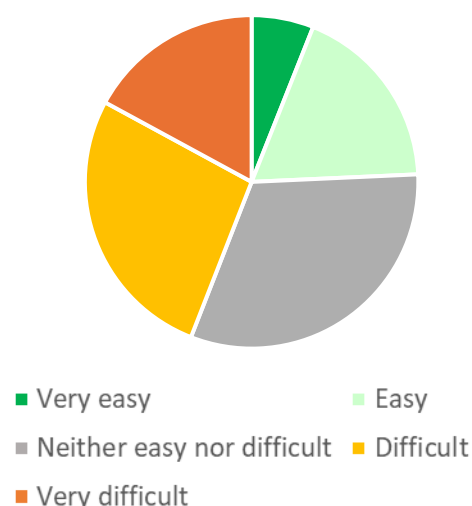
Answer choices	Percentage	Number
Yes	80.28%	509
No	19.72%	125

Based on the comments, where people said 'No' this was often because they were either:

- holding a Blue Badge for the first time and had not yet reached the renewal stage
- supporting someone else with the application process (so it was not applicable to them)
- Stress of applying for initial badge

Question 10: 'If yes, was it:'

Answer choices	Percentage	Number
Very easy	6.07%	31
Easy	18.40%	94
Neither easy nor difficult	31.90%	163
Difficult	27.20%	139
Very difficult	17.22%	88



Some applying up to 7 times for 1 badge.

Participants experience applying:

I didn't reapply as know how stressful it was first time and as condition hasn't changed, I didn't want to go through stressful process again so decided to abandon application.'

'They have refused me outright with no right to appeal on the grounds I don't take enough tablets.'

'I haven't managed to reapply - all too complicated and I'm too busy caring.'

Professional supporting with application: 'Members are stating that the reapplication process is harder than the initial application, and that its very stressful. People's blue badges are running out before their new one arrives because you cannot reapply before 28 days of the expiry, and it can take up to 2 months for the blue badges to actually arrive.'

Question 11: 'How often do you have to reapply?'

Answer choices	Percentage	Number
Every year	7.89%	50
Every three years	77.76%	493
Other (please specify)	14.35%	91

Those that answered 'other' indicated that the question was not applicable to them. This group includes individuals who support someone else with the application process, some who have stopped applying altogether, and others who were unsure how often they reapply.

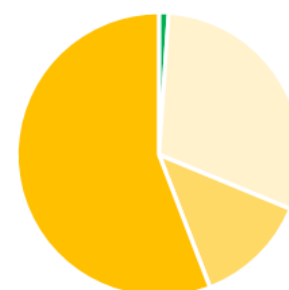
Question 12: Do you have to complete the full application form each time you reapply?

Answer choices	Percentage	Number
Yes	85.49%	542
No	14.51%	92

Those answering 'No', included those who support someone else in completing the form, rather than filling it out themselves.

Question 13: 'Have you been marked as 'Not for reassessment' (NFR)?'

Answer choices	Percentage	Number
Yes	1.10%	7
No	30.13%	191
Not sure	12.93%	82
I was not aware some people could be marked as 'Not for Reassessment' (NFR).	55.84%	354



■ Yes
 ■ No
 ■ Not sure
 ■ Not aware of NFR option

The majority of the participants, **68.7%** were not aware of or not sure about the 'Not for Reassessment option', 436 participants in total.

Question 14: Has renewal ever (Select all that apply)

Answer choices	Percentage	Number
Been delayed	28.86%	183
Been refused	11.04%	70
Left you without a blue badge for a period of time	33.28%	211

Participants sharing their experiences:

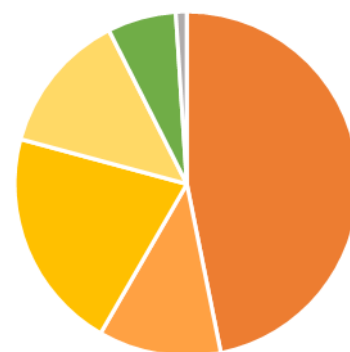
Our renewal was due during a period of time that we were at crisis. My daughter was engaging in serious self-injurious behaviour and I had to prioritise my time. That meant by the time that I applied, I had to apply again, rather than re-new her badge. This left us without a valid blue badge for over eight weeks.

Lots of our members have reported that the process is really difficult, and stressful. Some members have refused to reapply because the process is so stressful and might leave them without the badge anyway. These members are now struggling because they don't have access to accessible parking.

Left it until a year later as I couldn't face it again so I struggled on and on and on.

Question 15: 'Has the (renewal) process caused any of the following?'

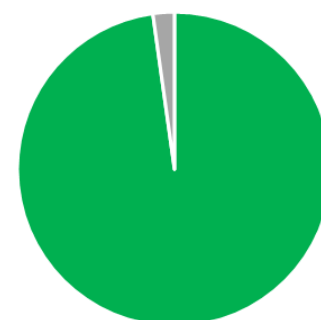
Answer choices	Percentage	Number
Stress	77.60%	492
Isolation	19.09%	121
Loss of independence	34.54%	219
Extra costs	22.08%	140
'NO' hadn't caused any of the above	10.70%	68
Have not applied to renew	1.70%	11



■ Stress ■ Isolation
■ Loss of independence ■ Extra costs
■ 'NO' hadn't caused any of the above ■ Have not applied to renew

Question 16: 'Would a life award make a positive difference to you or the person you care for?'

Answer choices	Percentage	Number
Yes	97.79%	620
No	2.21%	14



■ Yes ■ No

3. How a life award would make a positive difference

Participants who had said that a life award would make a positive difference to them or the person they cared for were asked to explain how it would do so and some of the responses are included below.

'I am a full time carer for my adult daughter who has severe learning disabilities, I also work and have my own health conditions. My daughters condition will not ever change, she will not ever miraculously "get better", so I do not understand why this is yet another hurdle in the already hectic cycle of trying to remember her appointments, forms, benefits renewal/changes, discretionary care payments and associated paperwork and places to be. It is also difficult to get letters form benefits/doctors/hospitals with the exact wording that would be needed. Caring for an adult with LD is already stressful enough and we do not get enough support and recognition - it would be lovely to have just one of the burdens removed.'

'Truly, unless you have ever had a lifelong condition or worse still multiple conditions that develop as a result of how your initial condition may impact on your life and future health, you cannot possibly understand how soul destroying it can be. I am a very devout person but it shames me to admit I once considered taking my own life, such was the way that you could be viewed by the general public. I understand their anger, I truly do. There are sadly people who take advantage of the Welfare system and they are a disgrace and a scourge on humanity. Not all conditions are visible. Mine are multiple and I've had them for 40 odd years. The anger you feel inside at the constant need to prove your disabilities cannot be put into words, truly. To at least, as I say, receive a lifelong award or at least as in my PIP Case a ten year award takes some of the stress out of having to revisit something you cannot change. You cannot underestimate how important that is for peace of mind.'

'My son has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and has been awarded a blue badge based on his complete lack of awareness for danger, he's a traffic risk, his temporary paralysis of will and refusals to walk sometimes lying in the main road because of sensory overload. A blue badge has meant we are able minimise the substantial risk of danger to him and others when in public. He's diagnosed asd, he's always going to be autistic and having a blue badge that I don't need to renew and him have it for life long disability would mean one less thing to fight for when Sen parents have enough to fight for already.'

'It would give my children the dignity that they deserve, without having to constantly fight and advocate on their behalf, for what they are rightfully entitled to by law. It would reduce the pressure that falls on families like my own and improve our mental health and well-being, as each application really does have a substantial negative impact on us. Unless you have lived experience of raising children with a lifelong disability or having one yourself, you really won't appreciate the devastating effect it truly has on our emotional well-being. I am physically drained and holding on by a thread, and one day that thread is going to snap, unless there is a release of pressure somewhere, from the amount of admin and applications that we face. My children have lifelong profound disabilities, which will always entitle them to a blue badge; it is time that was taken into consideration and changes were made to the law.'

To consider that so many of the people submitting applications on behalf of other people have disabilities themselves, and the renewal process makes it so much more difficult for us who do. My concern is also the enormous amount of pressure that all the needless renewals are placing on our county councils, as well as health, social care, and education services, due to the vast number of letters of support they are required to provide, at a time when they are already under pressure.'

'It would be one lot of paperwork we wouldn't have to fill in and we wouldn't have to remember when we need to start the renewal process to ensure we are not without a badge.'

'Reassurance to individuals in maintaining their independence and access to community without the worry of renewing blue badge.'

'Having supported individuals over many years i am fully aware how blue badges are crucial in maintaining independence and lifelong badge will replace the stress, worry and behaviours which I have seen due to badges being out of date or declined for no reason.'

'You only need to apply once, so the initial stress is not repeated every few years. There also wouldn't be the constant reminder that you're not able to do things other people are and need extra support and aids to help with that- members reported that they don't like being reminded that they are disabled. One member said "my disability is for life, so why do I need to reapply every few years when nothing has changed?" All of our members who use a blue badge have expressed concerns about the reapplication process. Our members also said that it would give them more independence if they didn't have to reapply because a lot of our guys need support with applying/reapplying, which would mean that they would only need support once, rather than on an ongoing basis.'

'Of all the people I care for all of them have a life long condition which will not improve. Completing renewals for each of them is time consuming and stressful, especially as sometimes I need to complete a 2nd form filled with all the same questions. I understand my own disability could change and needs reviewed, but my son for example requires a wheelchair and has reduced mobility and pain which he will have for his life. Its unnecessary to have to complete the forms over and over. His renewal is currently late and he is actually without a badge right now because I am so busy with the caring responsibilities of my elderly parents I just haven't time to sort his badge out. But this means he can only travel with me as I have my badge and I cant rely on others to help transport him because he hasn't got his own badge at the minute.'

'Unpaid carers are juggling so many tasks, and some of us care for more than 1 person whilst also trying to do our jobs, run the house etc lifelong blue badges for those with life long conditions would just help manage 1 load of additional paperwork / tasks.'

'Even filling this form, I get the sense of dread when talking about disability, feeling I need to prove illness and disability. As have to complete PIP form to get proof of disability. The PIP form is very difficult to complete. Very distressing and upsetting. Is there a way to link PIP so automatically provides evidence and blue badge is provided.'

'Less worry, less admin work when there's not enough hours in the day and no respite. Please consider people that cannot access a scanner for documents!!'

'Not having to complete the full application and provide evidence yet again. This will happen with every PIP reassessment, as the entitlement award will not have been renewed before my blue badge expires. The delay caused by this failure to be able to reapply using the automatic enhanced mobility pip award route for my blue badge gives rise to delays. This cost me in a parking fine as I had to park close to the pharmacy to collect my medication and when the expired badge was confiscated, I was compelled to walk considerably further in pain to access shops and friends.'

'It would create a relief as I wouldn't have to continuously prove myself in my community. I can live independently like most others can without the need for evidence. The PIP process is degrading enough, having a life long award would ease burden, admin and provide power for myself to live freely without an expiration date. I would like to ask that if there are people on the board who are considering this petition with no experience of disability. Please step out of your shoes and be alongside us in this decision to realise how extensive paperwork and admin is for disabled people/people with disabilities to just exist.'

'I hate having to list just how disabled I actually am. I leave it until the last possible moment to apply as I know it will depress me.'

'As someone with a disability it feels like i spend my whole life filling out forms, or getting paperwork just to fill out a form. It's an extra thing that plays in the back of my mind that I will need to renew my badge. I'm not going to get any better I will always need a wheelchair, I will always need access to a bigger parking space to get in and out of a car, where I go my wheelchair goes so I will always need that blue badge. I don't like the stress of it and I would like one less bit of paperwork I need to fill out which reminds me im disabled im different to a lot of the population.'

'Having a lifelong disability can feel so isolating and often times I feel so different to others that I struggle with accepting support. Having to renew my blue badge is already a physical struggle to do but knowing that every 3 years I have to be reminded that I'm different and need more support is a mental struggle and often makes me feel as though I don't want to go through the hassle and difficulty. This means that in the future when I renew my badge, I may struggle with accepting that I need the support even though my disability will be life-long.'

'Just not keep having to claim the same old help all the time for the same old condition. Incurable is incurable! GPs, Doctors and any medical professional's professional judgement should simply make life easier for us all. Accept medical expertise and stop making us prove something that we cannot prove - that's what the medical establishment is there for!'

'Because there is no reminder scheme, my badge went 8 months out of date and I could have been prosecuted for using it in that time up to £1000 and had my right to a badge removed. It was a thoughtful traffic warden who took the trouble to contact me about it. As it happens, I wasn't parked in a Disabled parking bay, but he wanted to warn me that I was at

risk, and that numerous others had fallen foul of this situation. Because it had expired, I had to make a new application from scratch.'

'Not having to prove every time that I am disabled and wasting tax payers money.'

'I wish to draw attention to the serious and far-reaching consequences caused by delays in the administration of the Blue Badge scheme. Because of significant inefficiencies in the processing of my application, I was left without the vital protections and entitlements that the Blue Badge is designed to provide. During this period of delay, I was placed in a position where, in order to meet essential day-to-day needs and access services, I was required to park in areas where, had my Blue Badge been issued on time, I would have been entitled to do so. As a direct result of not having the badge in my possession, I received multiple penalty charge notices. These fines were not the product of disregard for the law; they were an unavoidable outcome of administrative failure. Each instance arose from the practical reality of living with disability and the necessity of proximity parking to access health, work, and community services. The impact of this delay has been considerable. Firstly, there has been the financial burden of penalty notices. Secondly, I have been forced to undertake repeated legal challenges in order to contest these fines.

This has required the preparation of appeals, the collection and submission of medical and legal evidence, and the navigation of complex processes that demand time, resources, and energy that could have been far better directed toward my health, professional obligations, and personal responsibilities.

*The burden has not only been financial and administrative but also emotional. To be placed repeatedly in a position where I must defend my right to reasonable accommodation, knowing that the very purpose of the Blue Badge scheme is to prevent such exclusion, is both distressing and frustrating. The system, in effect, has transferred the consequences of administrative delay onto me as a disabled person, creating a situation of disadvantage and inequity. This case highlights a broader structural issue. When applications for Blue Badges are delayed, disabled people are not simply left waiting for a piece of documentation. They are exposed to disproportionate risk of penalty, unnecessary legal conflict, and direct discrimination in accessing everyday life. In practice, this undermines the statutory obligations of public bodies to promote equality, provide reasonable adjustments, and prevent disadvantage under the Equality Act 2010. In light of these experiences, I urge consideration of reforms to prevent further recurrence. Potential measures include: * The introduction of interim or temporary permits to cover the period between application and final decision. * The establishment of clear statutory time limits for processing applications, with accountability for authorities that exceed them. * A directive to local authorities and enforcement bodies to exercise discretion, or to suspend enforcement action, where evidence of a pending application exists. The failure to implement such safeguards places disabled people in an untenable position: either restrict their own participation in society, or risk financial penalty and legal conflict while awaiting access to a scheme specifically designed to prevent such barriers. My experience demonstrates that the consequences of delay are not minor inconveniences but serious infringements on independence, equality, and dignity. This submission therefore seeks not only to record the personal impact of delay in my own case but also to highlight the urgent need for systemic improvement. Without reform, others will continue to face unnecessary hardship, legal battles, and exclusion as a result of administrative inefficiency.*

The Blue Badge scheme is intended as a mechanism of support and inclusion; it must not, through delays and failures of delivery, become a source of disadvantage and distress.

It is one of the most important instruments for enabling disabled people to access everyday life on an equal basis. However, despite its intent, the scheme is hampered by outdated administration and an over-reliance on a medical model approach that often disadvantages the very people it is designed to support. Having lived with disability for over 43 years, and with more than 20 years' experience advising governments on disability and systems reform, I can attest to how the current scheme creates barriers rather than removing them.

At present, applications are still assessed heavily on medical evidence. This requirement obliges disabled people to gather, at personal cost and effort, detailed proof of impairment. It places undue emphasis on diagnosis rather than recognising the disabling barriers of the built environment. Such a system not only causes delay but also undermines dignity, forcing applicants to justify and re-prove their conditions rather than focusing on how inaccessible parking and mobility restrictions impact their participation in society. A reformed scheme must be firmly based on the social model of disability. This means shifting the focus away from medical gatekeeping and towards lived experience, functionality, and the environmental barriers that limit independence. By adopting this approach, the Blue Badge would better reflect its intended purpose: not as a medical entitlement, but as a practical tool to remove obstacles that prevent disabled people from accessing work, healthcare, community life, and social participation. It would also bring the scheme into alignment with the Equality Act 2010 and with broader governmental commitments to equality and inclusion.

Digitisation represents another necessary step. The current reliance on a physical badge displayed in the windscreen is open to error, misuse, theft, and delay. A modern system should connect the entitlement directly to a vehicle's registration number so that enforcement officers, using existing number plate recognition technology, can immediately identify vehicles entitled to park under the scheme. This would reduce reliance on physical documents, prevent misuse, and cut down on unnecessary fines and disputes.

At the same time, it is essential to preserve flexibility for disabled people who travel in multiple vehicles, for example with family, carers, or friends. A hybrid approach is therefore required: a vehicle-linked entitlement for regular use, alongside a portable badge—whether digital or physical—that can be used when travelling in alternative vehicles. This ensures security, efficiency, and convenience without undermining the flexibility that many disabled people depend upon. For those who drive themselves, entitlement could also be linked to the driving licence, enabling enforcement checks to be carried out quickly and securely against both the individual and their vehicle.

Embedding these reforms would have several immediate benefits. It would reduce delays and the burden of medical evidence by introducing a streamlined, socially-grounded application process. It would lessen the administrative and emotional toll caused by enforcement disputes and fines. It would modernise enforcement through digitisation, aligning the scheme with the wider digital transformation of government services. Above all, it would restore dignity, fairness, and equality to a scheme that too often falls short of those values in practice.

Wales, as a nation that has consistently championed the social model of disability in both policy and legislation, is uniquely placed to lead this reform.

If Wales were to implement a re-designed Blue Badge scheme that combined social model assessment with digital innovation, it would demonstrate to the rest of the UK how rhetoric can be translated into tangible systemic change. Such a step would not only alleviate hardship for disabled people in Wales but would also cement the nation's position as a progressive leader in disability rights and inclusion, setting a benchmark for others to follow.

The case for reform is therefore clear. The Blue Badge scheme must evolve from a static, medicalised, paper-based system into a modern, flexible, and socially-informed entitlement that genuinely removes barriers. Without this change, disabled people will continue to face delays, fines, disputes, and exclusion—consequences that are entirely avoidable in a society that claims to value equality and dignity.'

'It means as daughter gets older she wouldn't have to apply as without us there is no way she could complete herself.'

These are just **some** of the participants reasons by having a Blue badge Life award would make a positive difference.

4. Summary of Key Findings

We have received the views from individuals across Wales and some from England, covering all age categories. Participants include:

- Individuals with a lifetime diagnosis
- Carers
- People who are both individuals with disabilities and carers
- Professionals supporting the Blue Badge application process

The findings of this survey highlight not just operational failings in the Blue Badge system but raise serious concerns in relation to equality, human rights, and social justice.

Under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, the Welsh Government has the power, through Section 21, to lead meaningful and lasting change in how disabled individuals are supported.

The feedback gathered through this survey highlights widespread dissatisfaction within the current Blue Badge application and renewal process.

Below is a summary of some of the key concerns, and recommendations for change are included in the following section.

4.1 Issues Identified

a) Difficult and Repetitive Application Process

The initial and renewal application processes are described as unnecessarily complex, time consuming, and costly.

Repeated requests for identical information create an administrative burden for both applicants and health professionals.

The need to provide up to date medical evidence is especially difficult for those with lifelong conditions who may not have seen a health professional recently.

Many are asked to pay for duplicate documentation or to prove its authenticity, adding financial strain and stress.

b) Lack of Reminders and Communication

There is no official reminder system for when Blue Badges are due to expire. As a result, many individuals unknowingly lose their Blue Badge, leading to

- Parking fines
- Loss of mobility vehicles
- Increased isolation

c) Delays and Limited Reassessment Exemptions

Applicants are unable to reapply until a certain point before expiry, but many are still waiting beyond official timelines to receive a renewed badge.

Only 1.1% of applicants have been awarded a 'Not further reassessment' status, showing this provision is not effectively used for those with permanent, non-improving conditions.

d) Lack of Understanding of Disability

Application assessments are heavily focused on mobility, with limited understanding of hidden or unseen disabilities and assessors are often perceived as lacking appropriate training to understand the diverse nature of disabilities.

For example: 'I have a permanent stoma and since my operation last year, I struggle to find a suitable parking space which allows me to open my car door wide enough to get in and out without knocking my stoma and small hernia. I often need immediate access to a toilet and still experience fatigue and pain, but because I can walk a certain distance, I can't apply for a badge with my local council. I even had a supporting letter from my consultant. This is very unfair for those of us with unseen/hidden disabilities.'

e) Emotional Toll and Dignity Concerns

The process is widely described as stressful, demeaning, and triggering a “sense of dread”.

Individuals with lifelong, non-improving conditions report frustration at having to ‘prove’ their disability repeatedly, despite nothing changing. There is a sense that the system does not trust medical professionals or lived experience.

4.2 Legislative and Equality Implications

The issues raised not only highlight operational inefficiencies but raise equality, human rights and social justice concerns.

Relevant Legislation:

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (Section 21): Empowers the Welsh Government to take meaningful action in supporting disabled people.

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED):

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Remove or minimise disadvantage
- Provide reasonable adjustments

Human Rights Act 1998:

- Right to live with dignity and respect
- Freedom from discrimination

4.3 Key concerns:

Requiring repeated evidence from individuals with permanent conditions can constitute to indirect discrimination and a failure to make reasonable adjustments.

The process undermines dignity, autonomy, and independence, violating the principles of the Equality Act and Human Rights Act.

It diverts public resources toward unnecessary administrative tasks and adds stress to those the system is meant to support.

5. Recommendations

The Welsh Government, known for championing the social model of disability, is uniquely placed to lead reform. By introducing a Life Award for those with lifelong, non-improving conditions, that rely on a blue badge, it can:

- Fulfil its obligations under Section 21 of the 1970 Act, the Equality Act 2010, the PSED, and the Human Rights Act 1998
- Reduce administrative waste
- Uphold dignity and autonomy
- Remove systemic barriers that impact disabled people and their carers.

We urge the Government to:

- A) Introduce a Lifetime Award for individuals with lifelong, non-improving conditions, eliminating the need for reassessment and repeated applications.
- B) Improve Communication and Reminders
- C) Implement an automatic reminder system to inform individuals before their badge expires.
- D) Address Hidden Disabilities
- E) Ensure assessors are appropriately trained to consider a wide range of disabilities, including hidden and non-mobility related disabilities
- F) Reduce Bureaucracy
- G) Streamline the application process and reduce the need for repeated evidence, particularly where a lifelong condition is medically confirmed
- H) Uphold Rights and Dignity
- I) Design policies in line with equality, human rights, and social justice obligations.

6. Conclusion

The current Blue Badge system in Wales creates barriers rather than removing them, contradicting the goals of disability rights legislation. Urgent reform is needed to:

- Uphold dignity
- Restore trust
- Reduce waste
- Ensure equal access to essential support

The introduction of a Life Award and the implementation of these recommended changes will better serve disabled individuals and carers across Wales and fulfil the Government's legal and moral responsibilities.

About STAND North Wales CIC

STAND North Wales CIC was formed in 2018 by Yvonne Brookes and Sarah McCulloch as a not-for-profit Community Interest Company in response to the closure of organisations representing families of children and young adults with Speech, Language and Communication Needs, Additional Needs and Disabilities in North Wales, and is a parent led organisation.

For more information about STAND North Wales CIC, please visit our website: www.standnw.org If you have any queries, would like to know more about STAND North Wales CIC, or would like to receive information regarding our training, events and workshops for parents, carers and professionals, please email our admin Admin@standnw.org or call 07570 583 842

<https://www.standnw.org/>

