

Disabled Parking

How to persuade your local council to provide **Blue Badge parking bays** near your branch



Did you know?

‘Age Concern estimates that there are 4 million people in the UK with walking difficulties’

‘There are more than 2 million people who are over 70 years old who hold a driving licence’

‘2.2 million people are Blue Badge holders’

‘Motability provides over 400,000 cars to people with disabilities’

Many of these people are our customers and use their cars to visit our branches, but how far from your branch is their nearest available parking space?

Making life easier for disabled drivers

Put yourself in the shoes of a disabled customer with walking difficulties. You get in your car and head for the high street looking for a parking space close to the Post Office®. You drive round and round and find the nearest unoccupied space is 100 metres away – but you know you can't walk that far!

Often the hardest part of the journey for customers with walking difficulties is from the car to your branch, but the Blue Badge scheme can make it a lot easier.

In this guide you'll find, in simple to follow stages, what you can do to ask your council to provide Blue Badge parking close to your branch.



Contents

What is the Blue Badge scheme?	01
Is there Blue Badge parking close to your branch?	02
What to do if there is no Blue Badge parking nearby	03
Meeting with the highways department	04
Submitting your request	05
Useful contacts	06

Modified Post Office® branches — if you are a modified branch whose premises are leased from Post Office Ltd or Royal Mail, you need to speak with Post Office® Property Holdings on 0870 850 1000 before asking your local council for a Blue Badge parking space.

The information contained in this booklet is intended for guidance only.

What is the Blue Badge scheme?

The Blue Badge scheme is a national parking concession provided by local councils for people with severe walking difficulties who travel either as drivers or passengers.

The scheme also applies to registered blind people and people with severe upper limb difficulties who regularly drive a vehicle but cannot turn a steering wheel by hand.

The scheme's objective is to allow badge holders to park close to their destination.

Where can Blue Badge holders park?

Blue Badge holders can park in special disabled parking bays and on some single and double yellow lines.



Some of the problems they experience when attempting to park close to branches are:

- Members of the public who are not disabled, use their spaces
- There may not be a disabled parking bay close to the Post Office® branch
- The route from the parking bay into the Post Office® may be an obstacle course
- Despite some yellow lined areas being OK, others are restricted and cannot be used by badge holders
- When they have parked and arrive in your branch they may be exhausted or in pain because they have walked a long way



Is there Blue Badge parking close to your branch?

Your first action should be to find out where Blue Badge holders can currently park near your branch. You can begin by looking at the road right outside.

If it has yellow lines, check the wording on the signs. If they say:

- “No loading/unloading”
- or if the lines are:
- on a bus lane
 - on a cycle lane
 - on a Red Route in London
 - at zigzag markings by a crossing
 - by a lowered kerb for pedestrian access

then Blue Badge holders will need to go elsewhere to park.

In most other cases Blue Badge holders will be able to park on single or double yellow lines.

If Blue Badge holders can't park outside your branch, find out where the nearest disabled parking bay is. Again check the signs. If in doubt check with the local council's highway department or police for advice on whether Blue Badge holders are allowed to park on the yellow lines outside your branch.

If the nearest bay is on the street or in a council car park within a hundred metres of your branch, that's OK.

If the parking is on private, rather than council owned ground, such as a car park provided for a group of shops including yours, check it out for disabled bays. The provider of the car park is required by law under the Disability Discrimination Act to provide spaces and to have a patrol scheme in place to ward off drivers who are not disabled.

If you have any customer parking on your own premises, check that out too. You must ensure that there are spaces allocated for the exclusive use of Blue Badge holders.

Whether the private parking is directly under your control or not, you should ensure that your branch has a written procedure for disabled parking stating:

- how often the parking bay is checked
- what is done when a customer or colleague complains that shared parking for your premises is being abused

Staff safety needs to be considered as parking issues can lead to frayed tempers!

03 What to do if there is no Blue Badge parking nearby

If there is nowhere within a hundred metres for Blue Badge holders to park (in a special bay or somewhere with yellow lines where they are allowed to park), you can ask your local council to provide a bay. However you need to establish a good case for the council to spend its money. Here is a simple plan of action to make it easy for your local council to say “yes”.

Making a request for Blue Badge parking facilities

You'll need to gather evidence to make a good case for the request to your local council and you can do this by following these steps:

1. Obtain a large scale map of the streets around your branch.
Tip: You can get a map from the Internet by going to www.streetmap.co.uk and entering your postcode.
2. Decide where you think a Blue Badge parking bay could be provided close to your branch.
Tip: Mark it on the map and try to get a photo of the spot showing your branch in the background.
3. Identify any high kerbs or steps between the bay and your front door and work out what needs to be done to make sure there is a safe and level access route.
4. Check that the street lighting is good too; if not, add that to your request.
5. Obtain the name and contact details of the person in charge of the highways department — you can get this by calling your local council. At the same time check that it is the highways department that handles Blue Badge parking bays. **Tip: Make sure they know you are talking about the provision of parking, not the provision of badges.**
6. Identify at least one other local group who might be interested in improving Blue Badge parking — for example Help The Aged, Age Concern, The Disabled Drivers Association. Contact them and show them your plans and ask for their support. **Tip: Ask if you can refer to the local group's support when you make your Blue Badge submission to the council.**

Checklist

Local map

- Best position marked on it
- Photograph
- Clear route to branch identified

Obstacles

- Good street lighting? Kerbs? Litter bins?

Disability support group

- Name of person, office held and title of disability group
- Phone
- Email
- Address
- Agreement to quote their support

Council highways department

- Name of person, position and department
- Address
- Phone and fax
- Email

04

Meeting with the highways department

Don't document your request for Blue Badge facilities just yet as you need to be armed with the most powerful arguments to get a positive result.

Gather all the information listed in section three, call the highways department and ask for someone to visit you to discuss the disabled parking issues around your branch. **Tip: The best meeting is one outside your branch in the pouring rain. Make them imagine they have to unload a walking frame from the car and edge their way to your door.**

If they say no, ask if they would be kind enough to give you an appointment with them at their place. The first objective of that initial meeting is to remind them of the central role of the Post Office® in their community and to ask for their support in making it as accessible as possible for disabled customers.

Secondly, it is to identify how you can help them to do whatever is necessary to overcome the hurdles in getting a Blue Badge bay near to your branch.

The reason for this is that it pays to start off with the assumption that they will want to do everything they can to help disabled people. We are likely to be more effective by offering to help now rather than by accusing the council of not having done enough so far.

What you need to ask the highways department:

You need to find out if there are already plans under way to get a parking bay installed. **Tip: If there are plans in place ask for a date when the bay will be in operation. If plans have been held up find out why – perhaps it is due to budget or workload constraints. Knowing the show-stoppers is half the battle in trying to overcome them.**

If there are no plans in place, ask for advice on the best way to request that a Blue Badge parking bay is installed. **Tip: It will probably be in the form of a letter to the highways department outlining what is wanted, where and why.**



Ask about the process the council uses. How the request is considered, how long it is likely to take, whether there are any queues in order just to get onto the agendas of meetings (and if so how to get to the top of these queues).

Ask whether writing letters to the council chairperson, the mayor, the MP, etc. would help escalate the case for parking and obtain budget and resources.

Stress that this is urgent.

Tip: Mention that what may seem like just reducing inconvenience can be much more than that to a disabled person. They may be in pain and are often vulnerable as they move between car and branch.

Tell them about the disability group (e.g. Help The Aged, Age Concern, The Disabled Drivers Association) that you are working with.

05 Submitting your request

Now you have identified where you think a Blue Badge parking bay should be located; noted any barriers between the bay and your branch; obtained support from a disability group and you have met with the highways department to identify a powerful argument for having a Blue Badge parking space, it is time to document all this information and make a formal request.



You can use the letter on the right (which can also be found on the Disability Action Centre website: www.royalmailgroup.com/dac) to help your request:

Take a copy of everything for your records and post the request to the council, noting the date of posting.

Date _____ Branch name _____
Branch address _____

Name and address
of highways department
Blue Badge parking in XXXX street, XXX town

Thank you for visiting me to discuss the urgent requirement to improve parking for Blue Badge holders outside this Post Office® branch.

As you know, our local (name of disabled group) group is 100% behind this request.

There is a clear need to serve disabled customers and it can even be a factor in keeping Post Office® branches open for all.

The purpose of this letter is to make a formal request for your department to provide a parking bay or bays for Blue Badge holders. It contains details of our preferred location and some general points in support of the case.

We would stress that this is urgent; customers with disabilities struggle to reach our branch from distant parking spaces and can be suffering pain; others simply stay away and are being denied the benefit of using this Post Office®.


I have enclosed the following items:

1. Sketch map showing preferred location of Blue Badge parking bay
2. Disability group's statement of support (if you have one)
3. Contact details
4. Photograph

Please will you acknowledge receipt of this letter and provide some written feedback on the anticipated process and timescale in which we might reasonably expect to see action.

A copy of this letter is also being displayed in our branch to advise customers of this request.

Yours sincerely,



Name
The subpostmaster, Post Office® XXXXXXXX branch.

Submitting your request (continued)

What if I don't receive a reply?

Wait about two weeks. If you have not heard anything, write on your copy of the original letter...

Dear (name of highway department) - do you have any developments on my request?



Subpostmaster

Date

Branch name

Branch address

Name and address
of highways department

Blue Badge parking in XXXX street, XXX town

Thank you for visiting me to discuss the urgent requirement to improve parking for Blue Badge holders outside this Post Office® branch.

What happens next?

The council will consider your application and let you know whether they have agreed to your request for a Blue Badge bay.

If the council says “no” with an excuse such as “lack of available funds”, or if the council just does nothing, then you may consider writing to the head of the council (with a copy to your MP), asking him or her to take up this matter on your behalf.

If the council says “no” for a good reason, such as traffic danger, then you must bow to their expertise. At least you tried.

If your request is successful in the fullness of time, a Blue Badge parking bay will appear near your branch, so don't forget to write to the highways department to thank them. **Tip: A good way of saying thank you is through a letter to your local paper – it will be worthy praise for the local officials and will help advertise to readers that the bay is available outside your branch.**



Fax it to the council, noting the date. **Tip: Send it in the morning, towards the beginning of the week, so that it doesn't get forgotten overnight or over the weekend.**

Royal Mail Group's Disability Action Centre (DAC)

Practical expertise in disability issues for employees and agents. DAC can give advice on employment and access to goods and service issues.

Monday to Friday 9.00am-5.00pm. Calls through Typetext and TextDirect are welcomed.

Telephone: 0114 241 4731
Fax: 0114 241 4534
Email: dac@royalmail.com

Disability related information can also be found at the DAC website:
www.royalmailgroup.com/dac

Blue Badge scheme:

Contact your local council or
www.dft.gov.uk

Find your Council:

www.direct.gov.uk/QuickFind

Find your MP:

www.locata.co.uk/commons

This publication has been produced by Post Office Ltd.

Post Office and the Post Office symbol are registered trademarks of Post Office Ltd.

'Disabled parking – how to persuade your local council to provide Blue Badge parking bays near your branch'
© Post Office Ltd 2005. All rights reserved. June 2005.