

London Borough of Bromley

PART 1 - PUBLIC

Briefing for Care PDS

24th March 2020

BLUE BADGE VOLUME INCREASE

Contact Officer: Jane Campbell - Occupational Therapy Service Lead

Tel: 02084617386 E-mail: jane.campbell@bromley.gov.uk

Duncan Bridgewater - Head of Customer Service

Tel: 02084617676 E-mail: duncan.bridgewater@bromley.gov.uk

Chief Officer: Kim Carey

1. Summary

1.1 This paper is an update on the impact of additional volumes as a result of the new hidden disabilities eligibility criteria for Blue Badges from August 2019. The Executive agreed the allocation of £42k from the Council's 2019/20 Central Contingency to fund additional resources to enable services to continue to be provided within service level agreement up until the end of March 2020. The majority of applications are processed by Liberata under the automatic criterion and small proportion is passed to occupational therapy for further assessment of eligibility.

1.2 Growth of £91k has been allocated to enable services to continue to manage demand in the upcoming financial year. Should the demand significantly reduce the staffing levels will be adjusted accordingly.

2. THE BRIEFING

2.1 Liberata Update on administration

Liberata continue to process within service level despite the significant volume increase, and have achieved this with an additional seconded officer and weekend overtime, at no cost to the Council up to the end of December. However, they have stated this is not sustainable in the longer term and have asked for funding for an additional 1 fte for Jan/Feb/March and keep the volumes under review, and extend into the new contract (April 2020) as necessary. The total cost for this is £8600 for the 3 month period. Whilst application volumes remain high, continued funding from April 2020 has been made available in the budget, to avoid extended processing times beyond those published is requested. The funding is included in the growth allocated and will only be paid to the contractor, on a month by month basis, subject to applications volumes remaining inflated.

2.2 Occupational Therapy (OT) Update

A small proportion of the applications are unable to be processed under the automatic criteria. These are passed by Liberata to OT for assessment of eligibility. During the financial year of 2018-2019 the average weekly referral rate to OT for assessment of blue badges, freedom passes and taxi cards was 33 applications per week. One OT has been historically employed to manage this work.

The referral to OT rate significantly increased since the changes were implemented and the average weekly referral rates in the subsequent months were as follows:

Month	Average weekly referrals
September 2019	63
October 2019	66.5
November 2019	53
December 2019	45
January 2020	53.5
February 2020	51.5

An additional locum has been employed to manage this increase, working 35 hours a week, at a projected cost of £26k over 6 months.

Additional work is also being undertaken to ensure the new criteria are implemented appropriately and fairly. This involves the continued liaison with other boroughs and the sharing of complex decision making with senior managers, in the form of a newly created panel.

3 FUNDING

3.1 In the first year of implementation, the Department for Transport are providing £1.7 million across England. Based on the IBCF allocation methodology, Bromley would receive around only £6k.

3.2 August 2019 – end March 2020

£42k was made available to manage this work and has been used as follows:

- £2k additional Anite system licences to move to paperless system
- £26k - Full time OT locum for 6 months
- £9k –Additional administrative costs over 3 months

TOTAL £37k

3.3 2020-2021 Budget

A budget of £91k has been allocated for the new financial year and will be used as follows:

- £57k - Full time OT locum
- £34k - Additional administrative costs

TOTAL £91k

4 CONCLUSION

Sufficient financial resources have been allocated to manage the increased applications for Blue Badges within the upcoming financial year. Although it has been anticipated that the number of applications would have significantly reduced by now, this has not been the case.

The additional staffing is employed on a temporary basis and should the demand reduce then the staffing levels will be adjusted accordingly.