

From: Diane Morton Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care
Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health

To: Adult Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee - 6 May 2026

Subject: **BLUE BADGE UPDATE**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report provides an overview of the Blue Badge Service together with information on application demands, key achievements and challenges and ongoing priorities for the Blue Badge Service.

Recommendation: The Adult Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the content of the report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Blue Badge scheme is a statutory scheme, established under Section 21 of the Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970. It is governed by law, with local authorities responsible for its administration and enforcement. It provides statutory parking concessions for people with severe mobility issues. It is important to note that it assesses Mobility, not Disability.
- 1.2 The Blue Badge scheme is administered by Local Authorities in line with National Guidance and Legislation produced by the Department for Transport (DFT), who govern the fee and badge duration. These two areas are outside of Kent County Council's (KCC) control and limits local mitigations despite sustained demand pressure.
- 1.3 There is a statutory requirement for Local Authorities to provide this service, but the authority has local control on how the scheme is administered and how applications are assessed.
- 1.4 KCC is the largest Blue Badge Authority in England with 48,116 Applications received in 2025. Around 36% of applicants automatically qualified for a badge in 2025, with the rest, 64% requiring some form of assessment.
- 1.5 KCC operates a tiered proportionate assessment model to assess mobility, which is used as an example model by other local authorities due to the efficiencies this delivers. This includes Desktop, Telephone and Face to Face assessments. Face to Face is only used in the most complex cases, with around 350 Face to Face assessments offered in 2025.

- 1.6 KCC also chair the Blue Badge LA Peer group for England, promoting best practice and information sharing and working alongside the DFT and other stakeholders to deliver continuous service improvements and shape national changes to the scheme.
- 1.7 Misuse and Fraud investigations are limited due to capacity within the Counter Fraud Team due to other financially impactful priorities within KCC.

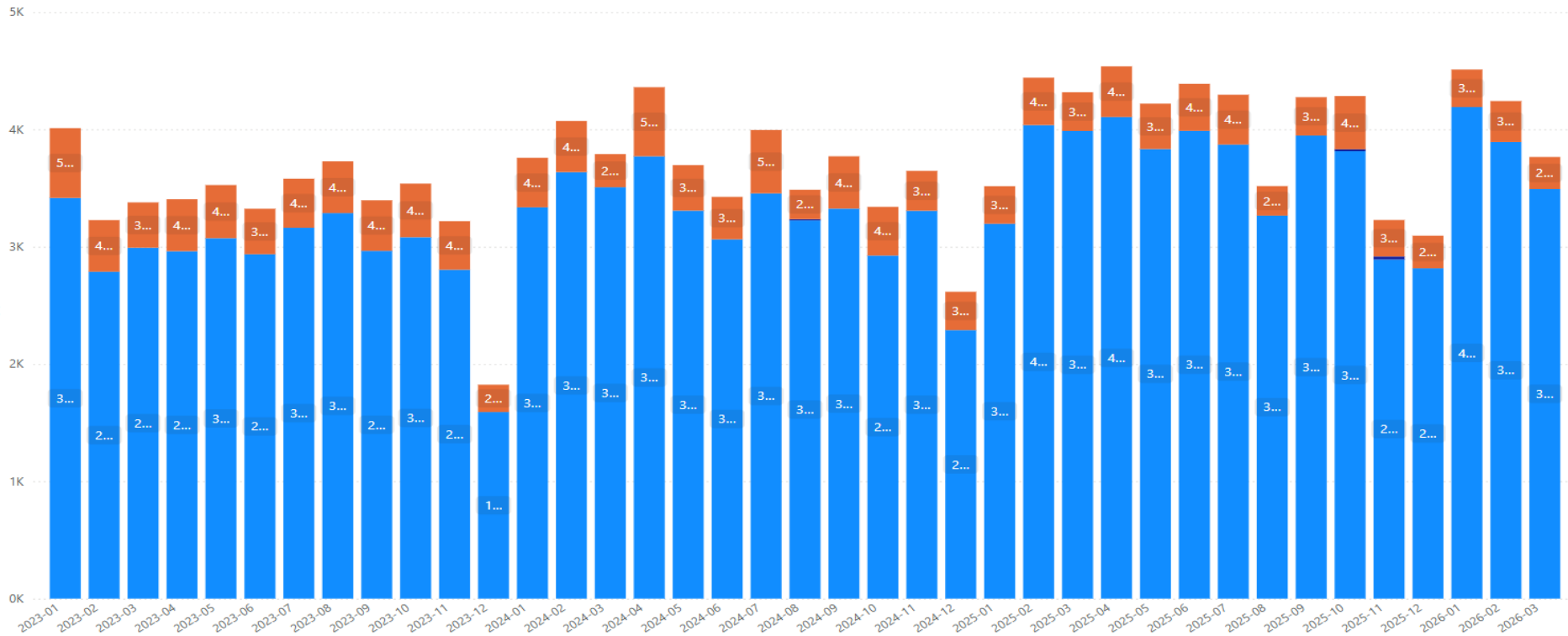
2. Background

- 2.1 Applications are made online, either by the individual or by using assisted digital services at Gateways, or by post (10%). Eligibility decisions are functional and impact based, not diagnosis led.
- 2.3 Demand growth continues to outpace sustainable capacity with the ongoing increase in demand reflecting national trends, as all local authorities are seeing year on year increases in applications
- 2.4 Complaint and Ombudsman volumes are low relative to application volume, with less than 1% of all applicants contacting Customer Care or the Ombudsman. This provides assurance that decision making is robust and proportionate despite increased demand.
- 2.5 KCC use a contracted Case Management Provider, IEG4 to deliver efficiencies across all service areas. KCC was a development partner with IEG4 for this product, which allowed maximum efficiencies to be delivered as part of this contract. Badges are issued for three years, or the length of their automatic entitlement, whichever is shorter.
- 2.6 The service operates with a lean structure, with combined operational, clinical, governance and performance responsibilities.

3. Key Statistics

- 65% of applicants are above the age of 60. 7% of applicants are under 18 years of age.
- 64% of badges issued are “subject to further assessment” (Not Automatically Qualifying)
- Ongoing increase in demand: 3,800 increase from 2023-2024, 4,116 increase from 2024-2025.
- At the start of 2025 there were 4,500 applications awaiting assessment. Currently there are 1,400 applications awaiting assessment.
- The current published wait time for applications is four months.
- Demand is increasing year on year – a 9% increase from the previous year, illustrated in the table below.

Increasing Application Demand 2023-2026



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|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 2023 | 40,155 applications |
| 2024 | 43,956 applications |
| 2025 | 48,116 applications |
| Q1 2026 | 12,922 applications |
| 2026 (estimated based on Q1 activity) | 51,688 applications |

4. Key Achievements

- 4.1 Changes to the recording of assessment outcomes have delivered efficiencies, particularly about unsuccessful applications. This has positively impacted morale of staff.
- 4.2 Ombudsman challenges have not found any areas of development for the service, reinforcing that the approach being taken by KCC is appropriate and proportionate.
- 4.3 The Business Support Team continue to support the Prevention and Adult Social Care Connect assessment staff and have successfully taken on the Agilisys staff under TUPE, who are working within the Business Support Team at capacity.
- 4.4 A standardised appeals approach has been implemented with the support of Digital Services, which also include a review and expansion of the information document provided with unsuccessful applications to assist customers in understanding why decisions have been made.
- 4.5 KCC continues to lead in national discussions, both with the Department for Transport and our local authority colleagues to share best practice, encourage positive change and support residents in getting the most appropriate service delivery.
- 4.6 Working with partner agencies to support assisted applications and vulnerable applicants

5. Key Challenges

- 5.5 Areas outside of KCC control (Badge Fee and Badge Length) could alleviate pressure within the service and lead to increased funding from badge production fees but requires the DFT to make a legislative change. KCC has initiated this discussion alongside our local authority colleagues with the DFT, but it requires ministerial support to propose a legislative change in these areas.
- 5.5 Application numbers continue to rise significantly year on year.
- 5.6 As Borough and District councils do not publish the number of disabled bays within their carparks it is not possible to cost out how much revenue is not received by local authorities due to the above concession. There is also the revenue not received as Blue Badge holders can also use on street parking where there are double yellow lines and residential parking restrictions apply.
- 5.7 However, If you were to take an estimated usage of between 1% and 5% of BB holders using their Blue Badge a day which would attract free parking, that might give you sense of how much is not received, between 780 and 3,900 Blue Badge uses a day x £5 (The average cost of a 3hr stay across Kent) equalling between £1.4m and £7.1m in lost parking revenue in a year period.

6. Ongoing Service Priorities

- 6.1 Demand management: clearer applicant information and evidence requirements.
- 6.2 Assessment efficiency: maximise lowest level decision making.
- 6.3 Workforce resilience: stabilise assessor capacity and review whether current staffing levels are appropriate given ongoing increasing demand.
- 6.4 Data and insight: improve visibility of throughput and blockages.
- 6.5 Focus on staff, including supporting personal development.

7. Recommendations

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| 7.1 Recommendation: The Adult Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the content of the report. |
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8. Background Documents

None

9. Report Author

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