

Inclusion London's briefing – The proposed expansion of ULEZ to Greater London

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Inclusion London is a Deaf and Disabled people's organisation that works to promote equality and inclusion of Deaf and Disabled people. We support over 70 DDPOs in London and through those organisations our reach extends to 70,000 Disabled people.

Summary

- In London 1 in 3 families with a Disabled adult are living in poverty, compared to 1 in 4 families without a disabled adult.¹
- A Disabled person spends an average of £583 per month more than a non-disabled person to achieve the same standard of living.²
- With the cost-of-living crisis unfolding, increases in energy costs will hit hard Disabled Londoners.
- The proposed expansion of ULEZ to Greater London will compound the existing cost of living crisis for many Disabled Londoners who rely on their own cars to go to work and hospital appointments.
- Many Disabled people regularly drive in London because public transport is not fully accessible. Also, alternative transport services such as Dial a Ride and Taxicard are not substitute for private cars as they are only meant to be used for social purposes.
- Current exemptions granted to owners of vehicles registered with the DVLA with a 'disabled' or disabled passenger vehicle tax class exclude a large proportion of people with significant mobility impairments who do not qualify for a vehicle tax exemption. This is because eligibility criteria are very strict.
- The car scrappage scheme is insufficient to support Disabled people to scrap or retrofit their non-compliant car as vehicle-specific adaptations post manufacture many Disabled people need are very expensive. The cost of vehicle replacement for Disabled people is disproportionately higher than for other car users, meaning it is not financially viable for them to do so.
- **We are calling on the Mayor of London to exempt all Disabled people who are Blue Badge holders from the ULEZ charge, regardless of whether vehicles are registered with a disabled or disabled passenger vehicle tax class.**

What is the ULEZ scheme?

The ULEZ (Ultra Low Emissions Zone) was adopted as part of the Mayor's Clean Air Action Plan with the objective of reducing air pollution in London, particularly from Nitrogen dioxide and Particulate Matter. The ULEZ seeks to reduce toxic air pollution by disincentivising the use of vehicles non-compliant with the ULEZ emission standards. It does this by levying a daily charge of £12.50 on any vehicles that do not meet emissions standards (including cars, vans, minibuses and motorbikes), with the charge being higher for heavy vehicles. The ULEZ applies 24 hours per day, every day of the year.

¹Trust for London. London's Poverty Profile:2020, April 2020. Available at: [Londons Poverty Profile 2020.pdf \(fra1.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com\)](https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/London-Poverty-Profile-2020.pdf)

² Scope. The Disability Tag Price Report, February 2019. Available at: [disability-price-tag-report-2019.pdf](https://www.scope.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/disability-price-tag-report-2019.pdf)

What are ULEZ emission standards?

To meet the ULEZ emissions standard, vehicles must meet the required Euro emissions standard for their vehicle and emission type. The ULEZ standards are:

- Euro 3 for motorcycles, mopeds, motorised tricycles and quadricycles (L category)
- Euro 4 (NOx) for petrol cars, vans, minibuses and other specialist vehicles
- Euro 6 (NOx and PM) for diesel cars, vans and minibuses and other specialist vehicles.

Proposed expansion of ULEZ to Greater London

From its introduction on 8 April 2019, the ULEZ initially only applied to vehicles travelling in central London. However, by way of the Greater London Low Emission Zone Charging (Variation and Transitional Provisions) Order 2018 (“**the Variation Order**”), the ULEZ area was expanded from central London to inner London (up to the North and South Circular roads). This extension came into force on 25 October 2021, though the legal basis for the extension was put into place in 2018.

On 4th March 2022 the Mayor, Sadiq Khan, announced that he had asked TfL to develop proposals for a public consultation on expanding the Ultra-Low Emission Zone London-wide from 2023, to make London a greener, healthier and less congested city. The Mayor argued that expanding ULEZ London-wide will help protect Londoners and the economy from the damaging impact of air pollution and carbon emissions whilst keeping the number of people affected by any new charge to an absolute minimum as the cost of living increases. He also claimed he is strongly committed to help Disabled people and Londoners on lower incomes to adapt to the extended London-wide ULEZ, with as big a scrappage scheme as is feasible.

ULEZ expansion will cause financial hardship to many disabled people

Inclusion London values the actions the Mayor of London has taken over the years to tackle pollution, carbon emissions and congestion in London and welcomes the efforts that have been made until now to reduce the circulation of polluting vehicles on the road in the city.

However, we are extremely concerned that the current proposal to expand ULEZ to Greater London threatens to cause real financial hardship to many Deaf and Disabled Londoners who already live in poverty and experience significant deprivation. We have already witnessed the disproportionate adverse impact that the expansion of ULEZ from central to inner London in 2021 has had on Deaf and Disabled Londoners who regularly drive in London. We believe that by expanding ULEZ even further to cover Greater London, Deaf and Disabled people will be worst hit by this proposal unless significant changes are made to the scheme and necessary measures are put in place by the GLA to mitigate the impact of this policy on Deaf and Disabled Londoners.

Cost of living crisis

Deaf and Disabled Londoners are more likely to experience poverty and inequality than people who are not disabled. Research from Trust for London shows that 1 in 3 families with a disabled adult are living in poverty, compared to 1 in 4 families without a disabled adult.

Poverty is compounded by the higher costs of living with a disability, including higher energy costs. Disabled people’s energy costs are often higher than those of non-disabled people because they may need to run the heating more (to cope with lower mobility or prevent severe illness due to weakened immune systems) and to charge essential medical and mobility equipment. A Disabled person already spends an average of £583 per month more than a non-disabled person to achieve the same standard of living. For one in five of Disabled people, these extra costs reach more than £1,000 a month.

The cost of living for Disabled Londoners was already a challenge before the pandemic. However, with London facing the highest levels of inflation in the UK since April 2021, the costs of food and energy in London have started rising exponentially over the last six months.³ As the cost-of-living crisis unfolds, the expected increases in energy costs will hit hard Deaf and Disabled Londoners.

Blue Badge holders should be exempted from the ULEZ charge

We believe that the current proposal to extend ULEZ to Greater London will have a devastating impact on those Disabled people who regularly need to drive into London and will therefore compound the existing cost of living crisis for many of them. In light of the existing cost of living crisis, we urge the Mayor of London to grant to all Blue Badge holders an exemption from the ULEZ daily charge. As of March 2021, 2.7% of the population in London are Blue Badge holders, meaning that there are 247,000 Blue Badge holders who are already exempted from the London Congestion Charge.⁴

We also believe all Blue Badge holders should be exempted from the ULEZ daily charge because:

- Public transport is not fully accessible to disabled people, with only 33% of London Tube stations offering step-free access.⁵ Also, alternative transport services such as Dial a Ride and Taxicard are only meant to be used for social purposes, like going shopping, visiting friends and family, and going out to events, and many disabled Londoners rely on the use of their own cars to go to work and attend hospital appointments;
- Many people with significant mobility impairments who are Blue Badge holders have vehicles which are not registered with the DVLA with a 'disabled' or 'disabled passenger vehicle' tax class and are not currently exempted from the ULEZ daily charge valid until 25 October 2025. These vehicles do not qualify for a vehicle tax exemption because eligibility criteria to qualify for the exemption are very strict.
- The car scrappage scheme is insufficient to support Disabled people to scrap or retrofit their non-compliant car as vehicle-specific adaptations post manufacture many Disabled people need are very expensive. The cost of vehicle replacement for Disabled people is disproportionately higher than for other car users, meaning it is not financially viable for them to do so.

Why Blue Badge holders are not exempted from the ULEZ charge

We know that on several occasions the Mayor of London has announced he excludes the possibility of exempting Blue Badge holders from the ULEZ charge by arguing that:

- there are already exemptions in place for drivers of vehicles with a disabled or disabled passenger vehicle tax class, and wheelchair-adapted private hire vehicles, who will be exempt from the charge until October 2025;
- Disabled people can choose to use a range of ULEZ compliant vehicles, rely on public transport and use other transport options available in London for disabled people, namely Dial a Ride and Taxicard;
- Disabled people can be eligible for the GLA's car scrappage scheme which would help drivers scrap their older, more polluting vehicles and switch to cleaner forms of transport, use a car club vehicle or purchase newer, cleaner models that are ULEZ-compliant.⁶

³ NIESR. Monthly CPI Tracker, January 2022. Available at: [NIESR-Monthly-CPI-Tracker-January-2022-FINAL-1.pdf](#)

⁴ Department for Transport. Blue Badge scheme statistics, England:2021, January 2022. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/blue-badge-scheme-statistics-2021/blue-badge-scheme-statistics-england-2021>

⁵ <https://tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/improvements-and-projects/step-free-access>

⁶ <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2021/2191>

However, our evidence suggests that some of the assumptions underpinning the ULEZ scheme are fallacious because they overlook a series of issues affecting Disabled Londoners and we believe that measures which have been taken until now to mitigate the impact of this policy on disabled people have been insufficient to prevent them from experiencing financial hardship.

Discounts and exemptions for disabled people under ULEZ

Blue Badge holders whose vehicles do not meet the ULEZ emissions standards do not have to pay the charge if their vehicles are registered with the DVLA with a 'disabled' or 'disabled passenger vehicle' tax class. This specific exemption applies until 25 October 2025 and in order to register for this class, vehicle owners must receive one of the following:

- higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- enhanced rate mobility component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- higher rate mobility component of Child Disability Payment
- War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement
- Armed Forces Independence Payment

The vehicle must be registered in the Disabled person's name or their nominated driver's name. It must only be used for the Disabled person's personal needs. It cannot be used by the nominated driver for their own personal use.

According to data provided by the Department of Transport, at the end of 2016 there were approximately 34,000 private vehicles registered as 'disabled' tax class and exempt from vehicle tax in Greater London. Of these, approximately 23,000 were petrol cars, 8,300 were diesel cars and the rest were either electric or hybrid. Assuming the age profile of the vehicles in 2016, Jacobs estimated that in 2021 there would be approximately 12,000 non-compliant disability tax-exempt private cars, of which approximately 6,600 would be diesel and 5,400 petrol.⁷

In the 2022's Integrated Impact Assessment conducted by Jacobs, it is proposed that the grace period is extended to 24 October 2017. While we welcome the decision to grant this temporary exemption, we are concerned about the negative impact that the removal of this temporary exemption will have on Disabled Londoners with disability tax-exempt private cars following 24 October 2027.

We also believe that there is a fundamental problem with the decision to only exempt from the charge vehicles that are registered as disabled tax class because there are many Blue Badge holders who daily rely on the use of private cars which do not meet the ULEZ emissions standards and do not qualify for the tax exemption. We estimate that there are approximately 50,000 Blue Badge holders who have vehicles not compliant with ULEZ.⁸ However, approximately 30,000 of these Blue Badge holders do not qualify for a tax exemption and, for this reason, have been and will continue to be subject to the ULEZ charge. Therefore, many vulnerable Blue Badge holders have been and will continue to be charged £12.50 per day, or up to £87.50 per week, in order to be able to drive their car in London.

⁷ **Jacobs.** Ultra-Low Emission Zone – Integrated Impact Assessment, Appendix C2, December 2017 (par.2.3.20). Available at: https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/appendix_c2_integrated_impact_assessment.pdf

⁸ [Letter from Deputy Mayor for Transport, Heidi Alexander, to Tony Devenish AM \(September 2021\)](#)

Vehicle tax exemptions for disabled people: eligibility criteria

We are calling on the Mayor of London to exempt all Blue Badge holders from the ULEZ charge, regardless of whether vehicles are registered with a disabled or disabled passenger vehicle tax class. This is because eligibility criteria to qualify for a vehicle tax exemption are very strict, meaning people with significant physical impairments are subject to the ULEZ charge.

Blue Badge holders are people with serious walking and/or mobility difficulties, including people with hidden impairments that are not immediately apparent to others and who, as a result, are conferred a range of parking benefits. When a person holds a Blue Badge, it is linked to the individual rather than a vehicle, meaning it can be used by the disabled individual when travelling in another person's car. This is particularly useful, for example, when a person is unable to drive or does not have access to a vehicle and is reliant upon a friend, family member or carer to help them travel around.

In the 2017's Integrated Impact Assessment conducted by Jacobs, TfL overlooked the fact that Blue Badge holders may not qualify for vehicle tax exemptions and fails to understand why it is so. When people are assessed for PIP, people with mobility issues can either get the mobility component of PIP at a standard or at an enhanced rate. People with mobility issues who score between 8 and 11 points in total, qualify for the standard rate of the PIP mobility component. There are many people with severe physical impairments who score 10 or 11 but do not reach the 12 points required for the enhanced rate. People only score 10 when they:

- cannot follow the route of an unfamiliar journey without another person, assistance dog or orientation aid;
- cannot undertake any journey because it would cause them overwhelming psychological distress;
- can stand and then move using an aid or appliance more than 20 metres but no more than 50 metres.

All these people do not qualify for a vehicle tax exemption and are therefore subject to daily charges of £12.50 every time they drive in London, whether it be to see a family member, go to hospital, or go to work. Many of these disabled people are disproportionately represented in lower income groups and are therefore unable to afford to pay these daily charges.

In the 2022's Integrated Impact Assessment, Jacobs states that the proposed expansion of ULEZ to Greater London is expected to cause a disproportionate negative financial impact on those Disabled people who rely on transport by a non-compliant vehicle and who do not qualify for the disabled vehicle tax exemption.⁹ However, no substantive mitigation measure is proposed to prevent Disabled people from experiencing financial hardship.

Public transport and other accessible transport options (Dial a Ride, Taxicard)

The proposed expansion of ULEZ rests on the assumption that those Londoners whose vehicles do not meet the ULEZ emissions standards will be able to rely on public transport and other accessible transport options to travel in London. However, only 33% of London Tube stations offer step-free access, meaning that they are not fully accessible to Disabled people. In the 2022's Integrated Impact Assessment conducted by Jacobs for TfL, it is acknowledged that Disabled people encounter significant barriers when using public transport due to the lack of accessibility.¹⁰ Jacobs also acknowledge that due to the lack of accessible transport and the proposed expansion of ULEZ to Greater London, many Disabled Londoners would stay at home because they cannot afford to pay the charge, leading to social exclusion and isolation, which would in turn result in poor wellbeing

⁹ Jacobs. London-wide ULEZ Integrated Impact Assessment, May 2022 (p.84)

¹⁰ Jacobs. London-wide ULEZ Integrated Impact Assessment, May 2022 (p.84)

outcomes and exacerbate health inequalities.¹¹ Despite this recognition, no substantial mitigation measures are proposed to address this fundamental issue.

Alternative transport options that are currently available for disabled people include Dial a Ride and Taxicard. London Dial-a-Ride is a free door-to-door public transport service for passengers with mobility impairments who find it hard to use public transport. Dial-a-Ride provides a service that disabled people can use for leisure, visiting relatives and friends or going shopping. However, we know that Dial a Ride cannot always accommodate all journey requests, especially for same day bookings, due to lack of availability of minibuses and increased demand from passengers. Most importantly, Dial-a-Ride cannot be used for daily trips to work, day centres and schools, and cannot accommodate trips to hospital and clinic appointments. This means disabled people who need to go to work or go to the hospital are often unable to leave their house and live independently as their non-disabled peers.

Taxicard offers subsidised travel in licensed taxis and private hire vehicles (mini cabs) to London residents with serious mobility impairments or who are severely sight impaired. Like Dial a Ride, the scheme provides trips for social purposes only, for example going shopping, visiting friends and family, and going out to events, meaning disabled people cannot use it daily to go to work or attend hospital appointments. In addition to this, Taxicard journeys can be very expensive if people need to travel long distances and is in fact best suited to short journeys in and around people's local areas.

Considering the service limitations of Dial a Ride and Taxicard, these transport options cannot be considered substitutes for private cars. Disabled people who cannot use public transport to travel in London, regularly need to drive for purposes that are not covered by current transport services and cannot therefore be left to exclusively rely on Dial a Ride and Taxicard.

NHS Reimbursement Scheme

In the 2022's Integrated Impact Assessment, Jacobs references the NHS Reimbursement Scheme as a potential measure to mitigate the negative impact of the proposed expansion of ULEZ on those Disabled people who travel by non-compliant private cars to access medical appointments in outer London.¹² Currently there are reimbursements in place for NHS patients accessing healthcare facilities travelling in a vehicle which does not meet the ULEZ standards if they are:

- (i) a patient who: has a compromised immune system or requires regular therapy, assessment or recurrent surgical intervention; and is clinically assessed as too ill, weak or disabled to travel to an appointment on public transport;
- (ii) or (i) a patient who is clinically assessed, in accordance with the advice of National Health Service for the time being applicable, as being high or moderate risk from COVID-19.

Jacobs assume that Disabled people can be eligible for NHS reimbursements under these criteria and are therefore able to attend medical appointments. However, they acknowledge that the process of applying for reimbursements for the ULEZ charge is complicated and bureaucratic¹³ and that bureaucratic barriers often restrict legitimate claims for support and pose additional stress and strain, risking the health of Disabled people.¹⁴ They also recognise that the reimbursement scheme may not be as effective in helping people on low incomes who may struggle to pay the charge upfront, particularly Disabled people who are more likely to be in

¹¹ **Jacobs.** London-wide ULEZ Integrated Impact Assessment, May 2022 (p.106)

¹² **Jacobs.** London-wide ULEZ Integrated Impact Assessment, May 2022 (p.96)

¹³ **Jacobs.** London-wide ULEZ Integrated Impact Assessment, May 2022 (p.96)

¹⁴ **Jacobs.** London-wide ULEZ Integrated Impact Assessment, May 2022 (p.105)

poverty. In addition, they emphasise that people who travel to outer London to their GP surgeries could be dissuaded from making the trip if they have to pay the charge because the reimbursement scheme only applies to secondary care.

Despite recognising the limits of the NHS Reimbursement Scheme, Jacobs only conclude that it is key to raise awareness of the reimbursements available. We believe that awareness-raising does nothing to address the existing limitations of the scheme and support those Disabled people who routinely need to visit their GP.

Car scrappage scheme

In 2019 the Mayor of London introduced a scrappage scheme to support disabled people and Londoners on lower incomes to adapt to the extended London-wide ULEZ by making available a certain amount of funding to be used to scrap or retrofit their older, more polluting vehicles. While an important and positive measure, we believe that the current car scrappage scheme is not fit for purpose as it is insufficient to support disabled people to scrap or retrofit their car.

A key issue with the car scrappage scheme is that the amount of funding available which is equivalent to £2000 doesn't provide an adequate financial support to disabled people to enable them to adapt to the extension of ULEZ. According to estimates included in the 2017's integrated impact assessment conducted by Jacobs for Transport for London, the estimated cost of upgrading to a compliant petrol car is £1,000 compared to £5,700 for a compliant diesel car.¹⁵ However, these calculations overlooked that a large proportion of cars used by people with mobility impairments require further vehicle-specific adaptations post manufacture and that adaptations are often very expensive (the average additional cost of a drive from Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) is £30,000). Disabled people who would be eligible for the funding available through the scrappage scheme would have to face an unsurmountable amount of extra costs to scrap their own car for a less polluting one. It is evident that for disabled people, the cost of vehicle replacement is disproportionately higher than for other car users, meaning it is not financially viable for them to do so.

In the 2022's Integrated Impact Assessment, Jacobs acknowledge that Disabled people would be disproportionately impacted by the proposed expansion of ULEZ to Greater London as it would be more difficult for them to upgrade to a compliant vehicle, due to financial constraints and/or the vehicle adaptations required.¹⁶ However, the IIA does not contain any proposal to change the car scrappage scheme which, in its current form, is not fit for purpose.

Another key issue with the scrappage scheme is that the ULEZ Car scrappage scheme grant payments may be treated as savings. If the grant payments are treated as savings, and take recipients of benefits over the permitted savings limits, their means-tested benefits may be affected.¹⁷ Some of these benefits include Universal Credit, income-related Employment and Support Allowance and Pension Credit. This means that there is a high risk for disabled people to see their benefits significantly reduced or removed altogether.

In the 2022's Integrated Impact Assessment, Jacobs consider the proposal of treating scrappage payments as non-taxable so that they do not count towards savings and affect eligibility for means tested benefits. However, they conclude that it is up to the individual to make an informed decision on whether or not to proceed with the scrappage application, thus not addressing the concerns raised by Disabled Londoners.¹⁸

¹⁵ Jacobs. Ultra-Low Emission Zone – Integrated Impact Assessment, Appendix C2, December 2017 (par.2.3.14)
https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/appendix_c2_integrated_impact_assessment.pdf

¹⁶ Jacobs. London-wide ULEZ Integrated Impact Assessment, May 2022 (p.84)

¹⁷ <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/ultra-low-emission-zone/car-and-motorcycle-scrappage-scheme>

¹⁸ Jacobs. London-wide ULEZ Integrated Impact Assessment, May 2022 (p.127)