

Access Improved

Progress on parking in Central London for people with mobility problems
October 2003



Access Improved

Progress on parking in Central London for people with mobility problems

October 2003

copyright

**Greater London Authority
October 2003**

Published by
Greater London Authority
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA
www.london.gov.uk
enquiries **020 7983 4100**
minicom **020 7983 4458**

ISBN 1 85261 541 9

This publication is printed on recycled paper

Chair's foreword

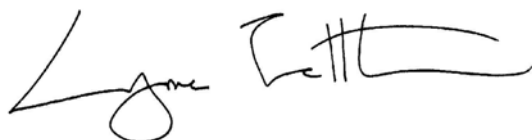


Getting around London is difficult enough for disabled people without a forest of conflicting parking regulations and a lack of clarity about which apply where and when. Parking rules should be there to help disabled people and their carers, not to make life more difficult still.

The London Assembly Transport Committee's report back in July of last year made a number of recommendations, including simplification of parking rules for Blue Badge holders. It is particularly pleasing that four of London's central local authorities – the Boroughs of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Camden, and the Corporation of London – have all agreed that Blue Badge holders can park for at least three hours in all Blue Badge bays in the central area, stay free for an additional hour in "pay and display" areas, and wait for up to twenty minutes on yellow lines to drop off and pick up goods and passengers.

These authorities are to be applauded for their actions. I am delighted that they have taken on board our recommendations to simplify their rules for Blue Badge holders. This will make necessary car trips to the heart of the capital much easier and more pleasant. We now need the other London Boroughs to follow suit so that this good practice is general and uniform throughout Greater London.

The Greater London Authority Act gave the London Assembly power to raise issues of importance to Londoners. I regard this as the positive aspect of our work – to help set the agenda for London and to be at the forefront of worthwhile change.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Lynne Featherstone'.

Lynne Featherstone
Chair, London Assembly Transport Committee

Membership of the Transport Committee

Lynne Featherstone	- Chair (Liberal Democrat)
John Biggs	- Deputy Chair (Labour)
Tony Arbour	- Conservative
Roger Evans	- Conservative
Sally Hamwee	- Liberal Democrat
Samantha Heath	- Labour
Jenny Jones	- Green
Eric Ollerenshaw	- Conservative
Val Shawcross	- Labour

The Transport Committee's general terms of reference are to examine and report on transport matters of importance to Greater London and the transport strategies, policies and actions of the Mayor, Transport for London, and the other Functional Bodies where appropriate. In particular, the Transport Committee is also required to examine and report to the Assembly from time to time on the Mayor's Transport Strategy, in particular its implementation and revision.

Contact for this report:

Richard Davies, Assistant Scrutiny Manager
richard.davies@london.gov.uk
020 7983 4199

Contents

		<i>Page</i>
	Executive summary	1
1	Introduction	3
2	Access Denied recommendations and summary of responses	4
	Appendices	
A	List of responses to the Access Denied? report	10
B	Orders and translations	11
C	Principles of London Assembly scrutiny	12
D	List of Transport Committee publications	13

Executive summary

In London there are 215,000 members of the national Blue Badge (formerly Orange Badge) scheme, which provides special parking concessions, such as permission to park on yellow lines, and the right to park free of charge and for extended periods in metered spaces. The scheme's concessions do not apply in the Central London boroughs (City of London, City of Westminster, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and part of Camden). These four boroughs each operate their own individual schemes, which are much more limited than the national Blue Badge Scheme.

The Transport Committee's Access Denied? report, published in July 2002, addressed the difficulties that motorists with mobility problems experience every day trying to find suitable parking in Central London close to the amenities that they require. A year after the publication of a report, the Committee seeks an update from key organisations on the progress being made with the implementation of the recommendations in the report. We have recently heard from key organisations such as the London boroughs, Association of London Government (ALG) and Transport for London (TfL) that substantial progress has been made in implementing our recommendations.

As a result of our report the London Borough of Camden, City of Westminster, Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and Corporation of London have agreed to harmonise their schemes to make it easier and less confusing for disabled drivers' to park in central London. This includes: at least three hours parking on all Blue Badge bays in Central London; an additional one hour free parking on pay and display areas after the expiry of the paid time; and, permission to park for up to 20 minutes on yellow lines for dropping off and picking up goods and passengers.

However, we acknowledge that there is still tension between the central London schemes and the national blue badge scheme. The four central London boroughs and the ALG feel that the present central London schemes should be maintained because of the unique parking and traffic conditions in central London.

We are pleased that the boroughs, ALG and TfL have been working closely with the Department for Transport (DfT) regarding the fraud and abuses of the blue badge scheme. We understand that the DfT is now considering proposals to tackle this issue which include legislation to provide more powers to enforcement officers, clearer guidance to enforcement officers and blue badge holders, and research on developing a national database and smart cards for blue badge holders. We look forward to receiving more details about this in due course.

We feel that there have been positive outcomes from the Access Denied? Report and we will continue to work closely with the boroughs and Transport for London to ensure that the good work that is being done in this area continues.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Transport Committee published its “Access Denied? Parking in Central London for people with mobility problems” report in July 2002. The terms of reference for that scrutiny were:
 - To examine the parking concessions in Central London available for people with mobility problems; and,
 - To make recommendations for reducing confusion in the implementation of the Blue Badge scheme in London and for improving access to Central London for people with mobility problems.
- 1.2 We heard that a visit to the West End or City for London’s 215,000 Blue Badge holders can be frustrating, confusing and often result in parking fines. As a result, many effectively feel excluded from the heart of their own city.
- 1.3 Central London councils are reluctant to apply the full range of Blue Badge concessions given the existing pressures on parking and congestion in their areas. Most boroughs felt that the Mayor’s Congestion Charging Scheme would not dramatically improve accessibility for people with mobility problems. However, they did concede that more could be done and we found a surprising degree of consensus amongst boroughs and disability organisations about the ways in which the situation could be improved.
- 1.4 The report recommended that the Mayor start by reviewing the need for the current Central London exemption from the Blue Badge Scheme. If it was to remain in place, we recommended significant improvements in:
 - the guidance given to the boroughs about parking accessibility;
 - the enforcement of existing disabled bays (including additional powers and training for parking officers);
 - the amount of information provided about concessions in Central London (including TfL producing an updated map of disabled bays in Central London); and
 - the level of consistency between the parking schemes within each Central borough.
- 1.5 A year after the publication of the report, the Committee sought an update from key organisations on the progress being made with the implementation of the recommendations in the report. The Committee has received responses from all of the key relevant organisations in London on the recommendations in Access Denied? including Transport for London, Association of London Government and the London boroughs. These responses are summarised in the following chapter.

2. Access Denied recommendations and summary of responses

2.1 Recommendation 1:

We recommend that the Central London exemption from the Blue Badge Scheme be carefully considered as part of the Mayor's commitment to review Central boroughs' parking schemes.

- The City of Westminster, Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, Corporation of London and London Borough of Camden feel that the existing Central London exemption from the national parking concessions regarding Blue Badge holders should be maintained, with the individual local authority schemes remaining intact. They have said that the parking and traffic conditions in Central London dictate that controls are carefully tailored to the unique needs of the area.
- The ALG do not support the removal of the exemption to the Blue Badge Scheme in central London as they believe the negative effects that this would have outweigh any benefits.
- The ALG, TfL and many boroughs have raised concerns with Government about the national Blue Badge scheme such as misuse, abuse, fraudulent applications, inconsistency in issuing criteria and theft. The ALG said that it is clear from these discussions that primary legislation is needed to tackle these issues and to preserve the credibility of the scheme.
- The ALG have said that in central London the issue rates for Blue Badges are low as they are only allocated to those who meet independent assessment criteria. This has encouraged a reduction in local abuse rates and means that only those who genuinely require a badge are entitled to one.
- TfL have concerns about allowing blue badge holders to park on yellow lines within central London, as this may have negative effects on the traffic flow and the success of the congestion charging scheme.
- TfL have concentrated their efforts on increasing the availability of permitted parking places for blue badge holders, standardizing the arrangements in the central London boroughs and providing better information on where disabled parking is available.
- TfL support the DfT's intention to research the impacts of a number of concessionary measures in Central London, not just the removal of the exemption.

2.2 Recommendation 2:

We call on the Mayor and TfL to issue clearer and stronger guidance to the boroughs on improving accessibility for people with mobility problems, following consultation with boroughs and disability organisations.

- The boroughs would support this recommendation. They have said that they are committed to improving facilities for the disabled and in particular are seeking to increase the supply of Blue Badge parking bays where appropriate especially in the vicinity of hospitals.
- The London Borough of Camden have told us that they are undertaking a programme of parking bay re-allocation in the central area of Camden to take advantage of changing demands resulting from the introduction of Congestion Charging and part of this initiative will be to expand the provision of Blue Badge bays where appropriate.
- The Corporation of London also provides a local additional parking entitlement to Blue Badge holders by allowing them to park for a maximum of six hours on disabled parking spaces around the Royal Hospital of Saint Bartholomew. This is particularly helpful to disabled people who may have lengthy appointments at the hospital.
- The City of Westminster is considering the provision of additional Blue Badge parking bays in the vicinity of St Mary's Hospital at Paddington. They will also be reviewing Blue Badge parking provision in light of the impact of the congestion charge.
- The London Borough of Wandsworth have said that blue badge holders are allowed to park in a majority of the on-street parking bays in Wandsworth without charge or time limit. Wandsworth has also introduced bays which are for the exclusive use of individual disabled persons where it has been found that other disabled badge holders regularly park in the regulated disabled bay which was primarily provided for a specific resident.
- The London Borough of Wandsworth does not agree that disabled blue badge holders should be able to park on yellow line restrictions. They have written to the Department for Transport to seek advice on this issue. Wandsworth are suggesting the possibility of opting out of the Blue Badge scheme altogether and replacing it with their own borough specific one, similar to that of the central London boroughs.
- The London Borough of Harrow has a close liaison with the Harrow Association for Disabled People on parking issues. They have given a high priority to the enforcement of disabled bays and against the misuse of Blue Badges.
- We have heard from a disabled driver who has complained about the lack of disabled parking bays near to shops, theatres, galleries and hospitals. She suggested that if central London was overwhelmed by disabled drivers, a further badge could be introduced which had a limit on the number of days per year that disabled drivers could park in the center e.g 30 days per year.

She also claimed that Kensington & Chelsea do not have their disabled bays functioning on a Saturday. However, we have subsequently heard from the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea that this is not the case. They confirmed that all their disabled bays are reserved for disabled drivers at all times and are vigorously enforced. They said that there is a maximum stay period of 4 hours from Monday to Friday and at other times there is no limit to how long a blue badge holder may park.

- The ALG believe that setting up a monitoring framework would be too difficult, impractical and cause financial difficulties and that Congestion Charging could change the whole traffic situation in central London. The ALG believe that it would be easier for the GLA to carry out focus groups with badge holders to look at common problems.
- The ALG said that the boroughs are addressing the access problems to Central London hospitals and in some cases the provision made is above the common minimum entitlement for Blue Badge holders in Central London.
- The London Borough of Tower Hamlets provides 60 “Blue Badge” disabled parking bays near hospitals, clinics, other public buildings and some shopping centres. Under the national concessions, blue badge holders have unlimited parking, free parking on pay and display parking bays and 3 hours on yellow line waiting restrictions. Tower Hamlets consider requests for additional parking bays where possible. Since 1st May, following DfT signed approval, 233 specific “Blue Badge” parking bays at residential addresses have now been personalized. This was to address the problem of other “Blue Badge” holders using the residential bays. The new scheme has the support of the local Disability Accessible Transport Forum.
- The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is not in favour of allowing Blue Badge holders a general exemption from the regulations on permit parking bays. They would also like to introduce a maximum stay of 4 hours on the pay and display parking bays, instead of unlimited free parking for Blue Badge holders. This is to address the abuse by some badge holders and to maintain on street parking facilities for visitors to the borough.
- TfL are looking to build on the willingness of London boroughs to increase the provision of blue badge parking places at key locations including hospitals.
- The boroughs suggested that increasing the facilities for blue badge holders could be considered as part of any reviews in parking supply and demand leading on from the congestion charging scheme. TfL will encourage this approach. TfL also anticipate that the Mayor’s Transport Strategy will provide guidance or formally support increasing disabled parking facilities.
- TfL also advised that the GLA has undertaken some survey work in consultation with disabled people, into the supply, demand and abuse of disabled parking places in off-street car parks. This is to assist the parking standards development within the London Plan.

2.3 **Recommendation 3:**
We recommend that Central London boroughs achieve greater consistency and transparency between their disabled parking schemes.

- We have been informed by the City of Westminster, Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, Corporation of London and London Borough of Camden that they have been working closely together to harmonise the concessions offered to national Blue Badge holders visiting central London. In the near future, the four local authorities have agreed to provide a common minimum entitlement across the whole of Central London, which will mean that Blue Badge holders can be certain of the concessions available to them without worrying about differences between the four boroughs. These are:
 - a) One additional hour free parking on pay & display machines after the expiry of the paid-for time, without a penalty charge notice being issued;
 - b) At least three hours parking on all Blue Badge bays in Central London (many bays will have longer stay periods, in the Royal borough of Kensington & Chelsea all bays will have a four hour maximum);
 - c) Stopping for up to 20 minutes on a yellow line to drop off or pick up goods or passengers.

TfL will encourage an increase in this 'base' provision.

2.4 **Recommendation 4:**
We recommend that the Government introduce legislation as soon as possible to enable traffic wardens and parking attendants to inspect badges.

- The ALG and the boroughs fully support this recommendation that parking attendants have powers to inspect badges and they feel that this is a key change necessary in the reform of the national Blue Badge scheme.
- Tower Hamlets fully support this recommendation. For the last 12 months or so they have been operating their own fraud investigation unit and have made around 60 successful prosecutions on individuals falsely displaying Blue Badges. In response to car crime relating to the stealing of Blue Badges, Tower Hamlets has also introduced an optional alternative permit to resident Blue Badge holders to use whilst parking in the borough. There has been a 35% uptake of this permit and associated crime has reduced by 30%.
- TfL recognise that the issue of enforcement affects efforts to improve parking facilities for disabled people, although they believe that the laws of enforcement against non-blue badge holders are adequate. However they point out that the improvements in enforcement proposed by the Transport Committee require changes in legislation. The DfT is currently pursuing options to introduce provisions for parking attendants to inspect badges. On red routes the issue of abuse is less of a problem, as the supply of parking is more constrained and the enforcement powers by police and traffic wardens

are higher. TfL will comment on any draft legislation when it becomes available.

- The Department for Transport has proposed to:
 - a) introduce legislation to provide powers to enforcement officers to enable them to inspect a badge;
 - b) Provide clear guidance to local authorities, enforcement officers and badge holders about the illegal use of badges and to publicise the powers that are already in existence. They are also liaising with the Home Office about possibly increasing penalties and points on driving licences;
 - c) Undertake research on introducing a national database and smart cards for blue badge holders, which could assist with the enforcement of the scheme.

2.5

Recommendation 5:

We recommend that TfL and the ALG work with London boroughs and their contractors to develop a code of best practice to ensure that parking officers are sensitive to the needs of Blue Badge holders.

- The boroughs would be happy to cooperate with any initiative by the Mayor or TfL to establish a code of practice for parking officers.
- The ALG informed us that parking attendants have little discretion on the street. Discretion is used as part of the notice processing operation and where representations have been made, which ensures greater consistency in approach. The ALG produce the Parking Attendant's Handbook and this contains considerable information on Blue Badge Holders exemptions.
- TfL believe that the boroughs should provide training for parking attendants on disability awareness as part of their induction and ongoing training. TfL also believe that key elements, such as courteousness and information provision when dealing with motorists who may be unaware of the central London regulations or find them difficult, should be highlighted in the codes or handbooks used by the attendants. TfL will work with the ALG to make any necessary changes. TfL are considering looking to the GLA and/or TfL's Equality and Inclusion Unit for advice on training.

2.6

Recommendation 6:

We recommend that the Mayor work with the boroughs to improve the quality of information available to Blue Badge holders about parking concessions in Central London.

- The ALG published a map of Blue Badge parking in Central London in 1998, which was revised in conjunction with TfL and central London Boroughs in late 2002.
- The London Borough of Camden has also issued a leaflet, which is available to badge holders.

- The City of Westminster has undertaken an initiative earlier this year “Improving Parking Information for People with Disabilities”. This has led to the production of a guide to disabled parking leaflet and the provision of disabled parking information on their web-site.
- The London Borough of Harrow has said that there is a need for better information to be made available because some badge holders do not fully appreciate the extent of the dispensations the scheme provides.
- TfL have provided a link on their website to the relevant page of the ALG’s website, which includes a map and other relevant parking information. TfL will look to make this information more prominent by improving search and link functions. TfL also provide specific pages on the website on congestion charging and how this relates to blue badge holders.

2.7 **Recommendation 7:**

We recommend that the Mayor encourage the private sector to improve the enforcement of disabled bays in off-street parking, including promoting the existing work done by some retailers and disability groups in this area.

- The ALG and the boroughs would support any initiative to encourage better provision and enforcement of disabled parking facilities in the control of the private sector.
- TfL pointed out that the GLA has carried out a survey of off-street parking, looking at use, misuse, signing and enforcement of disabled parking bays. TfL believe that there is an increasing realization by retailers and other car park providers that disabled parking facilities should be provided and protected. TfL will continue to push for better off-street parking where applicable.
- TfL point out that the London Plan proposes maximum limits on the amount of parking at new developments, to restrain traffic growth, except for disabled people.

Annex A: List of responses to the Access Denied? report

The following responses to the Access Denied? Report were received from:

Association of London Government

City of Westminster

Corporation of London

Department for Transport

London Borough of Camden

London Borough of Harrow

London Borough of Hillingdon

London Borough of Merton

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

London Borough of Wandsworth

Lucy Jones

Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea

Transport for London

Annex B: Orders and translations

For further information on this report or to order a bound copy, please contact:

Richard Davies
Assistant Scrutiny Manager
Assembly Secretariat
Greater London Authority
City Hall, The Queen's Walk,
London SE1 2AA
richard.davies@london.gov.uk
tel. 020 7983 4199

If you, or someone you know, needs a copy of this report in large print or Braille, or a copy of the summary and main findings in another language, then please call 020 7983 4100. You can also view a copy of the Report on the GLA website: <http://www.london.gov.uk/approot/assembly/reports/index.jsp>.

আপনি বা আপনার পরিচিত কেউ এ রিপোর্টের সারসর্ম ও প্রস্তাবের কপি বিনামূল্যে বড়ছাপা বা ব্রেইল, অথবা তাদের নিজের ভাষায় চাইলে 020 7983 4100 এ নাম্বারে ফোন করুন বা ই মেইল করুন এ ঠিকানায়:
assembly.translations@london.gov.uk

જો તમને કે તમે જાણતા હો તેવી કોઈ વ્યક્તિને, આ અહેવાલમાંથી કાર્યકારી સંક્ષેપ અને બેલામણીની નકલ મોટા અક્ષરોમાં છપાવેલી, બ્રેઈલમાં કે તેમની પોતાની ભાષામાં વિના મૂલ્યે જોઈતી હોય, તો કૃપા કરીને ફોન દ્વારા 020 7983 4100 ઉપર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો અથવા આ સરનામે ઈ-મેઈલ કરો assembly.translations@london.gov.uk

Se você, ou alguém de seu conhecimento, gostaria de ter uma cópia do sumário executivo e recomendações desse relatório em imprensa grande ou Braille, ou na sua língua, sem custo, favor nos contatar por telefone no número 020 7983 4100 ou email em assembly.translations@london.gov.uk

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਜਾਂ ਕੋਈ ਤੁਹਾਡਾ ਜਾਣ-ਪਛਾਣ ਵਾਲਾ ਇਸ ਰਿਪੋਰਟ ਦਾ ਅਗਜ਼ੈਕਟਿਵ ਸੁਮਾਰੀ ਅਤੇ ਸੁਝਾਵਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਕਲ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਬ੍ਰੇਅਲ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਅਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਮੁਫਤ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ 020 7983 4100 ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ assembly.translations@london.gov.uk ਤੇ ਸਾਡੀ ਈ-ਮੇਲ ਕਰੋ।

Si usted, o algún conocido, quiere recibir copia del resumen ejecutivo y las recomendaciones relativos a este informe en forma de Braille, en su propia idioma, y gratis, no duden en ponerse en contacto con nosotros marcando 020 7983 4100 o por correo electrónico: assembly.translations@london.gov.uk

اگر آپ یا آپ کا کوئی جاننے والا اس ایگزیکٹو سمری اور اس رپورٹ میں سے سفارشات کی ایک کاپی بڑے پرنٹ میں یا بریل پڑیا اپنی زبان میں بلا معاوضہ حاصل کرنا چاہیں تو براہ کرم ہم سے فون 020 7983 4100 پر رابطہ کریں یا assembly.translations@london.gov.uk پر ای میل کریں۔

Ta ba ri eniken i ti o ba ni ife lati ni eda ewe nla ti igbimo awon asoju tabi papa julo ni ede ti abinibi won, ki o kansiya lori ero ibanisoro. Nomba wa ni 020 7983 4100 tabi ki e kan si wa lori ero assembly.translations@london.gov.uk. Ako ni gbowa lowo yin fun eto yi.

Haddii adiga, ama qof aad taqaanid, uu doonaayo inuu ku helo koobi ah warbixinta oo kooban iyo talooyinka far waaweyn ama farta qofka indhaha la' loogu talagalay, ama luuqadooda, oo bilaash u ah, fadlan nagala soo xiriir telefoonkan 020 7983 4100 ama email-ka cinwaanku yahay assembly.translations@london.gov.uk

Annex C: Principles of London Assembly scrutiny

The powers of the London Assembly include power to investigate and report on decisions and actions of the Mayor, or on matters relating to the principal purposes of the Greater London Authority, and on any other matters which the Assembly considers to be of importance to Londoners. In the conduct of scrutiny and investigation the Assembly abides by a number of principles.

Scrutinies:

- aim to recommend action to achieve improvements;
- are conducted with objectivity and independence;
- examine all aspects of the Mayor's strategies;
- consult widely, having regard to issues of timeliness and cost;
- are conducted in a constructive and positive manner; and
- are conducted with an awareness of the need to spend taxpayers money wisely and well.

More information about the scrutiny work of the London Assembly, including published reports, details of committee meetings and contact information, can be found on the GLA website at <http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/scrutiny/index.jsp>

Annex D: List of Transport Committee publications

The Transport Committee has also produced the following scrutiny reports, which can be downloaded free at: <http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/transport.jsp>

Building bridges? A London Assembly response to the Thames Gateway Bridge consultation, August 2003

Flying into the future - The Transport Committee's response to the Government's consultation on air transport in the south-east, July 2003

Transport in Paris - A delegation's visit to Paris, July 2003

An Accident Waiting to Happen? - A Transport Committee investigation into the Chancery Lane derailment, June 2003

Getting the Public On Board - A Transport Scrutiny Update, April 2003

Mind the Gap – between what Londoners want and what Londoners get - Report of the Future Tube Priorities Investigative Committee, January 2003

Congestion Charging: the public concerns behind the politics, December 2002

Access Denied? – parking in Central London for people with mobility problems, July 2002

Alternatives to Congestion Charging, April 2002

Transport for All of London, March 2002

All Change? - Report of the Transport Operations Scrutiny Committee's Informative Review of Mainline Rail Services in London, February 2002

Safer Routes Home, July 2001

Improving London's Bus Services, June 2001

Scrutiny of the Mayor's draft Transport Strategy, April 2001

Scrutiny of the Mayor's Congestion Charge Proposals, November 2000

Greater London Authority

City Hall

The Queen's Walk

London SE1 2AA

www.london.gov.uk

Enquiries **020 7983 4100**

Minicom **020 7983 4458**