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Freedom Pass - Written Submissions – Personal Experiences

Submission Fourteen



16th July 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Freedom Pass Review

- 14 . 1 I am writing to you with my comments on the handling of renewing disabled persons bus passes. I myself completed my application to renew my disabled bus pass well in advance of the 31st of March. As I am in receipt of DLA for mobility I should have automatically qualified under the council's own criteria set out on their renewal form. I enclosed the proof required a qualifying letter from the Department of Works and Pensions, also a bank statement as proof of address as a resident of Southwark. After numerous phone calls to the disability section and call centres, I was informed by the staff working for Southwark Council that they were waiting for a letter from my doctor although I told them I should automatically qualify under their own set down criteria. The staff were most unhelpful, when indeed you could contact them which was not often. I even contacted my GP who never received a letter from Southwark concerning my application so indeed it was very frustrating to say the least. I even wrote to the head of the disabilities section and Nick Stanton but they did not even reply to my letters a copy of each is enclosed, I would have out of courtesy have expected a reply or an acknowledgement to my letters.
- 14 . 2 Had it not been for the help of Caroline Pidgeon contacting the disabilities section on my behalf I would still be waiting for my bus pass. Even when I did receive the letter to take to the post office I found that most post offices had run out of bus passes, so I went to Walworth Rd one stop shop to be told after queuing for a long time that I would just have to travel around to find a post office that had some passes left. I indeed had already had to pay two weeks of fares to get me to and from the hospital for appointments. Above all other difficulties the staff concerned working both at the disabilities section, the call centre's and Walworth Rd one stop both unprofessional, unsympathetic and under trained to deal with disabled people.

I hope that this never happens again when it comes to renewing our bus passes in 2010.

Yours sincerely

25th April 2008

Dear Mr N Stanton,

14.3 Please find a copy of a letter to the disabilities section enquiring why I have not yet received my disabled freedom pass. When reading the criteria I should have automatically been a straight forward case. I have found dealing with the staff on the occasion when they could be reached most unhelpful. On phoning the number yet again to enquire what the delay with my pass was, I was put through to a call centre who were no help at all. When I enquired how to reach you by letter they did not know who you were. I found this very surprising that someone employed by Southwark did not know the Head of Southwark Council. I hope that Mr Grant Smith who I have written to will sort this out as soon as possible and the disabilities section will be more efficient than they have been in the past. I feel it has been a mistake to close the disability section to the public as shows with the fiasco this year with our disabled passes.

Yours faithfully

Submitted by Carmel - 3

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25th April 2008

Dear Mr G Smith,

I am writing to you to enquire about the renewal of my disabled bus pass. I returned the completed form to your office about ten weeks ago, with it I enclosed a letter from the Department of Works and Pensions stating that I am in receipt of the higher rate disability living allowance for mobility indefinitely and proof of my address. On reading your criteria it appears that I should automatically qualify for my bus pass as I have great difficulty with walking (that is why I receive DLA mobility allowance). When I contacted your office last Wednesday a member of your staff looked up my application on the computer and told me that a letter had been sent to my GP, on checking with my GP the receptionist said they had not received any communication from your office. I consider this to have been unnecessary as you have the letter from the DWP about my mobility allowance higher rate. Your member of staff informed me she would mark the case as urgent but still I have received nothing from your office. Also I am concerned that although my pass has been extended to the 31st of May that if nothing is done I will be without a disabled pass to use to attend my monthly hospital appointments for treatment.

In a letter sent to me on the 14th December 2007 this is supposed to be a programme of planned improvements to how passes and blue badges are processed and reduce waiting times, this is certainly not the case with our disabled passes. I will be sending a copy of this letter to Nick Stanton at the Peckham Town Hall.

I Hope to hear from your office in the near future.

Yours faithfully