



Your guide to #GetOnBoard

We have put this toolkit together to help you change the way your local authority issues bus passes. It will help you speak to local councillors and MPs who can make this change happen.

Part one

1. What is the disabled person's bus pass?

The disabled person's bus pass provides free off-peak travel on local buses in England for some people with disabilities. If you are not allowed to drive because of your epilepsy you are eligible for a disabled person's bus pass.

Local councils are responsible for issuing disabled person's bus passes. You can find out how to apply [here](#).

2. What are the problems with the disabled person's bus pass?

Epilepsy Action wants people with epilepsy who are eligible for a disabled person's bus pass to be able to get one quickly and fairly.

We know that some local authorities are asking people to apply for a driving licence, for it to then be refused, before they will issue a pass. People with epilepsy who would be refused a driving licence should not be asked to do this. Local councils who are asking for this are not following government guidelines.

3. What can I do?

To make your local council change the way they issue bus passes for people with epilepsy, you need to tell them about the problem. The best way to do

this is to contact your local councillor. You can email them about the issue. You could call them or ask to meet them.

Your local councillor is elected to represent you and your concerns. This means they want to hear your views.

You can help your local councillor understand the issues people with epilepsy are facing when applying for a disabled person's bus pass in your area. By telling them about your own experiences, or those of people you know, they will understand more.

Local councillors can then influence what your council does about disabled people's bus passes – so by talking to them, they can change things for the better. You can find out who your local councillor is [here](#).

If you feel your local councillor is not helping, you could take things further by contacting your MP.

Your MP is elected to represent you and your concerns in the House of Commons and your local area. This means they want to hear your views so they can represent you properly.

MPs can influence what the government does about transport – so talking to them can help change things for the better. Your MP can also encourage your councillor to take action.

You can find out who your local MP is [here](#).

4. What needs to change?

Local councils must stop asking people with epilepsy for a driving licence refusal letter as evidence for a disabled person's bus pass.

They must follow current government guidelines. You can download the statements from the DVLA and the Department for Transport here [hyperlink to PDF docs] Print off the statements from the DVLA and Department for Transport and take them with you when you meet your councillor or MP.

These state what councils should be asking for when someone applies for a disabled person's bus pass.

5. What your local councillor can do:

- Raise the problem at council meetings
- Demand the council change their processes to fit with the guidelines

- Work with the council department responsible for transport to make sure the guidelines are followed
- Speak to Epilepsy Action if they want more information

6. What your MP can do:

- Write to the Minister for Transport asking them to make all councils aware of the guidance and ensure they are following it
- Write to the council asking them to make sure they are following government guidance and if they are not, change their processes to make sure they are.
- Raise the issue in the House of Commons
- Speak to Epilepsy Action if they want more information

Please tell us when you have a meeting booked in! We want to share where meetings with councillors and MPs are happening across the country and the difference they make. Don't worry, we won't share any personal information about you.

If you talk about this issue on social media include @epilepsyaction and the hashtags #MissedTheBus #GetOnBoard

Part two - Contacting your councillor or MP

Before your meeting

Step 1: Who is my councillor or MP and how can I contact them?

Find out who your councillor is and how to contact them by entering your postcode on the [government website](https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors) <https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-councillors>

Find out who your MP is and how to contact them by entering your postcode on the [parliamentary website](https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/) <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/>

Write, email or call your councillor or MP to request a meeting with them. You can ask what dates they can meet you.

For most MPs, Fridays will be the best day to meet when Parliament is sitting. Check the [parliament website](#) for dates when parliament goes into recess. During recess your MP may be available on other days other than Fridays.

You could invite your councillor or MP to come along to a group meeting or another event, if you would prefer. If you do this, make sure it is somewhere you will be able to have a proper conversation with them.

When you write to them, include your full address and postcode in your message. Councillors and MPs only represent their own constituents (someone that lives in the area they are councillor for) and so without your postcode they might not get back to you.

If you haven't heard back from them after three weeks, you could try sending them a short reminder to check they received your first message. You could also try calling them. MPs have a Westminster office and a constituency office. You can try contacting both if you don't hear from them.

Top tips

- In your first message briefly explain about your experience of epilepsy and why it matters to you. This will help make your message more memorable
- Keep this to just a few lines, as you can say more in your meeting
- If you're unsure what to say, have a look at Part I of the toolkit for some ideas

Step 2: How do I prepare for my meeting?

Councillors and MPs try and meet as many constituents as possible, so you may only have a short time with them.

The most important thing is to share your own experiences. This is what will matter most to your councillor or MP. It can help them understand the issue and help them realise how it is affecting people in their area.

Your councillor or MP will want to know:

- Why is this issue important to you
- How has it impacted you, a family member, or friend
- What the broader problems are with the issue you're talking to them about (see Part I of the toolkit to help you – what are the problems and what needs to change)
- What can they do about it? (see Part I of the toolkit for ideas on what your local councillor or MP can do)

Make sure that where you are meeting your councillor or MP is accessible to you.

Top tips

- Prepare a few notes on what you want to say and take them into your meeting to help you remember
- Use Part I of our toolkit to help you. There may be things you can print off and take with you to help show the problem or give a solution
- Check your notes before the end of the meeting to make sure you've said everything you planned to. It's ok to ask your councillor or MP to give you a moment to do that
- Be yourself and don't worry about being nervous. Councillors and MPs want to hear your views and so should be thoughtful when listening to your story. All the information you provide in your meeting will be confidential
- Wear whatever you feel most comfortable in. The councillor or MP will probably be wearing smart clothes, but you don't have to

During your meeting

Step 3: What will happen on the day?

Try to arrive a little early. This will mean you have time to get to where the meeting is and still have a few minutes beforehand to relax and prepare.

Your councillor or MP may meet you with a member of their staff who usually takes notes. It's an informal conversation, so if you want to, you can use your notes to remind you what you want to say.

It is possible that your councillor or MP will be sympathetic, but not agree with your views. Even if they don't agree with you, you can still ask them to take action on the issue on your behalf. They might not agree to do what you ask them, but there might be something else that they suggest they could do instead.

If your councillor or MP is happy to take action, remind them what they have agreed to do at the end of your meeting.

Take a photo with your councillor or MP. You can share this on social media. Look at Part I of our toolkit for ideas on a hashtag to use for the issue you're talking about.

Questions your councillor or MP might ask and suggested answers

Depending on what the issue is your talking about, you may be able to predict what your councillor or MP will ask you. Thinking about what they might ask will mean you can be prepared with answers. Look at Part I of our toolkit for some possible questions and answers that might come up in your meeting.

After your meeting

Step 4: What should I do afterwards?

Send your councillor or MP an email to say thank you. Remind them what they agreed to do when you met. Ask them to update you on any progress.

Let us know how it went. Email campaigns@epilepsy.org.uk and tell us who you met. Tell us what they agreed to do and if you are happy with how your meeting went.

The information you share will help us know how supportive different councillors and MPs are when it comes to the issue you've talked to them about. If they are supportive, we may be able to ask them for help on similar issues in the future.

Even if your councillor or MP didn't seem supportive or you think there isn't much to say, by telling us about your meeting, can still help us know where to focus our campaigning.

If you receive follow-up emails from your councillor or MP and you need any help or have any questions, you can email us on campaigns@epilepsy.org.uk

Step 5: Make sure they do what they agreed to do

If your councillor or MP said they would do something make sure they do it.

If you don't hear from them after more than three weeks, email them or call them. Ask them if they have done what they said they would. If they have ask them what happened. If they haven't, ask them why not and when they plan to do it.

Your councillor or MP may have said they wouldn't be able to do anything. There is no reason why you can't continue talking to them or meeting with them about the issue. You can try to persuade them to do something. Tell them why the issue matters and why they should be doing something about it.

If you don't think this is working try showing them the problem differently. Is there any more evidence to support what you want. Can you get more people who agree with you to contact them. They can share their experiences and ask for something to be done.

Top tips

- Use social media – the more people talking about an issue the more a councillor or MP will take notice
- Include your local councillor or MP in conversations on social media
- Councillors and MPs like numbers. Can you put together evidence on why this issue is a problem? How many people does it affect? How much does it cost? How much money would changing it save?

Sometimes change happens slowly. It can take time to change someone's mind. You might have to tell someone more than once why change is needed. If you believe what you are doing is right and that it would make things better, don't give up the fight.