

ADVICE FACTSHEET / Number 2 (September 2006)

## Tips on getting a Freedom Pass for people with mental health problems

- with thanks to Lambeth Mind and Vocation Matters.

There is no guarantee of getting a Freedom Pass unless you meet the automatic entitlement criteria. These tips are for people who do not, and who want to increase their chances of success.

- For the application form you should contact the Lambeth Accessible Transport Unit, phone: 020 7926 4990.
- Note that Lambeth Council will automatically award Freedom Passes to people on an enhanced level CPA [Care Programme Approach]
- A couple of years ago, the Council also wrote the text below, and although this is no longer in current use, it identifies what may tip the scales in your favour:

*"The authority may exercise its discretion to issue concessionary travel passes under the powers from the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.*

*This will usually extend to those people who are known to the authority's mental health teams and as part of their support programme in the community care assessment are required to attend an approved day service by public transport. The support programme must be formally monitored and a copy of it must accompany the application."*

- On the application form, the main place to write about your mental health (problem) is Part C, page 6, starting with questions 1, 2 & 3 (Continue on separate sheet as needed). Make sure to answer questions 5 & 6 if these apply (i.e. say about pain and severe discomfort relating to mental health problem – panic, anxiety etc – also relating to effects of medication). Make sure to answer 7 - continue on separate sheet too.

- If appropriate, state that you have a 'severe and enduring' mental illness/mental health problem. Back this up by saying what your diagnosis is (if you know). State how long you've had this, the longer the better – at least over 12 months and likely to last over 12 months.
- You'll need 'medical evidence' to back up your claim – at least a statement on the application form and a supporting letter from a health/mental health professional. The more medical and more senior the person the better, - it's best to have a letter of support from your consultant psychiatrist if possible.
- However, try to get at least 2 supporting letters from health professionals. If you have a social worker, try to get a supporting letter from them. If you are a volunteer with Lambeth Mind ask if they will write a supporting letter for you.
- Make sure your statement and the supporting letters address the various 'automatic' criteria stated at the front of the application form as far as possible e.g.
  - Criteria 4: State you have disability that has a long-term effect on your ability to walk - state the things that affect your mobility mental health-wise – e.g. panic, anxiety, hearing voices, needing support when out away from home. Say if you're on DLA, particularly important to say if on Higher Mobility Component of DLA. Send a copy of proof of receipt of DLA or other disability benefit.
  - Criteria 7: Say if, because of the medication you're on or your mental health diagnosis, you would not be granted a driving licence.
  - Also check if any other criteria are relevant.
- State that you need the pass as part of your rehabilitation and/or to attend day services, clinical services, treatment, etc. Remember that attending somewhere such as Lambeth Mind or Creative Routes should count (tell them a bit about what you attend for), as should seeing a counsellor, attending a college course etc.
- If you get turned down you can appeal, but you will need to supply new medical evidence.