

# Can a Blue Badge holder park in a Parent and Child parking space?

Amanda Angus / 14 June 2018 ( 02 October 2019 )

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If you're a disabled Blue Badge holder, can you park your car in a Parent & Child bay - and equally importantly, should you?



The answer to whether a disabled driver can park in a space allocated for a parent and child is not in black and white.

From my research on the internet, I found a whole lot of opinion and very few concrete answers.

So I started emailing and calling people. I contacted the Department of Transport for the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, but when I contacted the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, they told me it would be a question for the local authority.

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So far, so woolly.

Next I contacted a few different agencies to try to find something concrete, and the first people to email back were the police, via [askthepolice.uk](https://askthepolice.uk). They replied:

*This will depend on the terms and conditions of the car park. If the car park is owned and operated by the local council, you would need to check with them to see if this is permitted ([gov.uk/find-your-local-council](https://gov.uk/find-your-local-council)). If the car park is privately owned e.g. a supermarket car park, you would need to check with the owner, as to whether this was allowed.*

On this advice I contacted the Blue Badge specialist at my local council, who replied:

*We do not deal directly with parking; it will be different for every car park and we advise badge holders to check the board restrictions in each car park. Most parent and child spaces are in supermarkets, therefore it would be down to their discretion.*

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After this I got in touch with the very helpful Media Relations department at Sainsburys, who told me:

*I can confirm Blue Badge holders are permitted to use our Parent & Child bays if the disabled spaces are full.*

*The vast majority of our customers are very considerate of parents with young children and respect family bays. If our parking attendants find these bays are being misused they will, in the first instance, ask the driver to move their car. If they refuse, they will be issued with a Parking Charge Notice.*

With all these responses in mind, my advice in this instance would be to exercise caution and check with the owners of any car park before you park in case they have a strict policy of only families parking in the Parent & Child spaces, in order to avoid getting a Parking Charge Notice.

And personally, after thoroughly researching this topic, my opinions echo Sainsbury's: Blue Badge holders should take priority over parents with children - but only if the disabled bays are all full.

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Bear in mind the Parent & Child bays are a lifeline to new mummies struggling with the heavy car seats they now are compelled by law to use – they need the wider bays in order to open their car doors wide enough to physically manhandle bulky car seats in and out, and with C-Sections becoming more prevalent they may have recently gone through major abdominal surgery.

Although many parents with grown children remember they coped just fine without Parent & Child parking, it's worth remembering that cars used to be smaller and bays less tight; car seats were less bulky, and not legally enforced.

And with so many grandparents now taking on more and more childcare duties, it might be a struggling grandma and grandad having to take exuberant grandchildren to the supermarket who need the extra space.

Remember too, that the lack of clear regulations mean parents have to deal with people who don't have children - as well as people who aren't disabled - parking in their spots, so they might be quick to point it out if you don't have children and shouldn't (in their opinion) be parking there. However, if you are taken and you calmly and politely point out your Blue Badge, that should go some way to help.

**How to renew your Blue Badge**

Of course, not everyone will have the same information I have just compiled, so if you do, please do point with someone who just doesn't agree, and that's sadly something you'll have to do if you need to park in a Parent & Child space without a child.

To finish off, I asked some parents of toddlers their thoughts on who should be allowed to use the space:

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'Personally I wouldn't mind at all if a disabled person needed to use a Parent & Child space, it's the people who have no need for them at all that frustrate me.' Alana, via Facebook

'We all should also acknowledge that some people may need the bays for non-visible disabilities, and I agree that the Parent & Child bays should be used as an overflow for disabled parking.' Sara, via Facebook

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Saga readers say...

Advocating spaces for both:

'Some sensible supermarkets have started 'double marking' some of their spaces for both parents and disabled. Perhaps common sense coming back into fashion?' Jack, via email

'Perhaps a suitable alternative would be to make disabled and parent and child spaces used by either? On visiting several multi-story car parks around local towns, there are often three times as many disabled spaces (many often empty) as Parent & Child. If either could use, and it was clearly marked on the signs, no more arguments.' Maureen, via email.

A grandparent's view:

'I am a grandparent regularly looking after a toddler and it is so much easier to get him in and out of his child seat in the wider parent and child spaces. In my experience of supermarket parking, often there are very few parent spaces, always full, and masses of disabled parking spaces, most of which are empty. The idea of shared spaces sounds sensible.' Rosemary, via email

'As a granny who often ferries my small grandchildren around, I always look for a parent/child space. I'm not disabled but I'm not agile and I'd struggle to get my littlies in and out of a normal space. I frequently see white vans parked in child spaces while the driver goes into the shop for a sandwich. Very annoying.' Lynne, via Facebook

In agreement:

'I 100% agree that we should be able to use Parent & Child spaces if the Disabled Bays aren't available. I myself years ago with a young family didn't have the Parent & Child facility. We all survived!' Patricia, via email

Better conditions for all:

'Many new mums lack the confidence and skill to manoeuvre the big, legally required objects necessary to bring a child outside. Thus maybe require a bit of extra support and space to get out of the house. With post natal depression affecting more than one in ten (NHS data) this mobility becomes priceless.

I hear many arguments “I used to cope when I had children”. This is something I am particularly against as we should fight to make conditions better for all. For example, the blue badge was only issued in 1970, so using this argument many disabled people used to cope before this. But why should anyone have to cope? Conditions should improve for everyone to make everyone’s life easier and more enjoyable.' Rachel, via email

A bad experience:

'I would never again attempt to park in a parent and child space even with a Blue Badge. I was at a supermarket somewhere like Ikea which has painted both symbols on the spaces to show the correct use. One day, I parked in a Parent & Child space close to the door with two ladies aged around 60 and 70 getting into the store. I was verbally abused by a very able man with a very able primary school son. He obviously made up his mind that was his chosen space, nearest to the store. Fit to be a parent and child space to warrant these spaces unless difficult to safeguard because of autism or similar.

A good idea:

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'I would like to see the PC spaces made available for pensioners who need to be able to open the door fully because of restricted mobility. They may not qualify for a blue badge so cannot use disabled parking spaces'  
*Catriona*

'Excellent comment. This would be fab for my mum who has restricted mobility but can walk more than the required distance on good days and it is good for her. We struggle if other cars park too close to her side.'  
*Angela*

'We used to have a debate about this and my husband who worked in the disability field thought there ought to be different coloured badges/spaces for disabled drivers and disabled passengers. Some places have disabled drivers only spaces. Also considered the possibility of spaces closer for ambulant disabled (ie on crutches, sticks) who couldn't walk far and those in wheelchairs who needed wider door space but could travel further. Imagine a supermarket car park with multi-coloured spaces - ambulant disabled (blue), wheelchair users (orange), elderly (purple), parent and child (red), parent only (green) and the rest of the world (grey).'  
*Julie, all via Facebook*

## Discretion needed:

'I had a full knee replacement a few weeks ago and need to open the passenger door wide in order to get in and out. On my first excursion to the supermarket we parked in a disabled space and explained my situation to the help desk who said it was ok to park there. Despite seeing my crutches, on our second visit the parking attendant said we'd get a ticket if we parked in a disabled space, and we would have to park either in a family space or an ordinary space. We took the last family space even though there were 5 disabled spaces free. This week we parked in the last family space again although most of the disabled spaces were empty. I think discretion should be used by the parking attendant when it's obvious someone needs to use the disabled space but doesn't have a blue badge, if there are spaces available. We have never seen all the disabled spaces full although the family ones are usually full.'  
*Jean, via email*

## Location, location, location:

'Whilst the need for disabled parking spaces being close to a supermarket is acknowledged on the basis of likely reduced mobility, the position of parent/child parking spaces is not relevant. Such spaces need to be large enough to enable people to manoeuvre children into and out of car seats, pushchairs etc, but they do not have to be next to the store entrance like disabled spaces - they just need to be available somewhere in the car park.'  
*Alan, via email*

## More spaces for all:

'I think there should be shared parking spaces between disabled blue badge holders and parent child spaces, and also expectant parent spaces - like Asda, who have a symbol of a pregnant women. Maybe there should be a split between those needing close access as they can't walk so far, and those that need the space around the car to manoeuvre themselves out the vehicle, to get baby out of the car seat, to set the pushchair up, or space for setting up wheelchair or mobility vehicle. I know when I was heavily pregnant I had severe pelvic pain and could not walk far. But now I just need the space to open the door and get baby out of car seat and transfer him to pushchair.'  
*Michelle, via email*

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