

## Who cares

Have you ever parked in a disabled bay, even if just for 2 minutes to drop someone off? Or perhaps you were at the supermarket and the only free spaces were disabled spaces, or those reserved for parents and children, so you told yourself it doesn't count in this instance?

This issue has been highlighted in the media recently due to a well-known person being challenged for using a disabled bay. This person has 10-year-old twins who have autism, which can present as a hidden disability, in that it may not be apparent to the uneducated eye. The children in question have challenging behaviour and if it weren't for being able to park close to the supermarket doors, their mother wouldn't be able to venture out with them.

In 2019 the eligibility criteria for a Blue Badge was extended to include hidden disabilities. The qualifying criteria is still rigorous and those applying must prove beyond doubt that they qualify for a badge.

Can you imagine how hurtful it must be to be confronted in this way if you, or the person you are transporting, has a genuine disability? But then, on the other side of the debate, can you imagine how frustrating it would be to arrive at your destination only to find that all the disabled spaces have been taken by people who don't really need them?

Perhaps the answer is for us all to try and be more aware of the issues involved and to have a deeper understanding of the reasons why someone may need a Blue Badge, or a disabled parking space outside their home. These parking bays are usually closer to the entrance to the venue so that it is easier to get those with limited mobility or behavioural issues inside. They are also wider to enable wheelchairs, buggies and baby car seats to be unloaded.

If you are looking after someone who is ill, disabled or frail, local voluntary organisation Carers Outreach Service is here for you. Contact us on 01248 370797 or [help@carersoutreach.org.uk](mailto:help@carersoutreach.org.uk) or visit [www.carersoutreach.org.uk](http://www.carersoutreach.org.uk) for free and confidential information and support.