# UK airports vary in charges and accessibility for blue badge holders, prompting calls for standardisation



Disability campaigners and blue badge holders are calling for all UK airports to eliminate drop-off fees for disabled people when being dropped close to terminals, highlighting what they describe as a patchwork of inconsistent policies and often complex systems across the country’s busiest airports. This demand follows recent reports that more than half of these airports have increased their "kiss-and-fly" fees to as high as £7.

Disabled Motoring UK, a charity championing the rights of disabled motorists, criticised some airports for letting “greed cloud their judgement,” arguing that blue badge holders should be exempt from these charges entirely. Graham Footer, the charity’s chief executive, said disabled passengers deserve respect and dignity, not immediate charges upon arrival.

A survey by the BBC of the 20 busiest airports in the UK reveals a complex landscape. London City Airport stands out as the only airport to waive all drop-off fees regardless of passenger status. Meanwhile, other major airports like Gatwick, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Heathrow, Liverpool John Lennon, and Manchester charge drop-off fees but exempt blue badge holders from payment. Conversely, airports including Luton, Glasgow, Belfast International, Belfast City, East Midlands, Aberdeen, and Southampton charge blue badge holders the same fees as other passengers, but usually provide alternative free drop-off parking options located further from terminals. Notably, Glasgow and Aberdeen offer free parking only if blue badge holders are dropped off by family or friends, excluding taxis from this benefit.

This partial accessibility has significant limitations. For instance, Leeds Bradford Airport charges blue badge holders £7 for 60 minutes in their Pick Up & Drop Off car park nearest the terminal, though disabled passengers can also use a free parking zone a 5-10 minute walk away or park in designated bays within the mid-stay car park with shuttle service access. Similarly, Bristol Airport allows blue badge holders a reduced fee of £7 for 40 minutes in the drop-off car park, acknowledging that disabled passengers may need extra time to alight and access the terminal.

The situation is harsher at Cardiff, Newcastle, and Stansted airports, where the fee for blue badge holders matches that of other passengers with no concessions, charging rates such as £3 for 10 minutes at Cardiff and £7 for 15 minutes at Stansted. London Luton recommends that blue badge holders use facilities slightly removed from the terminal while offering discounted parking rates after prior validation, reflecting the variation in available options.

Another layer of complication arises from administrative hurdles. Airports like Heathrow and Liverpool require blue badge holders to apply online or via phone either before or shortly after their trip to claim free drop-off access. Heathrow states that applications can take up to five days for processing, though typically completed within 48 hours. Some disabled passengers find these systems difficult to navigate. James Williams, a 67-year-old blue badge holder from London, told the BBC that he often ends up paying because he is not computer literate and feels forced to “jump through hoops” to get a discount. Similarly, Jonathan Cassar, another Londoner, said the complex registration process restricts spontaneity for disabled passengers needing terminal drop-offs.

Heathrow defended its process, stating efforts have been made to simplify blue badge registration and advising urgent applicants to contact them by phone. Liverpool Airport claims its online system was introduced to prevent abuse of the blue badge scheme but acknowledges the inconvenience.

Airports UK, the industry body for UK airports, explained that the accessibility of drop-off spaces depends heavily on airport layouts, meaning no single drop-off solution fits all airports. They advised passengers to check individual airport websites to identify the most suitable option prior to travel.

Some airports, such as Manchester, take a more straightforward approach. Manchester Airport allows blue badge holders to use the Drop Off Zone free of charge upon showing the badge to traffic marshals. This policy exemplifies a clearer and more accessible solution compared to complex waivers or limited free zones further from terminals.

Meanwhile, Southampton Airport offers 30 minutes of free drop-off parking in its short-stay car park for blue badge holders, provided the ticket is validated at customer service. This system supports disabled passengers' need for extra assistance but does not extend to unattended vehicles on airport roads for security reasons.

In summary, while some UK airports provide concessions or entirely waive fees for blue badge holders, many charge substantial fees or offer free drop-off only in less convenient areas with limited signage or support. Disabled campaigners argue the system needs standardisation and simplification to ensure disabled passengers are not penalised or burdened unnecessarily—especially at a time when accessibility is a growing focus in transport policy.

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* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn5e1z6gz5yo?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn5e1z6gz5yo?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn5e1z6gz5yo?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss), [[2]](https://www.leedsbradfordairport.co.uk/parking/blue-badge-parking), [[6]](https://www.bristolairport.co.uk/at-the-airport/special-assistance/parking-and-transport/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn5e1z6gz5yo?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss), [[2]](https://www.leedsbradfordairport.co.uk/parking/blue-badge-parking), [[4]](https://www.london-luton.co.uk/special-assistance-landing/dropoff-pickup), [[6]](https://www.bristolairport.co.uk/at-the-airport/special-assistance/parking-and-transport/), [[7]](https://www.southamptonairport.com/parking/blue-badge-holders/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn5e1z6gz5yo?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn5e1z6gz5yo?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss)
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* Paragraph 11 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn5e1z6gz5yo?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss), [[7]](https://www.southamptonairport.com/parking/blue-badge-holders/)
* Paragraph 12 – [[1]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn5e1z6gz5yo?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn5e1z6gz5yo?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.leedsbradfordairport.co.uk/parking/blue-badge-parking> - Leeds Bradford Airport offers dedicated Blue Badge parking spaces across all car parks, with special assistance available to support passengers in accessing the terminal. Blue Badge holders can use the Pick Up & Drop Off car park for up to 60 minutes for £7.00, provided they present their Blue Badge and a travel document at the Special Assistance desk. Alternatively, a 1-hour free parking zone is available approximately 5-10 minutes' walk from the terminal, accessible to all passengers, including those with mobility issues. Disabled passengers can also park in dedicated bays within the mid-stay car park, with complimentary shuttle bus service to the terminal.
3. <https://www.heathrow.com/at-the-airport/assistance-and-accessibility/accessible-travel> - Heathrow Airport provides accessible travel options for Blue Badge holders, including free access to the Terminal Drop-Off Zone upon application. Blue Badge holders can apply for a concession allowing free access to the Terminal Drop-Off Zone by visiting the Heathrow website. The application must be made by midnight the day after the trip was carried out and the concession will allow a single visit to a terminal drop-off zone. Blue Badge holders must submit a copy of the front and back of their Blue Badge, the vehicle registration number of the vehicle they will be travelling to Heathrow in, their flight number and contact email address as part of their application.
4. <https://www.london-luton.co.uk/special-assistance-landing/dropoff-pickup> - London Luton Airport recommends Blue Badge holders use the Drop Off/Pick Up Zone or Terminal Car Park 1 for dropping off or picking up passengers with reduced mobility needs. The Drop Off/Pick Up Zone, located right outside the terminal building, charges £5 for up to 5 minutes, with £1 per minute thereafter (maximum stay 20 minutes). Alternatively, Terminal Car Park 1 offers reduced rates, including 30 minutes of free parking or reduced rates for longer stays up to 24 hours. To benefit from these reduced rates, Blue Badge holders must validate their parking ticket at the Priority Parking office on the second floor of Terminal Car Park 1.
5. <https://www.manchesterairport.co.uk/terms-and-conditions/drop-off-zone-terms-and-conditions/> - Manchester Airport allows Blue Badge holders to use the Drop Off Zone free of charge for drop-off only. To use this service, the travelling passenger must produce their Blue Badge to the traffic marshals when entering the area. Failure to display/notify the traffic marshal may lead to charges applying. Exemptions apply to authorised airport operational vehicles, emergency service vehicles, and military vehicles, as determined by the Airport. The Airport reserves the right to offer discounts to the tariff at its discretion. Where eligible, discounts will be applied to a payment unless otherwise stated.
6. <https://www.bristolairport.co.uk/at-the-airport/special-assistance/parking-and-transport/> - Bristol Airport offers Blue Badge or special assistance bays clearly marked in their car parks, located either closer to the terminal or next to the reception building in Silver Zone. All shuttle buses are fitted with wheelchair ramps and are certified to carry one wheelchair. Blue Badge holders can receive up to 40 minutes parking for a reduced fee of £7.00 in the Drop Off & Pick Up Car Park. To benefit from this, Blue Badge holders must drive up to the exit barrier and scan the barcode on the reverse of the Blue Badge. Family and friends who are dropping off customers with a Blue Badge can also use the Drop Off & Pick Up Car Park by scanning the Blue Badge on exit at the barrier and benefiting from the 40 minutes stay duration for £7.00.
7. <https://www.southamptonairport.com/parking/blue-badge-holders/> - Southampton Airport provides Blue Badge parking in the short stay car park, on the ground floor close to the terminal. Blue Badge holders receive 30 minutes free in the short stay car park for dropping off passengers who require extra assistance. To validate this, Blue Badge holders should head to customer service on exit and get their ticket validated. If assistance is needed reaching the ticket/payment slot or attending the cash office, the help button at the exit barrier can be used to contact a member of staff. For security reasons, the Blue Badge scheme does not operate on the Southampton Airport road system, and unattended vehicles must not be left on the airport road system at any time.