

Scottish Government submission of 20 February 2024

PE2079/A: Introduce legislation to provide for exemptions in paying medical facility parking charges and to create a new classification of parking badge for care-givers

Thank you for your correspondence on 22 January regarding the above petition. Before addressing these specific points, I would like to clarify the Government's position regarding parking charges on NHS premises.

In 2008, the Government abolished all car parking charges on NHS owned car parks, we estimate this has saved patients, visitors and staff £54 million since the policy was implemented. That did leave three PFI owned car sites at Glasgow Royal Infirmary, Ninewells Hospital and Edinburgh Royal Infirmary which continued to apply charges, however, again re-emphasising our commitment to eliminating charges which we consider to disproportionately impact on people and families that are impacted by poor health, we removed these charges in 2020 so there is no NHS facility in Scotland that has car parking charges.

The Scottish Government recognises that disabled persons' parking places play a vital role in enabling disabled people to carry out day-to-day activities that non-disabled people can take for granted. The Blue Badge scheme can assist with this and badges are issued to individuals, not vehicles. As long as the Blue Badge holder is a passenger, any driver can use the badge to drop off or pick up the badge holder.

The Scottish Government also recognises the huge contribution made by carers and continue to work to improve support available to them and that the provision of free parking can support both patients and carers in accessing hospital sites.

The cost crisis is disproportionately affecting unpaid carers, exacerbating existing financial pressures already felt by them. We know that caring comes with additional costs that can significantly impact a carer's financial situation, including travel costs associated with their caring role. We are implementing our National Carers Strategy to drive forward long-term changes to improve the lives of unpaid carers across

Scotland. It sets out a cross-government approach to carers issues, and includes a chapter dedicated to carers' financial inclusion and support, encompassing social security, travel and actions to help mitigate the impact of the cost of living crisis.

With regards to carers working in social care, the Scottish Government has a long-standing commitment to the principles of Fair Work for the social care sector. We are fully committed to improving pay and conditions for the social care workforce as we recognise and value the work that they do. However, arrangements for travel and subsistence for the social care workforce are not set by the Scottish Government and are a matter for individual employers. Responsibility for providing and commissioning social care services lies with local authorities and Health and Social Care Partnerships. In terms of parking charges which may apply to social care staff, local authorities are responsible for decisions around the enforcement of parking restrictions and the consideration of any exemptions is at their discretion.

Finally, while the Scottish Government has policy responsibility on how parking arrangements should apply to NHS properties, this responsibility does not extend to deciding parking policy outside the hospital. As mentioned above, Local Authorities are responsible for managing the wider car parking policy and it is for them to decide how much they should charge and if any exemptions should apply.

Our commitment to eliminating car parking charges on NHS sites for patients, visitors and staff is clear, however it is for Local Authorities to decide wider car parking arrangements and there are no plans to intervene on this matter.

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