

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee  
Wednesday 23 April 2025  
7th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

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

### **Introduction**

**Petitioner** Martin James Keatings

**Petition summary** Calling on the Scottish Parliament to ask the Scottish Government to bring forward primary legislation to provide for exemptions in paying medical facility parking charges and to create a new classification of parking badge for care-givers.

**Webpage** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2079>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 15 May 2024.](#) At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to Disability Equality Scotland, COSLA, Carers Scotland and the Scottish Government.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new written submissions from COSLA, the Scottish Government, Disability Equality Scotland, and Carers Scotland, which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial position on this petition on 20 February 2024.](#)
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 17 signatures have been received on this petition.

### **Action**

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

**Clerks to the Committee**  
**April 2025**

## **Annexe A: Summary of petition**

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

### **Petitioner**

Martin James Keatings

### **Date Lodged**

18 January 2024

### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to ask the Scottish Government to bring forward primary legislation to provide for exemptions in paying medical facility parking charges and to create a new classification of parking badge for care-givers.

### **Previous action**

Correspondence to MSP's, drafted a proposal and proposed bill; and currently seeking the feedback on said proposal from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and the Minister for Transport.

### **Background information**

It is imperative to ensure equitable access to medical facilities for all individuals whilst acknowledging the undue financial and physical encumbrances that parking charges levy upon individuals seeking medical care, in particular those grappling with disabilities or acting in a care-givers role; people with constrained financial means; or those providing transport support to others for medical reasons. For these reasons the Scottish Government should introduce legislation to provide for exemptions in paying medical facility parking charges and to create a new classification of parking badge for care-givers.

## **Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2079 on 15 May 2024**

**The Convener:** PE2079, which was lodged by Martin James Keatings, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce primary legislation to provide exemptions from paying medical facility parking charges and to create a new classification of parking badge for care givers. The SPICe briefing provides information on existing eligibility criteria for the blue badge scheme, noting that it applies primarily to on-street parking.

In responding to the petition, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care notes the decision to abolish car parking charges at all car parks that are owned by the national health service. It is also noted that responsibility for parking policy beyond NHS facilities rests with local authorities and it is up to them to decide how much to charge for parking and whether any exemptions should apply. These were changes of some long-standing practice. The cabinet secretary also recognises the huge contribution that is made by carers and he says that, through implementation of the national carers strategy, the Scottish Government aims to drive forward long-term changes to improve the lives of unpaid carers.

We have also received a submission from the petitioner in which he responds to the cabinet secretary. He highlights that carers perform tasks in the absence of the disabled person whom they support yet, in such circumstances, they are unable to make use of a blue badge. He suggests that the introduction of a carers badge scheme would be a tangible demonstration of support for the role that carers play while also helping to address the financial impact that parking charges have on carers, some of whom are, in fact, simply volunteers.

Do members have any comments or suggestions for action?

**David Torrance:** We should write to Disability Equality Scotland, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and Carers Scotland to seek their views on the action that is called for in the petition, specifically the proposed introduction of a carers badge scheme. We should also write to the Scottish Government to highlight the petitioner's submission and seek further detail on what consideration the Scottish Government has given to introducing a carers badge scheme.

**The Convener:** We should also highlight that a number of these people are volunteers and that parking charges represent a considerable additional burden. That maybe distinguishes them from other groups in society that request exemptions, many of whom are in completely different circumstances. I think that, in this instance, the petitioner's ask is worth pursuing. Are we agreed?

**Members *indicated agreement.***

## **Annexe C: Written submissions**

### **COSLA written submission, 14 June 2024**

#### **PE2079/C: 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 letter, dated 17th May 2024, in which you asked COSLA to provide views on the above petition.

COSLA is fully committed to supporting unpaid carers, considering them to be equal partners in care. We know there are an estimated 800,000 carers in Scotland and three out of five of us will become carers at some point in our lifetime. We recognise that their unpaid care is worth an estimated £12.8bn in economic terms, while for loved ones receiving care, this support is invaluable. COSLA regularly engages with Carers Scotland at events such as the annual Carers Parliament to ensure carers' voices are heard.

COSLA recognises that carers face additional financial barriers in order to fulfil their caring duties, including incurring extra transport costs. These financial pressures continue to be compounded by the ongoing cost-of-living crisis which affects carers disproportionately. Statutory guidance embedded in the Carers (Scotland) 2016 Act requires local authorities to consider how carers access and benefit from universal services, including transport, while also ensuring the provision of targeted carers' information and advice services, such as welfare rights and financial advice. Looking ahead, COSLA supports the local implementation of the cross-government Carers Strategy to ensure all partners work together to improve the lives of carers in Scotland.

Where parking charges are in place, they are an important source of income for local authorities and support the provision of essential services. During the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of local authorities lost large amounts of income due to people staying at home and not using parking facilities. Therefore, we suggest that if legislation was to be created, further work would need to be undertaken to quantify the cost of this proposed policy, and how potential lost revenue could be reimbursed to local authorities.

There are further questions raised around the capacity of parking spaces. Again, further work is required to ascertain how this would impact on current blue badge holders and ensure there are enough parking spaces for all people who require a blue badge.

Thank you once again for asking us to comment on this petition.

## Scottish Government written submission, 14 June 2024

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

The Blue Badge scheme in Scotland is designed to allow disabled people who experience severe barriers in their mobility to park closer to their destination. As long as the Blue Badge holder is a passenger, carers can still use the badge to drop off or pick up the badge holder.

The Blue Badge scheme only applies to on-street parking. Off-street car parks, such as hospitals or supermarkets are governed by separate rules. Therefore, the decision to offer parking concessions at these types of facilities would be the responsibility of the relevant health board, local authority, or landowner.

For clinics or medical units without NHS car parks it is understood that any required parking would have to be via on-street local authority run spaces. Should parking charges be higher in locations close to any medical facilities or if Blue Badge spaces are not available it would be appropriate to raise this directly with local authorities.

The administration and enforcement of the Blue Badge scheme is the responsibility of local authorities. A separate concessionary scheme, such as a carers badge, would present significant challenges, including around administration, resourcing, enforcement and measures to prevent fraud and misuse.

The care provided by Scotland's unpaid carers is invaluable. The Scottish Government knows that many are caring under very difficult circumstances especially in recent years, with the pandemic, and now with the cost of living crisis, it has been tougher than ever before.

The Scottish Government worked with carers and stakeholders to develop our replacement benefit for Carer's Allowance, Carer Support Payment, which is being delivered by Social Security Scotland. We consulted with carers, the organisations who support them, and the wider public, to design the benefit to meet the needs of those who will use it. We introduced Carer Support Payment at the end of 2023 in the pilot areas of Dundee City, Perth and Kinross, and Na h-Eileanan Siar (the Western Isles). The benefit is being rolled out to more areas later this month and will be available nationally from November 2024. Carer Support Payment provides income for carers in recognition of their vital role and its impact on their lives and ability to take on paid work. Carers getting Carer Support Payment (or Carer's Allowance in Scotland) will also get extra support from our Carer's Allowance Supplement. Where carers are on low incomes, they may also be entitled to extra amounts in other benefits as a result of getting Carer Support Payment.

It is vital that people know what benefits they are entitled to, and that they are able to easily and consistently access them. The Scottish Government is committed to supporting people to receive what they are entitled to and are working with a range of partners who have experience in benefit take-up to learn every lesson we can on what works best.

To help individuals, including unpaid carers, access support according to their own circumstances, [the Scottish Government has launched a cost of living website](#). This may include assistance with energy costs, the Scottish Welfare Fund and Council Tax reductions.

Under the Carers Act, each local authority must have an information and advice service for carers which must include information about income maximisation.

The Scottish Government would encourage anyone providing unpaid care to contact their social work department or local carer centre to find out what support they may be able to offer.

Yours Sincerely,

**Health Infrastructure and Sustainability Division**

## **Disability Equality Scotland written submission, 25 June 2024**

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

Please find below the response by Disability Equality Scotland to the above petition considered by the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee at its meeting on 15 May 2025.

### **Disability Equality Scotland: Who We Are**

Disability Equality Scotland (DES) is a member-led, Disabled People's Organisation (DPO), working towards the inclusion and accessibility of all disabled people across Scotland in all of society. Our work is based on a human rights approach, and we share the collective voices of disabled people to inform and influence policymaking decisions. We adhere to the social model of disability and are a proud member of the Independent Living Movement. DES also acts as the umbrella body for the Scottish Access Panel Network.

### **Disability-Related Research**

DES stages regular consultations, permitting and supporting the voices of the disabled community to be heard in relation to topics of importance to them. Although DES is a membership-based organisation, we embrace the wider disabled community when conducting research to provide a national platform for the voices and views of the disabled community. This response is based on such research.

### **Cost-of-Living and Equality**

When consulted in connection with voting intentions around the forthcoming general election, disabled people told us that the following were the top five key issues for them, when deciding how to vote:

1. Health and Social Care

2. Accessible Transport
3. Energy Bills
4. Tackling Poverty and Inequality
5. Accessible Parking

The proposal to introduce legislation to provide for exemptions in paying medical facility parking charges clearly articulates with the current priority issues identified by disabled people.

Full report available: [Access to Democracy: Member's Priorities for the UK General Election - Disability Equality Scotland](#)

### **Financial Assistance and Advice**

Additional, complementary research around cost-of-living challenges further indicated that:

- 24% of respondents had used a foodbank in the last 18 months.
- 69% of respondents said they had to use some of their savings to pay their mortgage or rent in the last 18 months.
- Just over 25% said they were very worried about being able to pay their rent or mortgage in the same period.
- 37% said they'd sought financial advice from the Money Advice Service, or Citizens Advice, to get help to pay the mortgage, rent or bills.

Reasons for seeking this advice included:

- I was worried about paying my energy bill - 35%
- I was worried about paying my mortgage or rent - 7.5%
- I was worried about paying for food - 15%
- I was worried about paying my credit card or a loan - 5%
- I was worried about budgeting - 5%
- I was worried about all these things - 33%

Paying energy bills was the most common reason stated and corresponds with earlier work in December 2023 on the energy price cap, where disabled people were having to make a choice between heating and using their independent living equipment.

Full report available: [Fact Sheet: Energy Price Cap and Cost of Living - Disability Equality Scotland](#)

## **Summary**

The recently completed research involving disabled people (above) sharply represents the current financial challenges that disabled people face.

Taking the above into consideration, we would hope that medical facilities were accessible, equitable and inclusive for all those that are in need of them. That said:

- Many disabled people continue to experience a very real cost-of living crisis - with significantly constrained financial means.
- Some disabled people have been forced to choose between heating and/or lighting their home and using their independent living equipment.
- Some disabled people are having to resort to selling, or reducing the use of independent living equipment that they need.

Disabled people should not have to change the way they live their independent lives and should not be discriminated against due to their impairments.

Against the highlighted background of the continuing cost-of-living crisis for disabled people, it is essential to reduce – wherever possible – the financial barriers in attending medical facilities, including parking charges.

## **Recommendations**

The above summary reflects the continuing and challenging financial plight of many disabled people within Scotland.

It is against this backdrop that Disability Equality Scotland strongly supports the proposals to:

1. Introduce legislation to provide for exemptions in paying medical facility parking charges for disabled people and;
2. Create a new classification of parking badge for those providing transport support to disabled people for medical reasons.

For and on behalf of Disability Equality Scotland.

## **Carers Scotland written submission, 9 October 2024**

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

Carers Scotland welcome the opportunity to contribute to the call for evidence on this petition. Our response provides information and evidence on key issues for consideration in support of the principle of the petition.



Unpaid carers are an essential support for people with disabilities and older people. However, despite [the care they provide saving Scotland £13.1 billion each year](#), unpaid carers often face poverty and ill health simply because they care.

Carers Scotland's research illustrates the critical role of unpaid carers in supporting the person they care for to access health services. In Carers Scotland's State of Caring 2023 survey, we found that 29% of unpaid carers supported the person(s) they care for with 10 or more medical appointments in the past year, with a further 25% of carers supporting with between 5 and 9 appointments. In addition, 69% of unpaid carers visited community pharmacies on behalf of the person they care to collect prescriptions.

For those on the lowest incomes – in receipt of Carer's Allowance or an income replacement benefit such as Universal Credit or Pension Credit with a carer addition/element – 31% supported the person they care for with 10 or more appointments and 29% for between 5 and 9 appointments. If parking costs are involved for even a small proportion of these appointments, this represents an unwarranted strain on already stretched household budgets, simply to access necessary health services.

Unpaid carers also have their own health needs. Carers Scotland's research found that 54% of unpaid carers physical health had suffered because of caring and over a quarter (28%) experienced bad or very bad mental health. However, a worrying 41% said they had put off their own health treatment because of their caring role. For those who are struggling to make ends meet these figures rise significantly, with 73% experiencing physical health struggles 46% poor mental health. An astonishing 63% said they had delayed their own health treatment.

“I have arthritis, fibromyalgia. high blood pressure depression anxiety all symptoms worsened because of my role.” (Unpaid carer, State of Caring 2023)

Many unpaid carers described the practical challenges of caring for their own health whilst providing care and we believe that any action national and local government can take to remove barriers to accessing health services is both welcome and essential.

Beyond the level of health support unpaid carers provide and their own health needs, it is well evidenced that carers are more likely to live in poverty. [Recent research published by Carers Scotland](#) found that 28% unpaid carers across the Scotland are living in poverty, with 1 in 12 in deep poverty which is 50% below the poverty line. The rate of poverty amongst unpaid carers is 56% higher than those who do not provide unpaid care. Those unpaid carers in receipt of income related benefits have the highest rate of poverty, with a shocking 65% living in poverty.

[Further research in 2023 by Carers Scotland](#) showed similar levels of poverty amongst carers, with 28% of carers struggling to make ends meet, rising to 41% for those living on Carer's Allowance. One in five (21%) carers were struggling to afford the cost of food and 16% were struggling to afford to heat their homes. Four in 10 (41%) of those struggling to make ends meet had cut back on food or other

essentials such as heating. Over a third (37%) of these carers are in debt because of caring and 1 in 6 (16%) said they simply have nothing left to cut back on.

It is clear that caring is too often devastating to the financial security of unpaid carers, and many carers already have no spare income to meet essentials. Unpaid carers in this research described that they were already struggling to afford the cost of running their car: an essential item in supporting the person they care for to access services to support their health and care needs.

“There have been appointments that I have been unable to take my cared for people to because I couldn't afford the fuel for the car.” (Unpaid carer, State of Caring 2023)

“Our daughter has needed a lot of support and weekly CAMHS appointments, petrol has been expensive to travel to the city.” (Unpaid carer, State of Caring 2023)

Parking charges for access to essential services add additional strain. Unpaid carers already face unenviable choices between heating and eating and it is not acceptable that additional costs incurred to access to health services exacerbate this further.

Some areas have considered a parking permit for unpaid carers. For example, [Edinburgh City Council are in the process of introducing a Carers Permit for providing care](#). This is an extension of their existing healthcare workers permit and recognises that health and care can be provided by different professionals including paid and unpaid carers. It is limited to those who can evidence that they receive DWP Carer's Allowance (and Social Security Scotland's Carer Support Payment) or the Carers Credit.

However, the charge is significantly more than for healthcare workers and is aligned with the cost of a residential parking permit which, depending on the zone of parking, can be expensive and indeed prohibitive for those on limited incomes.

Carers Scotland is aware that unpaid carers may be able to park for free when with the individual with a blue badge (subject to certain restrictions). However, for those who care for someone without the relevant benefit mobility qualification, for example, for an older person on Attendance Allowance, there are additional assessment hurdles and, many unpaid carers care for someone with limited mobility but who would not necessarily reach this mobility barrier or who have other conditions such as ones affecting their mental health. As such, they will have the cost of parking placed upon their limited incomes.

Furthermore, access to a blue badge does not assist with the underlying challenge. Unpaid carers carrying out necessary caring responsibilities such as picking up prescriptions, shopping for food and accessing other services can only use such a badge where the person is present. In addition, it does not assist with the parking costs associated with enabling unpaid carers to access services and activities to meet their own health and wellbeing needs. Carers Scotland has raised similar issues with the concessionary travel scheme which can allow for a companion to travel free but does not allow a carer to travel independently of the disabled person, even when carrying out tasks in support of the health and wellbeing of the individual.

Given the crucial role of unpaid carers in supporting health and care, the barriers the face in looking after their own health and wellbeing and the opportunity to reduce at least some of the costs of caring that unpaid carer face, Carers Scotland believe that the petitioners proposal to introduce a Carers Permit has merit and warrants further exploration by the Scottish Government.