



Association of Directors of Public Health (UK) Position statement on NHS Car Parking Charges

About the Association of Directors of Public Health

The Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) is the representative body for Directors of Public Health in the UK. It seeks to improve and protect the health of the population through Director of Public Health development, sharing good practice, and policy and advocacy programmes.

Our aim is to maximise the positive impact on health and healthcare through policy development; and wherever possible to develop policy in partnership with other national Public Health Associations and other organisations working within Public Health.

ADPH Active Travel Initiative

Since 2007, the ADPH has led a collaborative initiative which, in partnership with Sustrans, has brought together over 90 of the UK's leading public health, transport, environmental and planning bodies to call on government, local authorities and other decision makers **to take action on active travel**. This significant collaboration calls on decision makers at all levels to act now to bring about a population-wide shift from sedentary travel to walking and cycling, by:

- committing 10% of transport budgets to cycling and walking initiatives
- a 20mph speed limit to be made the norm in residential areas
- a coherent high quality network of walking and cycle routes that link everyday destinations
- improved driver training and better enforced traffic laws
- ambitious official targets to be set for increases in walking and cycling

See below for links to the full policy call.

Context to the issue of NHS Car Parking Charges

During 2008 there has been increasing debate over the levying of parking charges at NHS sites. In April, the Welsh Assembly abolished car parking charges at most NHS hospitals in Wales (just 10 of the 130 NHS sites retain charges, for contractual reasons). In September the Scottish Government announced that it would follow Wales' example and abolish all car parking charges at NHS hospital sites in Scotland from 31 December 2008. This applies to 14 hospitals in Scotland (with charges at three Scottish PFI hospital car parks remaining in place).

The Nursing Times is campaigning for an end to NHS car parking charges for nurses across the whole of the UK. Health unions such as Unison and the Royal College of Nursing are taking up this issue on behalf of their members.

UK Health Minister Ben Bradshaw said he did not believe it was a "sensible use of limited resources" to subsidise car parking at hospitals in England. He went on to say "Our priority is the safety and speed of healthcare - one of the reasons in England waiting times are shorter." "In England, hospital car parking charges are decided locally by individual trusts to cover the cost of running and maintaining a car park. All trusts should have exemption and concessionary schemes in place to ensure that patients and carers who visit hospital regularly are not disadvantaged. ...They should also have sustainable public transport plans in place for staff and visitors."

Impact following the removal of charges

Patient concerns have been voiced over charges at hospital sites, and 'at a glance' the removal of charges might seem to be of benefit to those visiting hospitals. However potential implications

arising from the removal of parking charges are already emerging – examples cited at hospitals in Wales since the removal of charges in April 2008 include:

- lack of parking space for patients and visitors as car parks become routinely used by commuters, shoppers or students;
- as a result of the above, some hospitals are having to introduce systems to regulate and enforce the use of car parks for patients/visitors;
- increased demand generated by the removal of charges has necessitated the introduction of additional car parking provision.

ADPH position on NHS Car Parking Charges

The ADPH does not support the wholesale removal of car parking charges at NHS sites for the following reasons:

- This acts against the aims and objectives of the Carbon Reduction Strategy for the NHS in England (NHS Sustainable Development Unit, 2008).
- Provision of charge-free parking will increase the use of cars and act as a disincentive to active travel and the use of public/community transport. This promotes sedentary living and is not environmentally responsible.
- Charge-free car parking is in effect a subsidy for car driving, and is therefore disadvantageous to non-car users (predominantly those who are less affluent). This is unfair and inequitable.
- There is a concern that the costs of maintaining and managing car parks will detrimentally impact on NHS and health care budgets.

Action that should be taken:

- Trusts should promote their exemption/concessionary schemes to ensure that patients and carers are aware of these schemes and how to access them.
- Trusts should 'health check' their transport and travel plans for both staff and patients/service users. Trusts should also 'health check' their land use plans, focusing on the potential impact on levels of walking and cycling and other aspects of health; design and invest to the benefit of public health, and reject proposals whose impact on walking and cycling will not be positive.
- As the biggest employer in Europe, the NHS should actively take the lead in the promotion of modes of transport which are health enhancing and do not pollute.

Useful links:

Take action on active travel can be downloaded at: <http://www.adph.org.uk/news.php> ; printed versions are available on request from julia.ellis@adph.nhs.uk .

Draft Carbon Reduction Strategy for the NHS in England: http://www.sdu.nhs.uk/page.php?area_id=7

Nottingham University Hospitals trust award winning Medilink initiative: <http://www.thetram.net/buses/medilink.asp>

Implications of the removal of parking charges – examples emerging in Wales:

[Http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health-news/2008/09/08/hospitals-to-stop-abuse-of-free-parking-91466-21698517/](http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health-news/2008/09/08/hospitals-to-stop-abuse-of-free-parking-91466-21698517/)

BBC Watchdog item October 2008:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/watchdog/consumer_advice/latest_hospital_parking_emp.shtml

**Association of Directors of Public Health
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