

Annex 1: Current Guidance on Concessions

In 2005-06, the HSC reviewed NHS Charges including Car Parking. The relevant extract from their conclusions is appended below:

“The provision of parking spaces and the level of charges should remain a matter for individual NHS trusts to decide upon according to local circumstances. However, allowances should be made for frequent attendees.

We recommend that the guidance on car parking arrangements be reissued by the Department of Health. It should recommend that trusts:

- issue all regular patients, or their visitors, with a ‘season ticket’ that allows them reduced price, or free, parking;
- introduce a weekly cap on parking charges for patients;
- provide free parking for patients who have to attend on a daily basis for treatment; and
- inform patients before their treatment begins of the parking charges, exemptions and reduced rates that will apply.”

How this was incorporated into the Guidance

Variable Charging – Patients/Visitors

“Whilst NHS bodies will have to ensure that they raise sufficient income from charges so that a profit remains after maintenance costs are met, they should be sensitive in considering the position of those patients/visitors who have to use their car parks regularly.

NHS bodies are strongly recommended to have some kind of ‘season ticket’ arrangement, allowing free or reduced price parking for:

- patients with a long-term illness or serious condition requiring daily or regular treatment;
- relatives/prime visitors of patients with a long-term illness or a serious condition requiring daily or regular treatment.

NHS bodies are also recommended to have a weekly cap on car parking charges for patients/visitors having to attend on a daily basis.”

Informing Patients/Visitors and Staff

“It is very important that the details of the scheme are transparent for all users, including patients and their visitors. As well as what the income raised will be used for, they will want to know what the charges will be and what concessions they may be entitled to ahead of their visit to the healthcare site, particularly if they will be due to attend over several days or on a long term basis. NHS bodies should ensure that this is done wherever possible. Details of car parking charges and any concessions in place could be included in the literature sent out to the patient ahead of their appointment, as well as details on the availability of financial assistance under the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme or NHS low income scheme.

It is good practice to have clear information on these issues readily available to patients and their visitors, in appointment letters, by briefing appropriate staff who can pass on the information and by displaying the information on websites, beside ticket machines in car parks and in waiting rooms etc.”