

Free hospital parking for thousands of patients, staff and carers

Thousands of NHS patients and visitors in England will be able to access free hospital car parking under a new approach set out by Health Secretary Matt Hancock today.

The government will also consider car parking capacity across the country, and how improved technology will reduce burdens for hospitals and take away stress for visitors.

Currently, NHS trusts are responsible for making their own car parking arrangements, including setting any charges. Any profits from car parking charges must be reinvested into frontline care.

From April, all 206 hospital trusts in England will be expected to provide free car parking to groups that may be frequent hospital visitors, or those disproportionately impacted by daily or hourly charges for parking, including:

- blue badge holders
- frequent outpatients who have to attend regular appointments to manage long-term conditions

Free parking will also be offered at specific times of day to certain groups, including:

- parents of sick children staying in hospital overnight
- staff working night shifts

The government will work with the NHS and others to ensure that it:

- spreads existing good practice from NHS organisations applying current exemptions effectively to others
- uses the NHS standard contract if needed to ensure compliance
- assesses where capital investment could help to improve the experience of patients and visitors

Technology has helped a number of trusts to improve their parking, and the Department of Health and Social Care will work with the NHS in the coming months to identify and spread practical parking options that can make the most difference quickly. These could include:

- Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) systems, which use camera technology to scan car number plates
- ticket or token systems where eligible people can then redeem free parking, or receive a refund

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

This month millions of people put their trust in this government to deliver. One of the concerns mentioned regularly on the doorsteps was that vulnerable people, and staff working nights, have to pay for hospital car parking. So we are today delivering on our manifesto commitment and setting out our new approach to NHS hospital parking charges.

Currently, the situation varies from hospital to hospital. Instead, from April, across the country those with the greatest need – such as disabled people, parents staying overnight with sick children in hospital, and NHS staff working nightshifts – will no longer have to pay for parking.

This is yet another example of how this government is delivering on our promises and focusing on the people's priorities.