Many people who attend NHS hospitals, either as patients or visitors, expect car parking to be free.

However, given the limits on space, the costs involved and the demand for spaces, car parking needs to be managed properly. Often the most effective way to do this is by charging for parking. This recognises:

- the value of a car parking space
- the needs of other users of the hospital
- the environmental impact of driving and
- the need to maintain and improve car parks by reinvesting income.

We have published this Hospital Parking Charter, which is aimed at both NHS Trusts and car park operators. Its aim is to strike the right balance between being fair to patients and others, including staff, and making sure that facilities are managed effectively for the good of everyone.

We believe in raising standards in the parking sector and in delivering a more professional service to the public. Providing, managing and paying for hospital car parking needs to be seen in the context of delivering a better and fairer service to users. Both NHS Trusts and car park operators recognise the importance of car parking policy, both in terms of the wider transport strategy and the need to manage traffic and parking in line with demand and environmental needs. They also recognise the importance of professionalism in delivering their services and providing a high standard of customer care. In particular, it is essential to provide safe car parking for hospital users.

Parking charges can help to pay for maintenance and management services, and prevent these from becoming a drain on healthcare budgets. Therefore, we encourage NHS Trusts and car park operators who manage hospital car parks to sign up to this charter and to abide by its letter and spirit.
HOSPITAL PARKING CHARTER

1 NHS Trusts and their car parking contractors will do their best to provide a high standard of management and customer service in their car parks.

2 They will aim to provide:
   • good lighting
   • high standards of maintenance for structures and surfaces
   • payment systems and equipment that are easy to use and understand
   • signs that are clear and easy to understand
   • clearly marked parking bays.

Operators should do their best to ensure that car parks offer a safe environment for all users and aim to meet the Park Mark® standard¹.

3 Parking tariffs and tariff structures will be reasonable. They will reflect supply and demand, and the cost of maintaining the facility and providing the service. Tariff structures should be set to reflect local conditions, local tariffs and the needs of all hospital users. They should take account of the hospital’s environmental policy. Also, systems need to be in place to protect the legitimate use of hospital car parks. Tariffs should also take into account what the impact on local residents would be if the level of charges drove motorists to park in local streets.

4 NHS Trusts and their car parking contractors should consider the best practice advice available from organisations such as the BPA, Parking Forum, NHS...
Confederation and the Department of Health. In particular, information about costs and any income associated with running car parks should be clear, straightforward and published.

5 NHS Trusts and their car parking contractors should tell patients who are eligible about the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme\(^2\), and encourage them to claim back their charges.

Concessionary parking should be given to the following people if public transport may be impractical for them or if parking charges could become a burden over time:

- patients with a long-term illness or serious condition needing regular or long-term treatment (for example, people having dialysis, radiotherapy or chemotherapy) and
- people who need to visit patients regularly.

Trusts and operators should work together to make sure they give the maximum publicity to such concessions and that they are taken up by eligible patients.

6 NHS Trusts and their car parking contractors should consider the needs of disabled users for whom other types of transport may be impractical. They should make sure that there are enough disabled parking spaces and, if payment is required, that payment systems are adapted to make them easy to use.

7 Systems used by car park operators should be designed to recognise the unavoidable, unplanned and unpredictable nature of visits to hospitals. Enforcement action should be designed not to penalise people whose contravention of the parking rules could not have been foreseen by them. There should always be an appeals procedure. Policies should cater for the needs of patients and visitors separately from those of staff, where different circumstances may apply.

8 Any enforcement is to be proportionate, with a focus on encouraging compliance. Operators should all be members of the Approved Operator Scheme\(^3\).

9 This Charter should be read alongside the Approved Operator Scheme Code of Practice, particularly what it says about signs, the levels of charges and what customers can do if they feel they have been treated unfairly.
1 To raise the standard of safety in car parks, the BPA manages the Safer Parking Scheme (SPS) on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers. Its aim is to reduce crime and the fear and perception of crime in parking areas. Police-accredited assessors carry out a risk assessment for each site, and look at how the site is managed and maintained. The parking operator must put into place measures appropriate to the surroundings that help to deter criminal activity and anti-social behaviour, in this way doing everything they can to prevent crime and reduce the fear of crime in their parking area.

Park Mark®, the brand of the Safer Parking Scheme, is designed to set the standard for parking areas across the UK, both for the public and their vehicles. National statistics show that around 22% of vehicle crimes happen in car parks. Many parking facilities with the award have seen a dramatic drop in crime. Or, if they had not suffered from vehicle-related crime, they have been able to create a safe and non-threatening environment that encourages customers to keep coming back. Car parks with the award can use signs showing the distinctive Park Mark® tick, so drivers know exactly where to go for safer parking. There are almost 4500 Park Mark® car parks in the UK. The public can search for them and get directions to them from a dedicated website www.parkmark.co.uk

2 The Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme entitles patients who are getting certain benefits, or who are on a low income, to reclaim travel expenses when receiving medical treatment. To see the full guidance please go to www.dh.gov.uk.

NHS Trusts and their car parking contractors should define what they mean by ‘regular or long term treatment’ in consultation with patients, to reflect local demand. It might cover, for example, more than five outpatient visits during a single course of treatment or more than five nights in-patient stay. The concessions might take the form of a cap on payments; for example, free parking or reduced charges after a set number of visits.

3 The Approved Operator Scheme was set up by the BPA in response to concerns about the management of private car parking and parking on private land, and because there is no government regulation of the sector. Members of the scheme must comply with the BPA’s Code of Practice, which sets out requirements for signs in car parks, the levels of charges and what customers can do if they feel they have been treated unfairly. You can see the Code on the BPA website www.britishparking.co.uk

The BPA is an Accredited Trade Association of the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). The DVLA will only release ‘registered keeper’ information to members of the Approved Operator Scheme. The government is intending to legislate to license clamping companies so that they must also agree to comply with a Code of Practice. The government has also said that an independent appeals service should be introduced as a further option for members of the public who are unhappy about the enforcement action taken against them. The BPA wholly supports that proposal.
WHAT THE BPA IS AND WHO WE REPRESENT

The British Parking Association (BPA), founded in 1968, is the largest independent professional association in Europe. We represent around 650 member organisations in the parking and traffic management industry. Members range from technology manufacturers and car park operators to local authorities and NHS Trusts.

We are dedicated to promoting and improving knowledge and standards in every type of parking facility, both on-street and off-street. We are also committed to bringing together the interests of users, government, local authorities and commercial organisations, providing a forum for the exchange of information and ideas concerning parking.

One of our main aims is to encourage members to raise standards so that they provide a better, fairer service to their clients and to all car park users.

Our members recognise the value of maintaining high standards, and membership of the BPA enables them to do this. Many of our members operate car parks accredited with the Safer Parking Scheme award – the Park Mark® – or are a member of our Approved Operator Scheme, having signed up to our Code of Practice (both of these are described opposite).

HOW TO CONTACT THE BPA

For further information, please contact:
Dave Smith, Communications & Events Coordinator

Phone: 01444 447 316
Email: dave.s@britishparking.co.uk
Website: www.britishparking.co.uk

THOSE SUPPORTING THIS CHARTER

BPA Approved Operators
The NHS Confederation
The Healthcare Facilities Consortium