



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

---

Paper 33/12

28 November 2011

NIAR 684-11

**Dr Lesley-Ann Black**

# Car parking charges in the health and social care sector

This paper has been compiled in response to a request by the HSSPS Committee in relation to car parking charges in the health and social care sector (HSC) in Northern Ireland. Guidance on car parking provision and management on hospital sites has been in operation since June 2008.<sup>1</sup> However, new proposals seek to permit charging in a wider context in the health and social care sector.<sup>2</sup> This paper discusses current car park management contracts across local hospital sites, and also provides information on car park charging in hospital sites in the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

---

<sup>1</sup> Health Estates Agency (June 2008) *Guidance – HSC Hospital Car Parking Provision and Management*, Available online at: [http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/health\\_estates\\_guidancefor\\_hsc\\_hospital\\_car\\_parking\\_provision\\_and\\_management.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/health_estates_guidancefor_hsc_hospital_car_parking_provision_and_management.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> DHSSPS (September 2011) Policy for car parking provision and management in the health and social care sector. Consultation response questionnaire.

## Key points

- The issue of charging patients, visitors and staff for car parking, particularly on hospital sites, has generated significant debate and controversy.
- Policy guidance relating to hospital car parking provision and management in Northern Ireland's health and social care (HSC) sector was issued in 2008.
- At the time of writing, car parking charges are in operation in **nine hospital sites** across Northern Ireland. In eight of these sites, car parking is managed in-house by the Trust, the only exception being the main car park at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast which is part of a private finance initiative (PFI) contract.
- Car parking charges range, for example at Altnagelvin Area hospital, it costs 60p for up to one hour and £12.00 over eight hours. Charges for periods in excess of 8 hours are generally at a higher rate. This is to deter commuters/shoppers from using hospital car parks as a "park n' ride" facility.
- Under current policy, many patients suffering from cancer and other serious long term conditions are exempt and entitled to free car parking at hospital.
- Four hospital sites currently charge their staff for car parking (namely the Royal, Mater, City, and Ulster hospitals). Charges are set at a local level by Trusts in consultation with staff and rates are lower than those levied on the public. However, these rates vary between hospitals, and in the future, they are likely to become standardised and possibly more prevalent.
- Estimate figures obtained from the DHSSPS show that the gross income for car park charging on the eight hospital sites was around £2,536,000 in 2010-11. Any profits generated (once overhead costs are removed) are put back into the health service. It has not been possible to establish the revenue generated from the privately run contract at the Royal hospital. The company operating this initiative retain their profits.
- In 2011, a new consultation outlining five options regarding future car parking in the HSC sector is currently underway. The option deemed in the DHSSPS consultation as the most preferred way forward is 'Option 5'. If introduced, this would see *more extensive and widespread charging, including extending staff charging, and charging across other HSC sites.*
- Car parking charges at hospitals sites in nearby jurisdictions vary; Wales and Scotland have largely abolished hospital car parking charges, whereas charging is commonplace in England and the Republic of Ireland.

# 1 Introduction

Historically, the issue of charging patients, visitors and staff for car parking - particularly on hospital sites, has generated significant debate and controversy in the UK and the Republic of Ireland (RoI). Those in opposition to the introduction of charging contest that such costs are an unfair “tax on the sick”, which only adds to the stress people feel when going to hospital.<sup>3</sup> Others argue that it can deter patients from attending hospital appointments. A lack of public transport, especially for those living in rural areas, can also exacerbate anxiety and stress. In addition, charging staff for parking can act as a disincentive to employment, especially when these charges are lower, or even free, at other hospitals.

Policy guidance for car parking provision and management in Northern Ireland’s health and social care (HSC) sector was issued in 2008, and specifically concerns **hospital** car parking.<sup>4</sup> It highlights that more services are being developed on constricted hospital sites and, coupled with an increasing number of households having access to cars, this has resulted in congestion and capacity issues. A number of hospital sites have also experienced problems with commuters and shoppers abusing health and social care parking facilities, which is known as ‘fly parking’. These factors have had an impact on the ability for patients to access hospital services and appointments.

## 1.2 New draft policy proposals

Revised draft proposals for ‘Car parking provision and management in the health and social care sector’ were recently developed by the DHSSPS (September 2011).<sup>5</sup> In a recent press release, the Minister stated that the aim of the new policy was:

*“to reinforce the exemptions and bring some regional consistency to charging for both visitors and staff on HSC sites. Good car parking provision and management are an important part of the experience of using the health service. Car parking abuse and the lack of availability of car parking spaces can make a visit to a health service facility even more stressful. I hope that extending the policy to cover all of the HSC will help Trusts to make adequate provision for patients, visitors and staff.”*<sup>6</sup>

According to the DHSSPS, the policy would also enable Trusts to ensure that charges reflect a reasonable balance between the perceived needs of the legitimate car park users, and, given the current financial climate, the costs of providing and maintaining parking facilities (i.e. road surfaces, security, lighting, ticket barriers).<sup>7</sup> The charges must also be justified as part of a

<sup>3</sup> BBC News February 2008 Hospital parking ‘a tax on sick’. Available online at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/south\\_west/7264964.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/south_west/7264964.stm) Website accessed 20.10.11.

<sup>4</sup> Health Estates Agency (2008) *Guidance – HSC Hospital Car Parking Provision and Management*, June: Available online at: [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/health\\_estates\\_guidancefor\\_hsc\\_hospital\\_car\\_parking\\_provision\\_and\\_management.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/health_estates_guidancefor_hsc_hospital_car_parking_provision_and_management.pdf) Website accessed 20.10.11.

<sup>5</sup> DHSSPS September 2011. Policy for car parking provision and management in the health and social care sector. Available online at: [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/policy-car-parking-provision-hsc-2011.doc](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/policy-car-parking-provision-hsc-2011.doc) Website accessed 18.10.11.

<sup>6</sup> Northern Ireland Executive website “Health Minister issues new car parking proposals for consultation” [www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/media-centre/news-departments/news-dhssps/news-dhssps-30092011-.htm](http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/media-centre/news-departments/news-dhssps/news-dhssps-30092011-.htm) Website accessed 20.10.11.

<sup>7</sup> DHSSPS September 2011. Policy for car parking provision and management in the health and social care sector. page 4

wider, environmentally-planned approach to travel management that encourages greater use of public transport.<sup>8</sup>

The policy proposals set out 5 options for consideration. These are:

<b>Option 1</b> - Maintain the Status Quo (keeping things the same)
<b>Option 2</b> - More extensive charging on hospital sites which charge, extending charging to all hospital sites, but maintaining free parking for staff where it is free
<b>Option 3</b> - More extensive charging on hospital sites including implementing staff charging
<b>Option 4</b> - Extend current charging arrangement to other HSC sites
<b>Option 5</b> - More extensive charging on hospital sites, including implementing staff charging and extend current charging arrangements to other HSC sites.

Table 1: Policy options for car park charges on HSC sites

Each option has been weighted against a range of criteria. The option deemed by the DHSSPS as the most preferred way forward is Option 5.<sup>9</sup> The proposals are currently open for public consultation until 30 December 2011.<sup>10</sup> If Option 5 is introduced, this would see *more extensive and widespread charging, including extending staff charging, and charging across other HSC sites.*

In the new draft policy, the DHSSPS has provided several reasons why standardising car parking rates would not be possible. This is due, for example, to supply and demand, and the different levels of investment required at various HSC sites.<sup>11</sup> The DHSSPS has also carried out an initial screening of the strategy and has concluded that a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.<sup>12</sup>

## 2 Current Car Parking Charges

Deciding whether (or not) to introduce car parking charges is an operational matter for each HSC Trust. Charging is permitted under the income generation initiative of Article 3(2) of the Health and Medicines (NI) Order 1988.<sup>13</sup> According to the DHSSPS, a number of factors impact on whether charging is appropriate, and these include administration costs, rurality and the vulnerability of the patients affected. As car parking management solutions are becoming more sophisticated, the Department has also emphasised that any charging proposals must be capable of demonstrating cost recovery, both in terms of capital investment *and* recurrent costs.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> DHSSPS September 2011. Policy for car parking provision and management in the health and social care sector. page 6

<sup>9</sup> DHSSPS September 2011. Policy for car parking provision and management in the health and social care sector. page 22.

<sup>10</sup> Northern Ireland Executive website "Health Minister issues new car parking proposals for consultation"

[www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/media-centre/news-departments/news-dhssps/news-dhssps-30092011-.htm](http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/media-centre/news-departments/news-dhssps/news-dhssps-30092011-.htm) Website accessed 20.10.11.

<sup>11</sup> DHSSPS September 2011. Policy for car parking provision and management in the health and social care sector. page 13.

<sup>12</sup> DHSSPS September 2011. Policy for car parking provision and management in the health and social care sector. page 23.

<sup>13</sup> The Health and Medicines (NI) Order 1988. Available online at: [www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1988/2249/article/3](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1988/2249/article/3) Website accessed 23.11.11

<sup>14</sup> DHSSPS response to author for information on local car parking charges. Correspondence dated 9.11.2011

## 2.1 Which hospitals currently charge for car parking?

At the time of writing, car parking charges are in operation in **nine hospital sites** across Northern Ireland. Data obtained from the DHSSPS in Table 2 shows car parking fees by hospital site and Trust area.

Charges range from £0.60 for up to one hour, to £12.00 for any period over eight hours. Charges for periods in excess of 8 hours are generally at a higher rate. This is to deter commuters and shoppers from using hospital car parks as a type of “park n’ ride” facility.

Charge Bands	BELFAST TRUST			S.EASTERN TRUST	NORTHERN TRUST		WESTERN TRUST	SOUTHERN TRUST	
	Belfast City £	Mater £	Royal £	Ulster £	Antrim £	Causeway £	Altnagelvin £	Craigavon £	Daisy Hill £
Up to 1 hour	1.00	1.30	1.30	1.20	1.00	1.00	0.60	1.00	1.00
1-2 hours	1.50	1.30	1.30	1.80	1.50	1.50	1.20	1.50	1.50
2-3 hours	2.00	1.30	1.30	1.80	2.00	2.00	1.80	2.00	2.00
3-4 hours	2.50	1.30	1.30	1.80	2.50	2.50	2.40	2.00	2.00
4-5 hours	4.50	2.10	2.10	2.50	3.00	3.00	4.80	2.50	2.50
5-6 hours	7.50	2.10	2.10	2.50	3.50	3.50	7.20	2.50	2.50
6-8 hours	10.00	4.40	4.40	3.50	4.00	4.00	9.60	3.50	3.50
Over 8 Hours	10.00	4.40	4.40	4.50	5.00	5.00	12.00	4.50	4.50
In house contract?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Staff charging?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Clamping	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Free parking still available	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 2: Public car parking rates by Trust Area (based on data from August 2011)

As can be seen from Table 2, the Belfast Trust operates charging on its three acute hospital sites. Until recently, the Mater hospital had a ‘one payment all day’ rate of £1. This has been replaced by the rates adopted at the Royal Victoria Hospital. In addition, Belfast City hospital has a ‘planning restriction’ in place because the hospital is located in a designated restricted parking area. This means that the City hospital has to set rates which discourage extended/all day parking.<sup>15</sup> That is why most of its rates are higher than the other two Belfast hospitals, especially concerning parking periods exceeding 4 hours.

Both the Northern and Southern Trusts operate car park charging on two hospital sites and the South Eastern and Western Trusts operate car park charging on one hospital site. Three hospital sites still offer limited free car parking to the public - at Daisy Hill, Altnagelvin, and Craigavon Area hospitals. In comparison with the other hospitals outside the Belfast area, Altnagelvin also charges the public higher rates for parking periods over 4 hours.

<sup>15</sup> DHSSPS response to author for information on local car parking charges. Correspondence dated 9.11.2011

## 2.2 Exemptions

At present, under regional policy, many patients suffering from cancer and other serious long term conditions are entitled to free parking at hospitals. Exemptions for car parking were established under the 2008 car parking guidance and, under the current proposals, they will remain in place, but are not intended to be extended further. Trusts are also expected to apply discretion in cases where the duration and/or frequency of visits to hospital would lead to significant charges.<sup>16</sup> For example, patients who have outpatient appointments over an extended period of time can be considered for free car parking. Exemptions may apply in the following circumstances, as shown in Table 3.

Care Path	Application of Free Car Parking			
	Patient	Next of Kin/Partner	Relative	Visitor
<b>Radiotherapy Chemotherapy</b>	Yes	Yes, if transporting patient	Yes, if transporting patient	N/A
<b>Renal dialysis</b>	Yes	As above	As above	N/A
<b>Critical Care/ High Dependency</b>	N/A	Yes	Discretionary	Discretionary

Table 3: Free car parking eligibility criteria

In order that people do not suffer financial hardship, there is also a 'Hospital Travel Costs Recovery Scheme' which will remain in place for those on certain benefits or low incomes.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.3 Contract Management

Currently, eight of the nine hospital sites that charge a fee for car parking are managed **in-house by the Trust**, with the only exception being the main car park at the **Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast**.<sup>18</sup> This service is managed privately by "Car Park Services" under a private finance initiative (PFI) contract. This contract involves a 20 year licence to build and run the car park, and is due to expire around 2016. According to the DHSSPS, the only financial exchange between the Trust and the car park service provider is one annual payment for the use of the land (around £40,000 per year).<sup>19</sup> Any profits made from car park charging goes directly to Car Park Services. This contract is Car Park Services' largest operation, and involves the total management and maintenance of 2300 car parking spaces, spread over five different sites within the hospital grounds.<sup>20</sup> The contract will be reviewed before it expires.

<sup>16</sup> DHSSPS September 2011. Policy for car parking provision and management in the health and social care sector. page 26

<sup>17</sup> Further information on the scheme is available from the NI Direct website: [www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/money-tax-and-benefits/benefits-and-financial-support/ill-or-injured/hospital-travel-costs-scheme.htm](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/money-tax-and-benefits/benefits-and-financial-support/ill-or-injured/hospital-travel-costs-scheme.htm) Website accessed 19.10.11.

<sup>18</sup> DHSSPS response to author for information on car parking contract management. Correspondence dated 9.11.2011

<sup>19</sup> DHSSPS response to author for information on car parking contract management. Correspondence dated 19.12.2011

<sup>20</sup> Car Park Services Limited – data obtained from company website. Available online at: [www.carparkservices.com/royal.htm](http://www.carparkservices.com/royal.htm) Website accessed 20.10.11.

The DHSSPS also suggests that there are no plans to place any additional car parking management services with private contractors. However, the Department has also indicated that private contractors may be considered should 'wheel clamping' be adopted more widely.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.4 Wheel Clamping

Wheel clamping initiatives are used as a deterrent to car parking misuse. Several hospital sites in Northern Ireland currently have a wheel clamping system in operation and the majority of these contracts are managed **by private contractors** as detailed in Table 4. Only the Belfast City hospital site has an in-house clamping service. The Southern Trust does not operate wheel clamping services in the either Craigavon or Daisy Hill hospitals.

Trust	Site	Contractor	Contract period	Purpose	Clamp- ing Fee	Amount of fee to Trust	Number clamped 2010/11
South Eastern HSCT	Ulster Hospital	Parking Enforcement Agency	Dec 2010 for 24 months	Clamping	£40	£0	139
Northern HSCT	Antrim Hospital	Parking Enforcement Agency	Apr 2011-Apr 2013	Clamping	£40	£0	66 (by Sept 2011)
Northern HSCT	Causeway Hospital	Parking Enforcement Agency	Apr 2011-Apr 2013	Clamping	£40	£0	62 (by Sept 2011)
Western HSCT	Altnagelvin	Security 24 Guarding Ltd.	Dec 2010 - Nov 2011	Traffic Management <sup>22</sup>	£30	£0	0
Belfast HSCT	Royal Group of Hospitals	Car Park Services	Oct 1996 – Oct 2016	Car Park Management and clamping	Information unavailable	N/A	0
Belfast HSCT	Belfast City Hospital	<b>In house</b>			£20	£20	24

Table 4: Wheel clamping contracts in Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland

The main factors that the DHSSPS has cited for using a private contractor for wheel clamping include:

- It is a specialised service;
- Health and social care staff on one site who had carried out clamping were subject to serious threats by groups and individuals in their own area;
- On busier sites, clamping is required as a deterrent to abuse on a 24 hour basis to preserve safe access to hospital sites.<sup>23</sup>

The DHSSPS has advised that near the end of the contract period, wheel clamping contracts will also be reviewed and advertised for competitive tendering.<sup>24</sup> However, the renewal of clamping contracts will be subject to the outcome of the "Regulation of vehicle immobilisation on private property", part of a wider consultation on security, which is due to be released in the future by the Department of Justice.

<sup>21</sup> DHSSPS response to author for information on private contractors and wheel clamping management. Correspondence dated 9.11.2011

<sup>22</sup> This includes wheel immobilisation, wheel clamping and removal of vehicles from Altnagelvin Area Hospital

<sup>23</sup> DHSSPS response to author for information on the use of private clamping contractors. Correspondence dated 9.11.2011

<sup>24</sup> DHSSPS response to author for information on renewal of clamping contracts. Correspondence dated 9.11.2011

### 3 Profits from car parking charges and clamping

Table 5 shows the **gross** income generated from car park charges over the last three years.<sup>25</sup> Part of this money will be used to pay overheads such as equipment and labour costs etc. However, figures for net income were not available for all hospitals and as such, only gross income has been included. The DHSSPS has advised that these figures are estimates and therefore should be heavily caveated. All HSC Trusts report that any surplus generated from in-house car parking charges (with the exception of the privately run contract at the Royal hospital) are put back into the Trust. As previously stated, the income generated from car parking managed by the PFI contract at the Royal hospital is retained by the contractor, and the details of profits made were unavailable.

Year Hospital	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11
<b>Altnagelvin Hospital</b>	£131,000	£123,000	£116,000
<b>Royal Hospitals Group</b>	Revenue retained by contractor	Revenue retained by contractor	Revenue retained by contractor
<b>Belfast City Hospital</b>	£874,000	£883,000	£828,000
<b>Mater Hospital</b>	£79,000	£67,000	£173,000
<b>Craigavon Hospital</b>	No charges applied until Aug 2009	£ 200,000*	£338,000
<b>Ulster Hospital</b>	£1,050,000	£1,071,000	£1,081,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£2,134,000</b>	<b>£2,344,000</b>	<b>£2,536,000</b>

Table 5 Car parking gross income from hospital car parking

\*Craigavon introduced charging in August 2009

From the table we can see the profits over the past 3 years in the in-house managed contracts have risen from £1.9 million in 2007/8 to £2.3 million in 2009/10, with the Ulster Hospital making over £1 million pounds gross annual revenue since 2008/9.<sup>26</sup>

#### 3.1 Recouping investment in car park management systems

Car park charges were recently introduced in 2011 for Causeway and Antrim hospitals. Although it is difficult to ascertain how long it will take for investment in car park management systems to be recouped, calculations based on net income projections by the DHSSPS, suggest that capital investment could be recouped for Antrim hospital within about 2 years, and in around 4 years for the Causeway hospital.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> DHSSPS response to author for information on profits from car parking contracts. Correspondence dated 9.11.2011. This figure is heavily caveated and does not include net costs e.g. equipment, labour costs etc.

<sup>26</sup> Response to Assembly Question (AQW 3748/11) Mr Jonathan Craig (DUP - Lagan Valley) To ask the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether revenue raised from hospital car parks goes to the relevant Health and Social Care Trust or the Department. Response dated 12/11/2010

<sup>27</sup> DHSSPS response to author for information on where the profits go to that are made from car parking contracts. Correspondence dated 9.11.2011



### 3.2 Staff car parking charges

Four hospital sites currently charge their **staff** for car parking (namely the Royal, the Mater, the City, and the Ulster hospitals). These charges are set at a local level by Trusts in consultation with staff, and the rates are lower than those levied on the public. Staff at the Ulster hospital for example, who require a car parking space, will have the car parking rate deducted from their salary. However, there are currently **no staff car parking charges** at the Northern, Western or Southern Trust hospital sites, although this may be subject to review, pending the outcome of the car parking consultation. The Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan (2015)<sup>28</sup> indicates that, in order to help reduce transport congestion, there is an intention to “*evaluate and develop measures which may include car-parking levies by employers on employees*”. Therefore charging HSC staff for parking is likely to become standardised and more prevalent in the future. Details of current car parking charges for staff in the Belfast and South Eastern Trusts are shown in Tables 6 and 7.

Hospital	Monthly £	Annual £
<b>Royal Victoria</b>		
Full time	17.20	206.40
Up to 30 hours	13.58	162.90
Up to 25 hours	11.32	135.83
Up to 20 hours	9.14	109.69
Up to 5 Sessions	9.42	112.98
<b>City Hospital</b>		
Full time	6.50	78.00
Part time	3.25	39.00
<b>Mater Hospital</b>		
Full time	8.33	100.00
Part time	4.16	50.00

Table 6: Car parking fees for staff at the Belfast Trust

As can be seen in Table 6, staff car parking rates are less expensive in both the City and Mater hospitals in comparison to the Royal Victoria hospital. The Royal also has a number of different bands in which car parking fees are calculated, whereas the City and Mater hospitals are simply classified by ‘full time’ or ‘part time’ working hours.

Type of contract	Fee £
Staff working more than 32 hours per week	11.00 per month /132 per annum
Staff working less than 32 hours per week	8.00 per month / 96 per annum
Occasional user passes for 10 visits	10.00
Monthly pass (e.g. for agency staff)	11.00

Table 7: Car parking fees for staff at the Ulster Hospital (South Eastern Trust)

For **full time staff**, *annual* car parking charges range from:

- £206 at the Royal hospital;
- £132 at the Ulster hospital;
- £100 at the Mater hospital and;

<sup>28</sup> Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015. Department of Regional Development. Available on line at: [http://www.drndi.gov.uk/index/roadimprovements/strategic\\_proposals/regional\\_strategic\\_transport\\_network.htm](http://www.drndi.gov.uk/index/roadimprovements/strategic_proposals/regional_strategic_transport_network.htm) Website accessed 20.10.11.

- £78 at the City hospital.

For **part time staff** (in this case those working less than 32 hours per week), annual car parking charges range from:

- between £109-162 at the Royal hospital;
- £100 at the Mater hospital;
- £96 at the Ulster hospital and;
- £39 at the City hospital.

According to the DHSSPS, none of the Trusts have plans to use Agenda for Change bandings to determine car parking charges, as these are “*less practicable than charging on a part-time to full time basis because of the range and complexity of job roles*”.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.3 Are there any future plans for charging in the HSC Trusts?

As hospital car park charges are a matter for individual Trusts, the researcher also contacted the DHSSPS in order to ascertain what the future car parking charges might be in each Trust area, in terms of other acute hospital sites, smaller, local hospitals or primary care settings.<sup>30</sup> Their response is provided in Table 8.

Trust area	Details of possible future charging
Belfast HSC	It is important to note the tariff at the Belfast City Hospital site is governed by DOE planning policy and therefore must be treated differently. Proposals therefore will only result in a tariff increase in line with inflation for the visitors' tariffs at Belfast City hospital. The tariff at the Royal Victoria Hospital site is largely determined by the contract with Car Park Services.
Northern HSC	No plans at the present time, but the Northern Trust will be keeping this under review.
South Eastern HSC	No specific plans, but consideration is being given to introducing visitor and patient charging at <b>Lagan Valley Hospital</b> and <b>Newtownards Hospital</b> .
Southern HSC	No plans at present.
Western HSC	Car parking charging will be considered for the new acute hospital in the <b>South West</b> and <b>Omagh Hospital</b> in line with the timescales for commissioning of these facilities. The Trust currently has no plans to introduce paid car parking at any other site.

Table 8. Future plans to extend care parking arrangements by Trust area.

## 4. Comparison with other jurisdictions

This final section of the paper considers car park charging arrangements in hospital sites in the UK and Republic of Ireland (RoI). The table overleaf highlights which places currently operate car park charges on their hospital sites.

<sup>29</sup> DHSSPS response to author for information on staff car parking charges using Agenda for Change bands. Correspondence dated 9.11.2011

<sup>30</sup> DHSSPS response to author for information on future plans to introduce car parking charges. Correspondence dated 9.11.2011

Jurisdiction	England	Wales	Scotland	NI	ROI
<b>Is hospital car park charging in place?</b>	Yes. This is decided locally by individual Trusts. Income is used to help cover maintenance and security.  Exemption and concessionary schemes are also in place.	No charging. There is free parking at NHS hospitals.  However, charging at some hospitals with external contracts with private companies will be retained, but at a reduced fee.	No charging.  This was abolished in 2008 (except for 3 hospital sites with private contract arrangements in place).	Yes. Charging at 9 hospital sites across Northern Ireland, one of which is a privately owned contract. Charging is a matter for individual Trusts.  Exemption and concessionary schemes in place.	Yes.  Most hospitals in the ROI charge for car parking. In the vast majority of cases, these are managed 'in house' by the Health Service Executive (HSE).

Table 9: Car parking charges in hospital sites in UK and ROI

#### 4.1 Charges in England

As in Northern Ireland, the provision of hospital car parking and any associated charges are decided locally by individual Trusts in order to help cover the cost of running, maintaining and securing a car park. In 2009, the Labour Government launched a consultation on improving access to NHS car parking, which was primarily concerned with hospital car parking charges.<sup>31</sup> The consultation also set out proposals to introduce mandatory free parking. However, in 2010, the newly formed coalition Government responded to the consultation stating that “the provision of spaces and the level of charges should remain a matter for individual NHS Trusts, but that allowances should be made for frequent attendees”.<sup>32</sup>

NHS Trusts also have exemption and concessionary schemes in place to ensure that patients and carers who visit hospital regularly are not disadvantaged. They also aim to have sustainable public transport plans in place for staff and visitors. Any profits generated by NHS Trusts or Foundation Trusts are used to improve health services in that Trust. However, where hospital car parks are run by a private company (for example, under a PFI scheme), depending on the terms of the contract, the company may decide that the profits will not be reinvested in the health service.

Historical data on the income generated from staff, patient and visitors car parking charges in England (2001-2008) shows that this nearly doubled in the timeframe - from £60 million in 2001 to £112million in 2008.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Department of Health: NHS Car Parking (Dec 2009): Consultation on Improving Access for Patients. Consultation available online [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH\\_110557](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH_110557) Website accessed 20.10.11.

<sup>32</sup> Coalition government response to consultation 2010. Available online at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100916/wmstext/100916m0001.htm#10091614000025> Website accessed 28.10.11.

<sup>33</sup> Data in response to a Parliamentary question : **Damian Hinds**: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much (a) direct and (b) indirect revenue the NHS received from parking charges in each year since 1997. [70758]

## 4.2 Charges in Wales

The Welsh Assembly Government was the first administration within the UK to announce a process to bring an end hospital car parking charges. Media reports had highlighted charges as being 'excessive' with one press article stating: 'figures released by the Assembly Government showed that the total parking income Trusts received in the financial year 2006-07 was £3.9 million with a further £1.5 million raised by levying car parking charges on staff.'<sup>34</sup>

In 2008, the Welsh Assembly announced that free car parking would be available at NHS hospitals. The only exceptions would be hospitals where external contracts with private companies are already in place. In such cases, the Health Minister, Edwina Hart insisted that NHS Trusts who had contracts with private parking firms should introduce schemes to reduce costs for patients, staff and visitors until the contract expires. By the end of 2011, only four hospital sites (out of a total of 130) should still have car park charging in place.<sup>35</sup>

## 4.3 Charges in Scotland

Until 2008, car parking on healthcare sites in Scotland could be charged at a maximum daily rate of £3.<sup>36</sup> At that time, it was a matter for each NHS Board to decide what the charges would be, as long as they were in keeping with guidance issued by the Scottish Government.

In 2006, the Scottish Parliament's Health Committee held a single inquiry session into 'Car Park Charges', which took evidence from a range of witnesses including charities, NHS Boards, private sector car park operators and the Scottish Executive.<sup>37</sup> Then in 2008, car parking charges were finally abolished across NHS hospital sites in Scotland following the outcome of an Independent Review Group on car park charging. On announcing the decision, the Scottish Health Minister (Nicola Sturgeon) said:

*In this 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NHS Scotland, I am determined that the founding principles of our health service remain intact...Chief among these is that the NHS should be free at the point of delivery and it is my firm belief that this should apply whether one comes to hospital as a patient, visitor or a member of staff.<sup>38</sup>*

The decision to end car parking charges across NHS Scotland followed a sustained campaign led by Scottish politicians, the media, and lobbying from several campaign groups, such as Macmillan Cancer Relief. Whilst there are no charges, NHS Boards can use car parking management schemes to control the numbers of cars being parked in the one area. For example, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde has a policy stipulating that, during peak times

<sup>34</sup> Welsh Assembly Government (2008) 'Reform of car parking at NHS hospitals', Press release, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008 – accessible electronically at:

[new.wales.gov.uk/publications/accessinfo/drnewhomepage/healthdrs/Healthdrs2008/hospitalcarparkingcharges/?lang=en](http://new.wales.gov.uk/publications/accessinfo/drnewhomepage/healthdrs/Healthdrs2008/hospitalcarparkingcharges/?lang=en)

<sup>35</sup> BBC News (2008) 'NHS parking in Wales to be free', 3<sup>rd</sup> March – document accessible electronically at:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/7273649.stm> Website accessed 28.11.11.

<sup>36</sup> The Scottish Government Circular CEL 1 (2008) Revised guidance on car park charging

<sup>37</sup> Health Committee Inquiry into Car Park Charging. Available online at:

[www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/health/or-06/he06-1502.htm#Col2868](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/health/or-06/he06-1502.htm#Col2868) Website accessed 14.11.11

<sup>38</sup> Scottish Government News Release, 2 September 2008 – available electronically at:

[www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2008/09/02091611](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2008/09/02091611) Website accessed 16.11.11

Monday to Friday, cars cannot be parked for more than four hours.<sup>39</sup> However, free car parking does not apply to three hospital sites in Scotland which have Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangements in place (namely the Royal Infirmarys in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and Ninewells Hospital, Dundee). Regarding these, the Minister also remarked that those car park operators work to “*minimise inconvenience to visitors by limiting or reducing their charges.*”<sup>40</sup>

#### 4.4 Charges in the Republic of Ireland (RoI)

Currently a small number of hospitals in the Republic of Ireland (RoI) provide free car parking to patients and the public. However, a recent parliamentary question (dated August 2011) in the Houses of the Oireachtas shows that the majority (23) of hospital car park contracts in the RoI are owned and operated by the Health Service Executive (HSE).<sup>41</sup> There are approximately eight car park sites where hospitals have contracted-out car parking management to organisations such as ‘Euro Car Parks’ and ‘Park Rite’. The charges have generated much income, as one report suggests, hospitals just in the ‘HSE West region’ made a profit of €5 million alone during 2008/9.<sup>42</sup>

## 5. Summary

Charging patients, the public and staff for car parking at hospital sites is a contentious issue. At present, Northern Ireland operates car park charges at nine hospital sites, and offers patients with certain serious and long-term illnesses free access to parking. A recent policy consultation has been launched by the DHSSPS, recommending that charging be extended. This would include the flexibility to charge at other sites across the HSC sector if necessary. Car parking charges at hospitals sites in nearby jurisdictions also vary; Wales and Scotland have largely abolished hospital car parking charges, whereas charging is commonplace in England and the Republic of Ireland.

---

<sup>39</sup> NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Website – Parking. Available online at [http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=home\\_parking](http://www.nhsggc.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=home_parking) Website accessed 8.11.11

<sup>40</sup> Scottish Government News Release, 2 September 2008 – available electronically at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2008/09/02091611> Website accessed 28.11.11

<sup>41</sup> Parliamentary question number 19668/11. **Mr Gerry Adams** to ask the Minister for Health and Children if he will provide a list of the hospitals who have contracted out their car parks; and the company that has the contract in each case.

<sup>42</sup> Medical Independent (September 2010) HSE West hospitals made €5m in car parking charges. Article available online at: [http://www.medicalindependent.ie/page.aspx?title=hse\\_west\\_hospitals\\_made\\_5m\\_in\\_car\\_parking\\_charges](http://www.medicalindependent.ie/page.aspx?title=hse_west_hospitals_made_5m_in_car_parking_charges) Website accessed 28.11.11