

February 2018

Dear Constituent

Thank you for contacting me about hospital parking charges.

I agree with you that patients and their families should not have to deal with the added stress of unfair parking charges, at what is already an extremely difficult time. That is why I am glad that the Department of Health has published a clear set of principles to allow the public to hold the NHS to account for unfair charges or practices that are in place.

You may be aware that decisions regarding hospital car parking are taken locally by NHS Trusts and must take account of local circumstances and community interests. The guidance states that charges should be reasonable for the area and concessions should be available to certain groups such as people with disabilities, carers and visitors to relatives who are gravely ill or have an extended hospital stay. Many hospitals and NHS organisations do offer free parking, however I believe the Government is minded of potential unintended consequences of universal free parking, and its possible effects on the number of available spaces.

It is a priority to encourage transparency in the NHS. Each year, the Government publishes information about the costs and provision of car parking at each NHS hospital. The guidance makes clear that NHS organisations should work with patients, staff, visitors, local authorities and public transport providers when planning their parking provisions.

You may be encouraged see that the Department of Health has published overarching principles regarding hospital parking charges, to which all institutions must abide. I think it is right that such guidelines are available publicly, as they ensure that the Government maintains public trust on contentious issues, such as those surrounding hospital parking charges. These principles can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-patient-visitor-and-staff-car-parking-principles/nhs-patient-visitor-and-staff-car-parking-principles>

I know that the Government is aware of the need to ensure proper compliance with these standards

Yours sincerely



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