

**FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE
HEALTH ESTATES
Mr John Cole**



Department of

**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

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For Action:
Chief Executives HSC Trusts

For Information:
Chief Executives HSC Boards

Dear Colleagues

GUIDANCE FOR HSC HOSPITAL CAR PARKING PROVISION AND MANAGEMENT

Background

Most of our hospitals were designed and built in an era when car ownership and usage were significantly less than they are today. With more services being placed on constricted HSC hospital sites together with an increase in health and social care activity, there is evidence to suggest that current capacity and management of car parking has become a problem for most acute hospitals in Northern Ireland.

Up until now, Departmental policy covering car park management such as charging has been that this is a local operational matter for Trusts. However, this position may have resulted in a lack of consistency across health and social care for such issues as criteria for free car parking for patients or relatives who have to attend frequently or for extended periods.

A number of these issues were brought to the attention of the Minister which resulted in Health Estates undertaking a regional review of car parking with the objective of establishing the current position in relation to charging, free car parking provision and capacity.

The main outcomes of the review which Minister announced on 21 May 2008 were:

- Ensuring that eligibility criteria for free car-parking are consistently applied across Health and Social Care Trusts.
- Car parking solutions adopted at each hospital must fit the particular needs and circumstances of the facility – the introduction of car parking charges and the levels of charge will remain a local decision for each individual Trust.

The outcome of the review resulted in the production of the attached Guidance for HSC Hospital Car Parking Provision and Management.

Action

1. Where car parking charges are currently in place, HSC Trusts should ensure that the eligibility criteria for free car parking in the attached guidance are applied as soon as possible. Trusts will need to consider how the application of the eligibility criteria should be managed. It is appreciated that existing arrangements will need to be augmented to cover how information is provided for service users on;
 - charging levels;
 - charging policy in terms of free car parking eligibility;
 - the application of the Hospital Travel Costs Recovery Scheme.

This information may be provided on HSC Trusts' websites, appointment letters etc. Trusts should plan to have these arrangements in place by 30th September 2008. Health Estates is facilitating a policy implementation working group to assist Trusts in this matter.

2. Where Trusts are reviewing their car parking provision, including the consideration of the introduction of car parking charging, they must ensure that such considerations are set against the principles and criteria set out in the guidance document and they are able to demonstrate transparency. Such considerations should be included in business cases as appropriate.
3. Each Trust should review their current car parking provision and ensure that future capacity requirements are included in Strategic Development Plans. Those Trusts that are currently experiencing problems will need to take forward the development of action plans to address current capacity and/or congestion problems. Such action plans should include active development of Healthy Transport Plans to address parking problems from a new direction by managing demand for parking spaces more effectively. The management of car parking at HSC hospitals must be an integral part of wider travel planning requirements. Completed action plans should be forwarded to the relevant Health Estates programme Director.

Yours faithfully

John Cole