

EAST SUSSEX LINK

The County's Local Involvement Network in Health and Social Care

Report

LINK Issue No's: IR 31 and IR32

Car Parking charges at District General Hospital, Eastbourne and Conquest Hospital, Hastings.

Introduction

Before running an article on the 13 January 2009 entitled “Hospital parking charges ‘are too high’” The Eastbourne Herald asked the LINK to comment on the situation, which was difficult to do without first asking the community for their view. After the article was published the LINK was contacted by a member of the public who directly raised this issue and also the issue of having to pay in blocks of time rather than the amount of time parked. This often means that patients and visitors to the hospital sites pay more than they may need to as the amount of time attending is often an unknown.

It was decided to undertake a small survey of the community during February 2009, the results of which would be reported to East Sussex Hospital NHS Trust and the Eastbourne Herald.

The Questions

It was felt that a short easy to answer questionnaire would be the best way forward. The questions asked were:-

1. Do you agree that as a patient or visitor to the DGH, Eastbourne or the Conquest Hospital, Hastings, that you should have to pay to park?
Yes No
2. Is the amount charged fair?
Yes No
3. Should you pay for just the time you stayed, ie pay on leave system?
Yes No

People were also asked if they would like to leave their contact details and/or further comments.

The Process

After the questionnaire had been prepared a poster was produced and displayed along with a copy of the Eastbourne Herald article, copies at appendix 1, 2 and 3.

The questionnaire was launched at the East Sussex Disability Association (ESDA) Open Day and was taken to the ESDA Hailsham locality group AGM, The Hastings and St Leonards Seniors Forum Health and Social Care Special Interest Group event and the Live Better, Spend Less Event organised by Gensing and Central St Leonards Community Forum in St Leonards. As this was time limited further consultation was not possible.

The Result

We had a total of 68 responses, 15 from the Seniors Forum, 20 from the Open Day, 27 from the Gensing and Central St Leonards Event, 5 from the Hailsham Locality group and 1 in the post.

Whilst completing the questionnaire we realised that the last question should have read “If you agree that you should pay for car parking should this be just for the time you stayed, ie pay on leave system”.

Question	Yes	No	No answer	Total
1. Do you agree that as a patient or visitor to the DGH, Eastbourne or the Conquest Hospital, Hastings, that you should have to pay to park?	22	44	2	68
2. Is the amount charged fair?	2	61	2	68
3. Should you pay for just the time you stayed, ie pay on leave system?	43	27		68
Totals	67	132	4	

Comments:-

- People who use the hospital car parking sites to park for reasons other than attending the hospital itself should be clamped.
- Patient and Helpers (ie friends, family) attending with a patient should not pay. One seldom knows how long one will be at the unit, why should visitors/patients often book for longer than necessary to avoid £60 penalty. Family/friends visiting longer term in-patients bear a disproportionate penalty.
- Concern over money running out and being fined, only adds to the anxiety levels when at the hospital.
- I think special arrangements should be applied to daily visitors, weekly/monthly pass.
- Shouldn't charge penalties if don't pay correct amount.
- In Southampton you take a ticket on entry, the first hour is free then pay up to 6 hours. If longer and person very ill get charge reimbursed.
- Ability to pay needs to be allowed for!
- A member of Hastings Urban Bikes thought that car parking should be charged but the money should go to healthy transport initiatives.

The Conclusion

The overall opinion was that generally car parking should be free and the current rate charged is not fair. If, however, you do have to pay for car parking then there should be a pay on leave system so that you only pay for the time that you are parked.

This report will be circulated to the East Sussex LINK Core Group, the Eastbourne Herald, the East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust and the individual who raised this an issue with us. We would like to thank all those who took the time to participate in our survey.

East Sussex LINK
March 2009

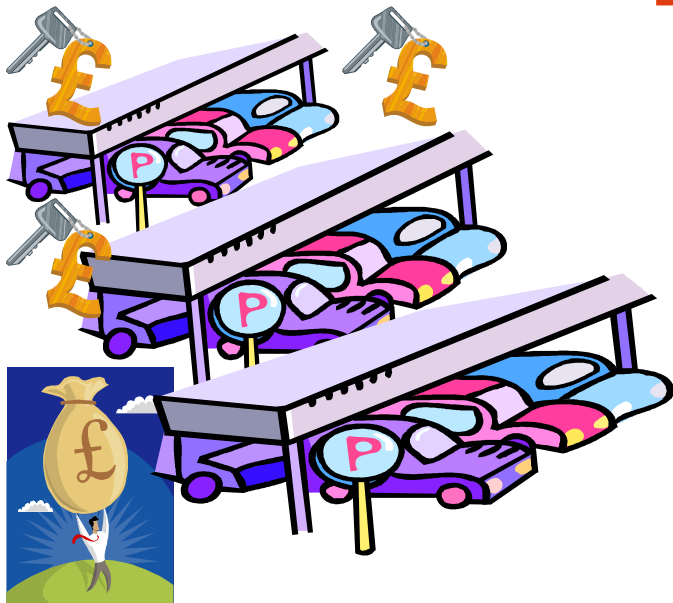
Appendix 1 – Questionnaire

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<p>Car Parking Charges at Hospital sites</p> <p>Do you agree that as a patient or visitor to the DGH, Eastbourne or the Conquest Hospital, Hastings, that you should have to pay to park? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Is the amount charged fair? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Should you pay for just the time you stayed, ie pay on leave system? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name</p> <p>Contact details</p>	<p>Car Parking Charges at Hospital sites</p> <p>Do you agree that as a patient or visitor to the DGH, Eastbourne or the Conquest Hospital, Hastings, that you should have to pay to park? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Is the amount charged fair? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Should you pay for just the time you stayed, ie pay on leave system? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name</p> <p>Contact details</p>
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The County's Local Involvement Network in Health and Social Care

HOSPITAL CAR PARKING CHARGES



Do you agree that as a patient or visitor to the DGH, Eastbourne or the Conquest Hospital, Hastings, that you should have to pay to park?

Is the amount charged fair?

Should you pay for just the time you stayed, ie pay on leave system?

These are issues that have been raised with us and were also reported in the Eastbourne Herald - 13 January 2009.

Let us have your views today!

For further information on East Sussex LINK, please contact :



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Appendix 3 – Eastbourne Herald article – 13 January 2009

Hospital parking charges 'are too high'

HOSPITAL visitors and patients are paying too much to park in Eastbourne, Conservative MP Nigel Waterson says, as he calls for the DGH to lower its car park tariffs.

Mr Waterson has stopped short of asking the DGH to abolish its fees, as most hospitals in Scotland did last month, but said, "I think the charges are too high and are a burden for people visiting sick relatives.

"If people are visiting someone ill, particularly over a long period, the cost does mount up.

"Particularly in these hard times, managers should review the charges."

East Sussex Hospitals Trust, which also runs the Conquest in Hastings, asks drivers to pay £1 to park for 30 minutes, £2 for two hours, £4 for four and £6 for 24 hours.

There are discounts for those visiting regularly, with a two-week ticket priced at £20, and a month at £31.

Free parking is available for oncology patients and low-income visitors can reclaim travel expenses.

The pay-and-display tickets are cheaper than at Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton, where it is £6.50 for six to 12 hours and £14 for 12 to 24 hours but nevertheless, Heather Burgess, a 65-year-old retired carer, said they were unfair.

Mrs Burgess, of Larkspur Drive, who used to park in the streets nearby to avoid the hospital charges, said, "It is rather harassing that you have to pay to park at the hospital, particularly with the monetary situation, where we all need to cut back wherever possible.

"It must be very costly for people going in every day — people who are sick are being penalised, aren't they?"

The DGH car park is managed and patrolled by hospital trust staff but a specialist company helps with enforcement.

The money from ticket payments totalled £490,000 in 2007/08, £441,000 of which was spent on parking services like lighting, CCTV, surveillance, landscaping and patrols.

It also helped run the trust's Healthy Transport Policy, to persuade people not to drive, but use other transport, to reach the hospital. The remainder was spent on healthcare.

Asked if cheaper parking would be considered, a trust spokesman said, "The car parks provide valuable income to support the trust's activities.

"The current tariffs were set in January 2007 and have been frozen for a further 12 months.

"They were based on the charges for parking throughout the borough of Eastbourne and are not excessive.

"The trust is looking to implement a 'pay on exit' parking system which allows for greater tariff flexibility, which has been suggested by many patients and visitors."

East Sussex Local Involvement Network, which represents the views of East Sussex residents on health and social care, is asking for opinions on car parking.