



Peter Lewis, Chief Executive
CC: The Trust Board
Somerset NHS Foundation Trust

Dear Mr Lewis

We, the undersigned, are Somerset NHS Foundation Trust staff and concerned members of the public. This collective letter is initiated by the Royal College of Nursing, produced in partnership with trade union colleagues by request of RCN members.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN), in response to members concerns, ran a survey about car parking and transport at Somerset NHS Foundation Trust. This survey was opened to members and colleagues across the trust. The survey, which attracted nearly 1,000 responses, displayed the strength of feeling around the issue of car parking at the Trust. Around 90% stated it is a pressing issue affecting their working lives and as significant as other concerns such as pay levels and staffing levels: It is a pressing issue not only for the 70% of respondents who currently drive and park at work, but also for the 20% of respondents who said they can't currently afford a permit or can't get a permit.

- Among all respondents, regardless of how they get to work: 89% stated that the price of the car parking permits is unfair.
- 98% of respondents agree or strongly agree that free parking would encourage them to remain in post.
- 30% of respondents said they had considered leaving their roles due to car parking.

The survey also highlighted concerns among those who currently drive to and park at work:

1. 85% of respondents stated that the permits put them under financial strain.
2. 60% of respondents are concerned about the safety of their vehicles.

Based on survey responses and verbal feedback collected at members meetings the Royal College of Nursing are now campaigning for change proposing the following measures to resolve the issues.

1. Free staff car parking.
2. A fair, equal and transparent permit system.
3. Improved safety, transparency and service in car parks, including action to stop the disproportionate and unfair use of parking penalties.
4. An accessible and equal transparent transport to work policy, which includes improved public transport options.
5. Improvements in the cost and conditions of public parking.

[NHS car parking guidance](#) from the Department for Health and Social Care says that NHS trusts should publish:

- their parking policy
- their implementation of the NHS car parking principles including implementation of free car parking for those with greatest need

- financial information relating to their car parking.
- summarised complaint information on car parking and actions taken in response.

Trust colleagues and RCN representatives have requested this information and have yet to receive these documents. We would be grateful for this to be rectified by return. In addition, the guidance says;

“NHS organisations are responsible for the actions of private contractors who run car parks on their behalf. NHS organisations should act against rogue contractors in line with the relevant codes of practice where applicable.

Contracts should not be let on any basis that incentivises additional charges, for example ‘income from parking charge notices only’.”

We have evidence to suggest that Q-Park and Parkingeye, contractors of Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, may be in violation of their contractual obligations to Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, its employees and service users.

Royal College of Nursing members have experienced the following:

- Harassment and bullying behaviour from private car parking contractors
- Disproportionate and unfair use of penalty notices
- Theft and damages to vehicles parked in hospital car parks

We, the undersigned, welcome your immediate attention on this matter. Royal College of Nursing Senior Officer, Chris Ashworth, will correspond on behalf of the undersigned.