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Improvements underway to hospital parking in South Tyneside as Trust introduces new 'pay on exit' system

Improvements to patient and visitor car parking at South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust are set to improve people's experiences when visiting hospital after health bosses listened to feedback.

From 1 October 2018, a new 'pay on exit' system will be introduced at South Tyneside District Hospital and at the Trust's Clarendon premises in Hebburn, making it much simpler for people to pay for their parking at the end of their visit.

The Trust has acted on feedback from patients and visitors who found the current payment system confusing. New signage around the Trust's car parks will make it much clearer to patients and visitors how to pay for their parking and, for the first time, payment machines will also be situated inside hospital buildings to protect people from bad weather when paying for parking.

The new 'pay on exit' kiosks will be situated at Ingham Wing main entrance, maternity, outpatients and within the emergency department. Using the latest touch screen technology, patients and visitors will be given multiple payment options, including the ability to pay by coins and notes with change given, or to pay by card or contactless.

The new system being introduced at South Tyneside is in line with recommended NHS best practice, meaning patients and visitors will be able to pay for their parking when leaving the hospital site, as opposed to when they arrive.

By typing in their registration plate on one of the large touch screen kiosks, an accurate recording of how long a vehicle has been on site will automatically generate the parking fee required. The system uses automatic number plate technology which recognises when vehicles enter and later leave the Trust's car parks. It means

people will only be charged for the time they have been parked and do not need to be concerned about their parking while they are in the hospital or whether they have paid enough.

The previous payment system in South Tyneside meant people had to estimate how much time they had spent on site, sometimes resulting in parking charge notices being issued. The Trust hopes the new payment system will reduce the number of times this happens. Car parking charges for the new 'pay on exit' system are as follows:

Up to 20 minutes	Free
Up to 1 hour	£2.00
Up to 2 hours	£3.00
Up to 4 hours	£4.50
Up to 24 hours	£8.00
Weekly pass	£10.00

There will continue to be a free 20-minute period allowing 'pick-ups' and 'drop-offs' in designated areas. Blue badge holders* will also continue to be exempt from all car parking charges but **must** register any vehicles used to visit the hospital sites.

Concessionary rates will continue to be available in certain circumstances, for example, people receiving long-term cancer treatment and the visitors of long-stay patients. Patients and visitors should speak to ward managers to ask about this.

Commenting on the improvements being made, Director of Estates and Facilities at South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust, Steve Jamieson, said: "We have recognised for some time that changes were needed to improve our car parking payment system and hope these new upgraded kiosks will be welcomed by patients and visitors.

"Attending hospital for an appointment or to visit a loved one can be a stressful time and we want to make it easy and straightforward as possible. We know from feedback that people prefer to 'pay on exit' and have the option to pay by card and

our new system will work on this basis. The introduction of contactless card technology is a big convenience factor too.

“The new pay on exit kiosk system means we can offer more choice and cost effective payment options for those who are visiting us regularly with a free 20 minute drop-off/pick-up period and a weekly £10 pass available through the new payment machines.

“As part of these improvements we have made some slight changes to parts of our car parking tariffs for the first time in three years and this will help contribute towards our overall efficiency programme as we look to improve our car parking facilities even further in the years ahead.”

Health bosses in South Tyneside are also looking at how more patient and visitor car parking spaces can be made available on the site as part of ongoing improvement work to improve patient experience.

Revenue generated from car parking payments is used to cover the costs of maintaining safe and secure parking facilities with any surpluses reinvested directly back into frontline patient care. The Trusts do not receive any income from parking charge notices and it is hoped the new ‘pay on exit’ system will avoid unnecessary parking charge notices being issued.

The new ‘pay on exit’ system will be simultaneously introduced at City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust. The changes affect patient and visitor parking only and do not affect staff.

ENDS

Media contact: For press enquiries on this release, contact **0191 404 1128** or email kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk

Notes to editors:

Blue badge holders

*Patients and visitors are reminded to register their vehicles before or on the day of their visit to hospital and to display their blue badge at all times whilst on site. Once a

blue badge is registered at either South Tyneside or Sunderland hospitals, this means blue badge holders will automatically be covered for parking on both sites and will not need to re-register for two years (unless they change their vehicle). Vehicles can be registered by:

South Tyneside

- Calling 0191 404 1094
- Using the automated registration system at main reception

To support the introduction of the new system, dedicated helplines have been set up to support visitors, help people identify where payments kiosks are located on site and manage general queries:

- South Tyneside – 0333 1235990