

PE2079/E: Introduce legislation to provide for exemptions in paying medical facility parking charges and to create a new classification of parking badge for care-givers

Disability Equality Scotland written submission, 25 June 2024

Please find below the response by Disability Equality Scotland to the above petition considered by the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee at its meeting on 15 May 2025.

Disability Equality Scotland: Who We Are

Disability Equality Scotland (DES) is a member-led, Disabled People's Organisation (DPO), working towards the inclusion and accessibility of all disabled people across Scotland in all of society. Our work is based on a human rights approach, and we share the collective voices of disabled people to inform and influence policymaking decisions. We adhere to the social model of disability and are a proud member of the Independent Living Movement. DES also acts as the umbrella body for the Scottish Access Panel Network.

Disability-Related Research

DES stages regular consultations, permitting and supporting the voices of the disabled community to be heard in relation to topics of importance to them. Although DES is a membership-based organisation, we embrace the wider disabled community when conducting research to provide a national platform for the voices and views of the disabled community. This response is based on such research.

Cost-of-Living and Equality

When consulted in connection with voting intentions around the forthcoming general election, disabled people told us that the following were the top five key issues for them, when deciding how to vote:

1. Health and Social Care
2. Accessible Transport
3. Energy Bills
4. Tackling Poverty and Inequality
5. Accessible Parking

The proposal to introduce legislation to provide for exemptions in paying medical facility parking charges clearly articulates with the current priority issues identified by disabled people.

Full report available: [Access to Democracy: Member's Priorities for the UK General Election - Disability Equality Scotland](#)

Financial Assistance and Advice

Additional, complementary research around cost-of-living challenges further indicated that:

- 24% of respondents had used a foodbank in the last 18 months.
- 69% of respondents said they had to use some of their savings to pay their mortgage or rent in the last 18 months.
- Just over 25% said they were very worried about being able to pay their rent or mortgage in the same period.
- 37% said they'd sought financial advice from the Money Advice Service, or Citizens Advice, to get help to pay the mortgage, rent or bills.

Reasons for seeking this advice included:

- I was worried about paying my energy bill - 35%
- I was worried about paying my mortgage or rent - 7.5%
- I was worried about paying for food - 15%
- I was worried about paying my credit card or a loan - 5%
- I was worried about budgeting - 5%
- I was worried about all these things - 33%

Paying energy bills was the most common reason stated and corresponds with earlier work in December 2023 on the energy price cap, where disabled people were having to make a choice between heating and using their independent living equipment.

Full report available: [Fact Sheet: Energy Price Cap and Cost of Living - Disability Equality Scotland](#)

Summary

The recently completed research involving disabled people (above) sharply represents the current financial challenges that disabled people face.

Taking the above into consideration, we would hope that medical facilities were accessible, equitable and inclusive for all those that are in need of them. That said:

- Many disabled people continue to experience a very real cost-of living crisis - with significantly constrained financial means.

- Some disabled people have been forced to choose between heating and/or lighting their home and using their independent living equipment.
- Some disabled people are having to resort to selling, or reducing the use of independent living equipment that they need.

Disabled people should not have to change the way they live their independent lives and should not be discriminated against due to their impairments.

Against the highlighted background of the continuing cost-of-living crisis for disabled people, it is essential to reduce – wherever possible – the financial barriers in attending medical facilities, including parking charges.

Recommendations

The above summary reflects the continuing and challenging financial plight of many disabled people within Scotland.

It is against this backdrop that Disability Equality Scotland strongly supports the proposals to:

1. Introduce legislation to provide for exemptions in paying medical facility parking charges for disabled people and;
2. Create a new classification of parking badge for those providing transport support to disabled people for medical reasons.

For and on behalf of Disability Equality Scotland.