

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

## **COSLA written submission, 14 June 2024**

Thank you for your letter, dated 17th May 2024, in which you asked COSLA to provide views on the above petition.

COSLA is fully committed to supporting unpaid carers, considering them to be equal partners in care. We know there are an estimated 800,000 carers in Scotland and three out of five of us will become carers at some point in our lifetime. We recognise that their unpaid care is worth an estimated £12.8bn in economic terms, while for loved ones receiving care, this support is invaluable. COSLA regularly engages with Carers Scotland at events such as the annual Carers Parliament to ensure carers' voices are heard.

COSLA recognises that carers face additional financial barriers in order to fulfil their caring duties, including incurring extra transport costs. These financial pressures continue to be compounded by the ongoing cost-of-living crisis which affects carers disproportionately. Statutory guidance embedded in the Carers (Scotland) 2016 Act requires local authorities to consider how carers access and benefit from universal services, including transport, while also ensuring the provision of targeted carers' information and advice services, such as welfare rights and financial advice. Looking ahead, COSLA supports the local implementation of the cross-government Carers Strategy to ensure all partners work together to improve the lives of carers in Scotland.

Where parking charges are in place, they are an important source of income for local authorities and support the provision of essential services. During the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of local authorities lost large amounts of income due to people staying at home and not using parking facilities. Therefore, we suggest that if legislation was to be created, further work would need to be undertaken to quantify the cost of this proposed policy, and how potential lost revenue could be reimbursed to local authorities.

There are further questions raised around the capacity of parking spaces. Again, further work is required to ascertain how this would impact on current blue badge holders and ensure there are enough parking spaces for all people who require a blue badge.

Thank you once again for asking us to comment on this petition.