

Brighton and Hove LINK Report

Car Parking at Royal Sussex County Hospital



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1. Acknowledgements

LINK enter and view representatives: Mick Lister, Robert Brown, MBE, Roy Pennington, Farida Gallagher.

Geoff Britten. (Transport Co-ordinator. Transport Bureau. Royal Sussex County Hospital, RSCH)

Nina Aynsleigh-Marshall. (Transport Co-ordinator. Transport Bureau, RSCH)

Lee Gander. Patient Transport at Bluebird Community Partnership

Patients, visitors and unpaid carers at the Royal Sussex County Hospital

2. Summary

This study was mainly concerned with looking into accessing the North Car Park at the Royal Sussex County Hospital, Eastern Road, Brighton. The study did cover other aspects of parking at the hospital, such as parking costs, use of public transport to get to the hospital and patient/public views on improving parking at the hospital.

Two separate surveys and an observation visit were carried out by Enter and View Representatives from Brighton and Hove LINK. The two surveys were carried out on Friday mornings and the observation visit on a Saturday morning. On reflection these were not the best times to carry out a survey as they were not the busiest times at the hospital, in the case of the first survey on a Friday morning 4 day clinics had been cancelled.

Some 62% of people surveyed travelled to the hospital by car, of these 48% parked their car on the street or were dropped off by a friend or relative. Of those people who parked in the North Car Park most said they usually had to queue for between 20-40 minutes before gaining access. Those who parked on the street or were dropped off at the hospital, did so because their previous experience had been that there were no available spaces in front of the Barry Building or there had been long delays in accessing the North Car Park.

As a result of these problems in parking when attending the Hospital either as a visitor or as a patient, people are having to allow extra time when travelling for an appointment or visit. In some cases patients have been late for their appointment through no fault of their own.

Views on hospital parking in this report are based on a relatively low number of questionnaire respondents (77) to 2 separate surveys of whom, 54.5 % were patients.

- In addition a LINK volunteer informally visited the North car park and surrounding roads in order to get an impression of the area.
- The surveys give a very limited picture not least because they were undertaken after 10 am on the morning of 05.11.10, and also on 11.03.11, a Friday afternoon when 4 outpatient clinics had been cancelled so fewer people than usual were in the Outpatients dept.
- The independent visit took place on a Saturday morning 16.04.2011 when there were unlikely to be large numbers of car park users.
- 11 (14 %) of the people in the survey complained of very long waiting times at the car park and therefore having to queue for some time. This contributed to the stress they were already experiencing, especially if they then arrived late for their appointment. This influenced their decision regarding mode of transport to the hospital in future.

- 57% of the people expressing an opinion about car park charges thought that they were unreasonable.
- Only 30% thought that the charges were reasonable, and 13% did not know. However, it must be noted that some people choose to park at the Royal Sussex County Hospital (RSCH) and go into town from there because it is cheaper than parking in the town centre – these users might well say that charges are reasonable.
- The major redevelopment plan for the hospital includes only 200 extra parking spaces. Given that there are already serious parking problems, and the new build will result in more patients, visitors and staff this seems unlikely to be sufficient.
- The proposed 691 vehicle parking spaces across the whole site is below that which would be allowed as a maximum by Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) if the full standard entitlement were to be used. With approximately 3,300 staff at any one time, and approximately 600 beds, the parking provision could be increased to 2,250 parking spaces. The total quantum of vehicle spaces being requested for the site as a whole represents just 31% of this total permissible allocation.

3. Introduction

The LINK is a statutory body established in 2008 under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. It is an independent network of people and groups who help make social and health care better in their local area. The LINK helps people have their say and makes sure that what they say is listened to. The LINK has powers to monitor and investigate issues relating to publicly funded health and social care.

The Department of Health (DH) (Sept 2010) is aware that access to, and charging for hospital car parking is an important issue for patients and their visitors. Some people are unhappy about the principle of being charged to park their vehicle when accessing NHS services, as they believe it contradicts the principle that NHS treatment is free at the point of delivery. Others are unhappy about the level of charges imposed. Provision of spaces and level of charges is currently a matter for individual hospital trusts, taking account of their local circumstances. DH guidance in line with recommendations made by the Health Select Committee advises that concessions should be offered to protect frequent users of NHS services. Concessions may be either reduced rate or free provision, under qualifying criteria set by local managers. This guidance has no statutory provision although Trusts are expected to take account of it.

The LINK elected to undertake this piece of work as a result of a number of individuals raising concerns about access to parking at RSCH. To obtain data direct from patients, carers, staff and visitors, the LINK agreed to undertake 2 surveys in order to collect the views of people whilst they were directly using the services. These were:-

- Based around people queuing at the North car park.
- In the Outpatients department in order to ascertain what proportion of people had come by car and identify those who had experienced difficulty in accessing the North car park in the past.
- A visit by a LINK volunteer was carried out to view the layout of the North car park, its entrance/exit arrangements and the surrounding road network.

The LINK enter and view team of authorised representatives are fully trained and all have completed an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check.

The LINK had already recommended that more information was provided on the BSUHT website on car parking and charges and concessions and this was implemented.

The results were gathered on 05.11.10 and 11.03.11 and 16.04.2011 at the Royal Sussex County Hospital (RSCH) which is part of the Brighton and Sussex University Hospital NHS Trust (BSUHT).

A report by Siobhan Ryan, health reporter for the Argus newspaper also highlighted concerns from staff, patients and residents around car parking at RSCH. (See appendices)

4. Background

BSUHT currently has 480 car parking spaces with 72 dedicated to patients and 73 to hospital staff and vehicles and 335 shared between everyone. The multi-storey has 20 disabled bays located on Level 6 which gives direct access into the hospital and 6 dedicated renal bays for regular renal patients.

The hospital has installed new digital car park signs in Eastern Road which tell people how many spaces there are and how long they will have to wait.

There is limited access to the A&E forecourt with 4 drop-off bays and 2 disabled bays.

At the front of the main hospital site there is a pay and display car park for patients and visitors only - this has 12 disabled bays outside the Physiotherapy Department (Latilla building) and 5 disabled bays by the car park entrance.

Car parking charges apply to all users, including those who are disabled.

The hospital has attendants working at the car parking sites to help ease traffic flow and guide drivers to the right spot.

There is a considerable amount of pay and display parking located in the roads around the hospital including from 2 hours limited parking, 4 hours limited parking and 11 hours parking.

There are several bus stops that serve this site on Eastern Road. Routes 1, 1A, 7, 14B, 23, 37, 37B, 40X, 47, 52, 57, 71, 73, 90, 94A, N7, N99 All stop outside the hospital.

The redevelopment plans for the southern half of the RSCH will bring the total on site vehicle parking to 691 - approximately 31% of the total amount permissible under BHCC parking standards. This is 200 more vehicle spaces than at present. Additionally, there will be 180 cycle parking spaces. There will also be improved drop-off facilities at a frontal point off Eastern Rd.

Some concessions for car park fees are available on site for the following people: -

- The Sussex Cancer Centre has their own car park for daily visitors (for radiotherapy, chemotherapy, out-patients, etc). They used to charge £1 to park for a day (01273 696955 ext. 4901).
- The Renal department (01273 696955 ext. 7624) does help out some of their patients with parking in the multi-story car park on the RSCH site. Contact extension.

- Disabled patients do not have any sort of discounted parking on either hospital site (RSCH or Princess Royal Hospital in Haywards Heath).
- Some people on benefits can claim back parking fees (see Appendices)
- If a person applies to be a volunteer for the BSUH Trust and gets accepted, they can apply for a BSUH parking permit - and this will be free of charge.

The Patient Transport Department provided the following information on help for disabled patients:

“Due to the high demand for patient transport, we screen booking requests and only grant it to those who meet the criteria. Basically, if the patient has a mental or physical condition that prevents them from being able to use public transport / taxis and this can be verified by their GP or hospital consultant then they will be provided with transport. Patients cannot request transport themselves; If it is their first referral to hospital the GP is responsible for booking/funding transport and for subsequent appointments, the hospital department the patient is attending.”

Patient Transport at Bluebird Community Partnership, operate a booking service with Volunteer Car Drivers, any one will qualify for Medical Transport, however it does depend on the availability of the Volunteer Driver. Patients can access the service by calling 01444 417919 after 9.30a.m.

5. Methodology

Results were gathered from questionnaires completed by patients, carers, staff and visitors which are recorded in the Results Section of this Report.

More in-depth observations were recorded by Enter and View representatives. Enter and View is a legal right of the LINK and means the observing of the delivery of health and social care services and collecting the views of people whilst they are directly using those services. It is a legal right of the LINK to be able to enter publicly funded services.

In addition, a LINK volunteer visited the North Car Park on a separate occasion in order to note the layout and occupancy of the bays.

Limitation of results

The total questionnaire survey size was 77 people. Although this gives a good indication of people's experiences with car parking at RSCH, it cannot be seen to be a significant sample. Furthermore the results are based on 'snapshots' from 2 occasions which may not be typical.

However it does demonstrate representative views of people using the RSCH.

The separate site visit to the North Car Park was undertaken on a Saturday morning when it was unlikely to be very busy.

- People would be less likely to be using it as a cheap place to park while they go to work elsewhere in Brighton.
- There would not be many / any clinics being held in Outpatients.
- Most visitors would be expected to come in the afternoon or evening.

However, this did provide the opportunity for a thorough check on the occupancy of marked disabled and renal parking bays.

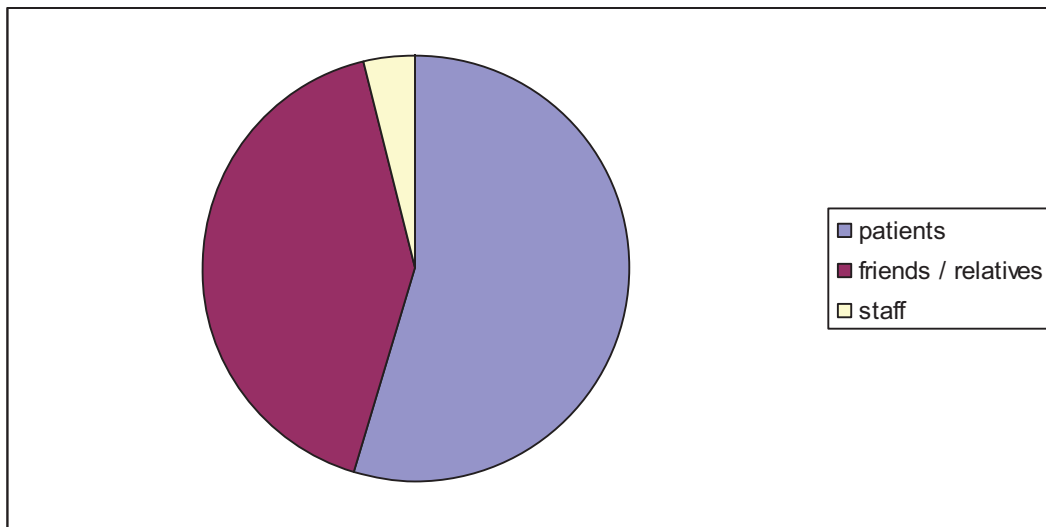
The RSCH Transport Bureau and Transport Coordinator were contacted for further information, as was Patient Transport at Bluebird Community Partnership.

6. Results

Q1. Are you?

a patient	42
non paid carer	0
relative/friend	32
staff	3

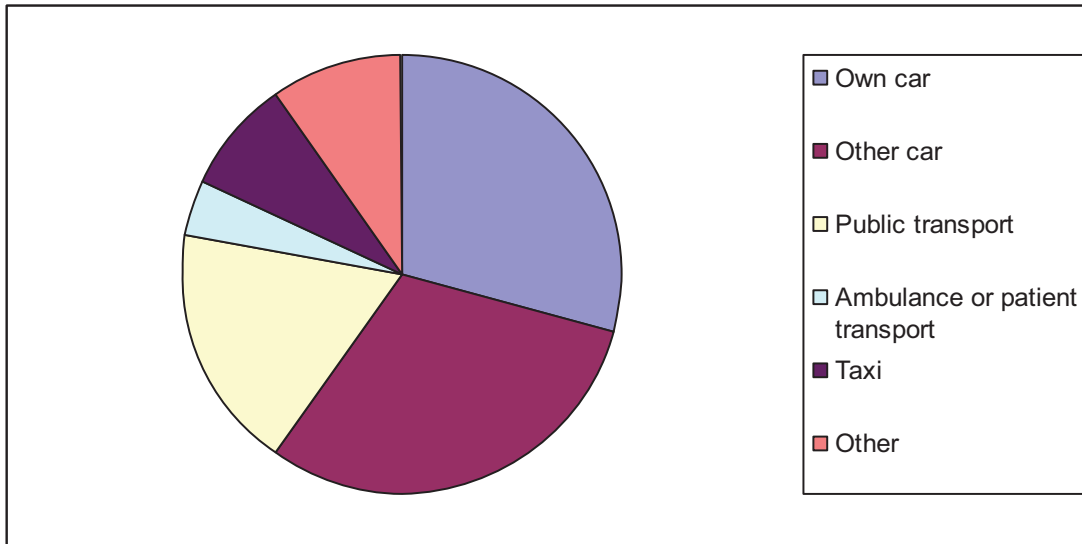
Of 77 respondents 54.5 % were patients.



Q2. Which mode of transport did you use to get here?

Your car	21
Other car	22
Public transport	13
Ambulance or patient transport	3
Taxi	6
Other	7

Approximately 56% (43 / 77) had travelled to the hospital by car on this occasion.



Q3. Are you registered disabled?

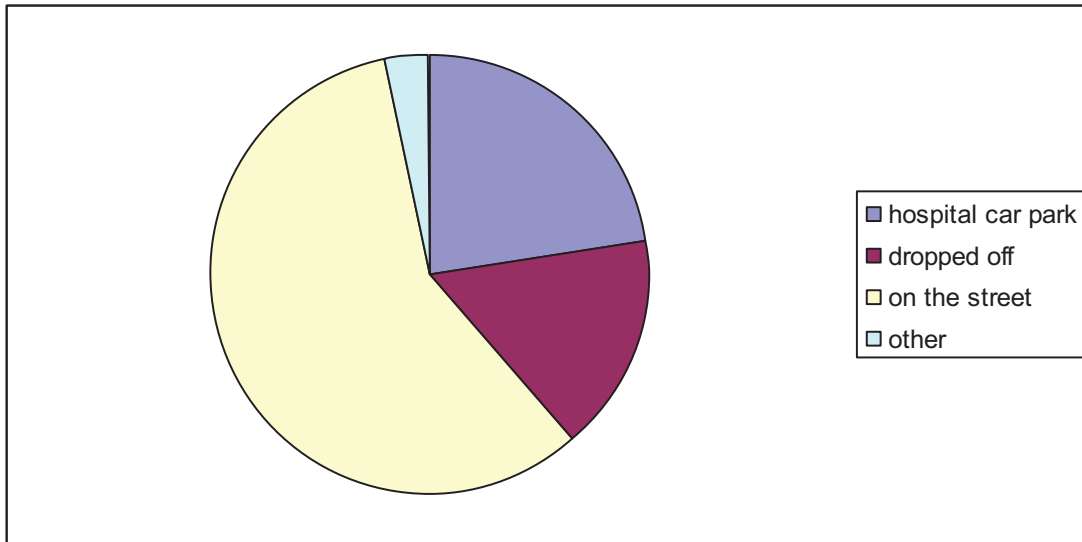
Yes	8
No	63
No response	6

Approximately 13% (8 out of 63) of those who responded were disabled.

Q4. If you came by car, where did you park?

hospital car park	7
dropped off	5
on the street	18
other	1

Approximately 23% (7 out of 31) had parked in the hospital car park.



Q5. If you came by car, how long did you wait to park today?

less than 5 minutes	19
5-10 minutes	12
half an hour	4
40-50 minutes	0
an hour	1
more than an hour	0

47 % (17 of 36) had to wait more than 5 minutes to get into the car park.

11 people in the survey (14%) complained of very long waiting times and having to queue.

Q6. Have you been offered any help parking, from parking attendants etc?

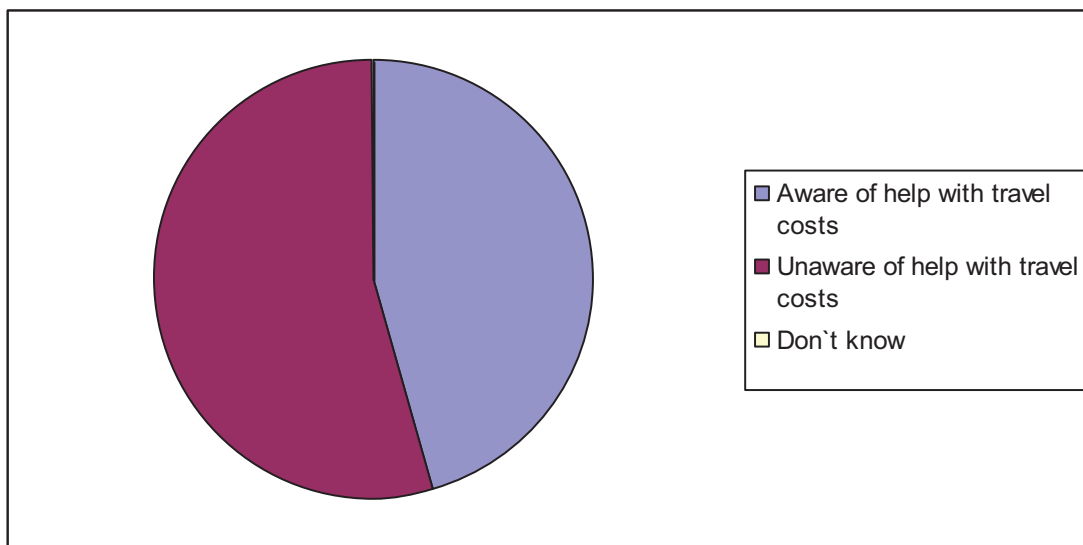
Yes	5
No	31

Most people (86%) had not been offered any assistance with parking.

Q7. Are you aware that if you are on a low income or benefits you may be entitled to reclaim your travel costs, to and from hospital?

Yes	30
No	36
Don't know	0

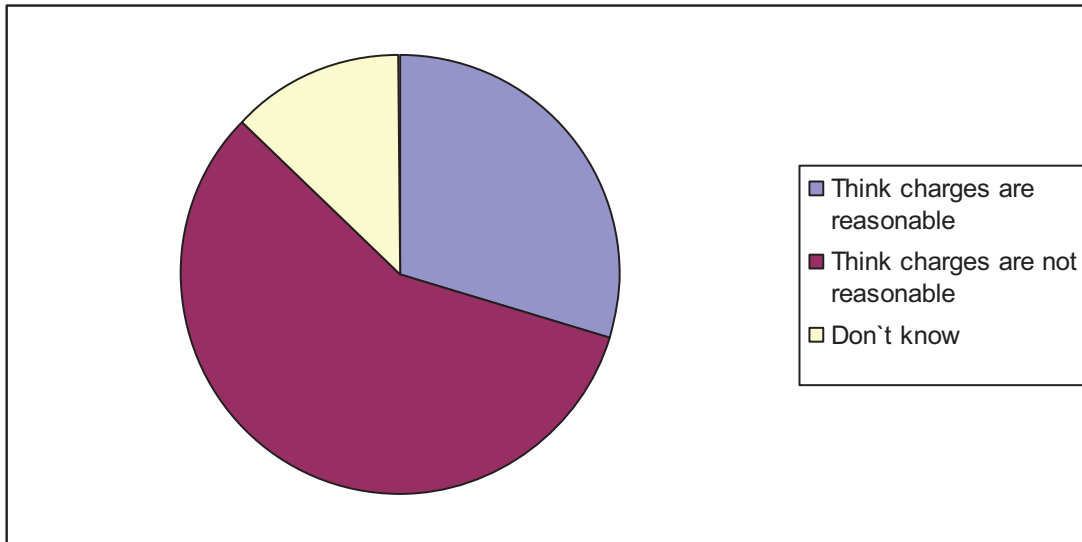
More than half the people surveyed (55%) were unaware that those on low incomes might be able to reclaim travel costs to and from hospital.



Q8. Do you think the car parking charges are reasonable? (0 – 2 hours £2.00, 2 – 4 hours £3.00, 4 – 6 hours £4.00)

Yes	14
No	27
Don't know	6

57% of the total thought that the charges were unreasonable while only 30% thought that they were, and 13% did not know.

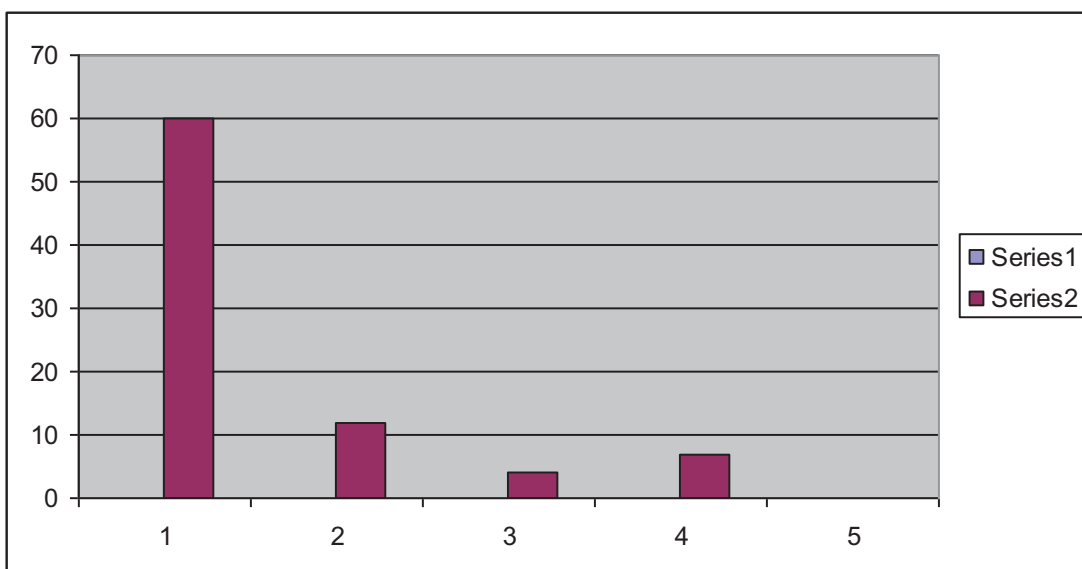


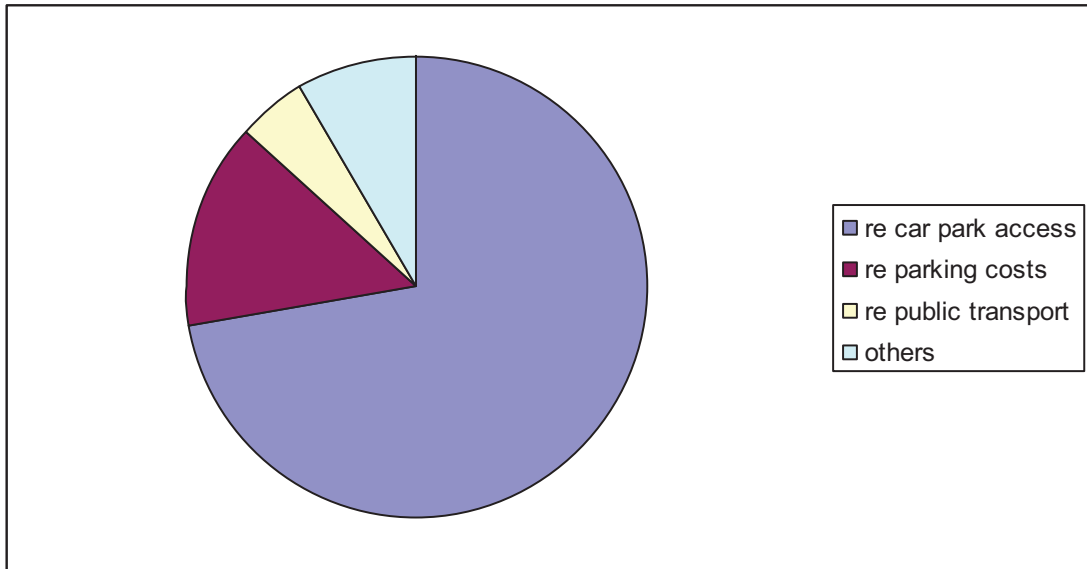
Q9. What do you think could be improved with car parking at this hospital?

This provided an opportunity for people to express their own views, complaints and ideas.

There were 83 suggestions in total - 10 repeated more than once. They were organised into 4 categories:-

1. Car parking access = 60 = approx 72% of the total comments.
2. Parking costs = 12 = approx 15% of the total comments.
3. Public transport = 4 = approx 5% of the total comments.
4. Others = 7 = approx 8% of the total comments.





Observations during informal visit to the North Car Park:

- No Parking attendants were seen during the 90 minutes while the volunteer was present.
- The car park was approximately one third full with many empty spaces.
- 13 Disabled spaces were occupied by cars which were not displaying either a blue badge or a yellow renal patient card. This was despite there being plenty of other empty spaces to choose from. (These spaces are near exit doors for easier access).

7. Recommendations

1. SPACE

The Which? Report states that around ½ of hospital car park users have had a very stressful visit made worse because they could not find a space.

This is borne out by the results of our survey.

The major redevelopment plan for RSCH includes only 200 extra parking spaces.

1a. This number needs to be increased to a more realistic level.

2. ACCESS to North Car Park

2a. Create a one way through road in from Bristol Gate along the North Access Rd leaving via Whitehawk Hill. This would allow quicker access and reduce users` frustration. The area of the turning roundabout could then be used for extra disabled parking bays.

If the queue were on the right hand side of the road, trapped drivers who decide to leave can make their escape. This would reduce waiting times. It would also be within the hospital grounds and not clogging up surrounding roads. However, it would involve the cost of switching round the entry/exit barriers and some repositioning of the disabled bays just inside the car park.

2b. Improved signage would help users.

2c. Attendants could go through the queue seeking out blue badge holders in order to `fast track` them in when there are free disabled spaces in the car park.

2d. Provide more disabled parking bays outside the Barry building – some blue badge holders would not then need to queue at the North car park, and they might also be nearer to the departments that they are visiting making access easier for them.

2d. Have someone regularly check the disabled parking bays in the North Car Park and the few outside A&E to move unauthorised drivers on and ensure that those who need the bays can get into them.

2e. Display prominent signs on the wall in front of each disabled bay on the hospital site stating that unauthorised users may be clamped or fined if they ignore them and occasionally do this.

2f. Investigate the possibility of setting up a Park and Ride for staff, patients and visitors. This would relieve pressure at RSCH and the surrounding area (possibly sited at Black Rock or Brighton Race track).

3. CHARGES

Charges must be fair and cover the cost of running the car park but without generating a profit.

3a. Concessions for patients who visit regularly should be reconsidered e. g. renal patients have to spend many hours a week at the hospital and should not have to pay for parking while visiting the dialysis unit.

3d. Concessions should be widely advertised in car parks, patient literature to ensure that patients are aware that they may be entitled to reclaim travel costs.

3e. Reimburse patients for additional parking fees when appointments are excessively delayed or have a fixed rate charge if a way can be found to identify those car park users who are genuinely going to the hospital.

3f. Investigate possibility of concessionary fares on buses for staff.

8. References

- RSCH Website information re transport and parking plus email responses from Geoff Britten and Nina Aynsleigh-Marshall.
- Site map of RSCH
- RSCH site map of car parks.
- Siobhan Ryan; Health reporter comments
- Brighton 3T`s Transport Assessment report: Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals. March 2009.
- Brighton 3T`s Redevelopment Transportation Presentation: Hospital Liaison Group Meeting. 11th October 2010
- Which? campaign for improved hospital car parking.
<http://www.which.co.uk/campaigns/food-and-health/hospital-car-parks---have-your-say/get-involved-with-our-car-park-campaign/>
- DH document Sept 2010. NHS Car Parking: Response to Consultation
- LINK Report on Car parking charges at District General Hospital, Eastbourne and Conquest Hospital. Hastings. (Issue nos: IR 31 and IR 32)

9. Appendices

9a Questionnaire used at North car park

Tell us what you think about car parking at the Royal Sussex County Hospital



Who is asking these questions?

Brighton and Hove Local Involvement Network (LINK) is the independent Health and adult social watchdog for the city. We are a network of local people (volunteers) and organisations who want to improve local health and social care services. LINKs have legal powers and can influence health and social care that is funded by the public.

What will the LINK do with answers to these questions?

Your opinions will be taken seriously, and will help to bring about positive change in the way local services are run.

Who can complete this survey?

Anyone who lives or uses the services in Brighton or Hove.

Do I have to give my name and contact details?

No, you don't have to give your details. However, If you want to be entered

Q1. Are you?

- a patient
- non paid carer
- relative/friend
- staff

Q2. Are you or your passenger/s registered disabled?

Which mode of transport did you use to get here?

- your car
- other car
- public transport
- ambulance or patient transport
- other

Q3. Are you registered disabled?

- Yes
- No

Q4. If you came by car, where did you park?

- hospital car park
- dropped off
- on the street
- other

Q5. If you came by car, how long did you wait to park today?

- less than 5 minutes
- 5-10 minutes
- half an hour
- 40-50 minutes
- an hour
- more than an hour

Q6. Have you been offered any help parking, from parking attendants etc?

- Yes
- No

Q7. Are you aware that if you are on a low income or benefits you may be entitled to reclaim your travel costs, to and from hospital?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q8. Do you think the car parking charges are reasonable? (0 – 2 hours £2.00, 2 – 4 hours £3.00, 4 – 6 hours £4.00)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q9. What do you think could be improved with car parking at this hospital?

Thank you for taking the time to answer our questions!

If you would like to be kept informed of what improvements or changes will be made as a result of this survey please complete your contact details.

9b. Copy of Questionnaire used at Outpatients Department

Tell us what you think about car parking at the Royal Sussex County Hospital



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Q1. Are you?

- a patient
- non paid carer
- relative/friend
- staff

Q2. Which mode of transport did you use to get here?

- your car
- other car
- public transport
- ambulance or patient transport
- other

Q3. Are you registered disabled?

- Yes
- No

Q4. If you came by car, where did you park?

- hospital car park
- dropped off
- on the street
- other

Q5. If you came by car, how long did you wait to park today?

- less than 5 minutes
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Q6. Have you been offered any help parking, from parking attendants etc?

- Yes
- No

Q7. Are you aware that if you are on a low income or benefits you may be entitled to reclaim your travel costs, to and from hospital?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q8. Do you think the car parking charges are reasonable? (0 – 2 hours £2.00, 2 – 4 hours £3.00, 4 – 6 hours £4.00)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

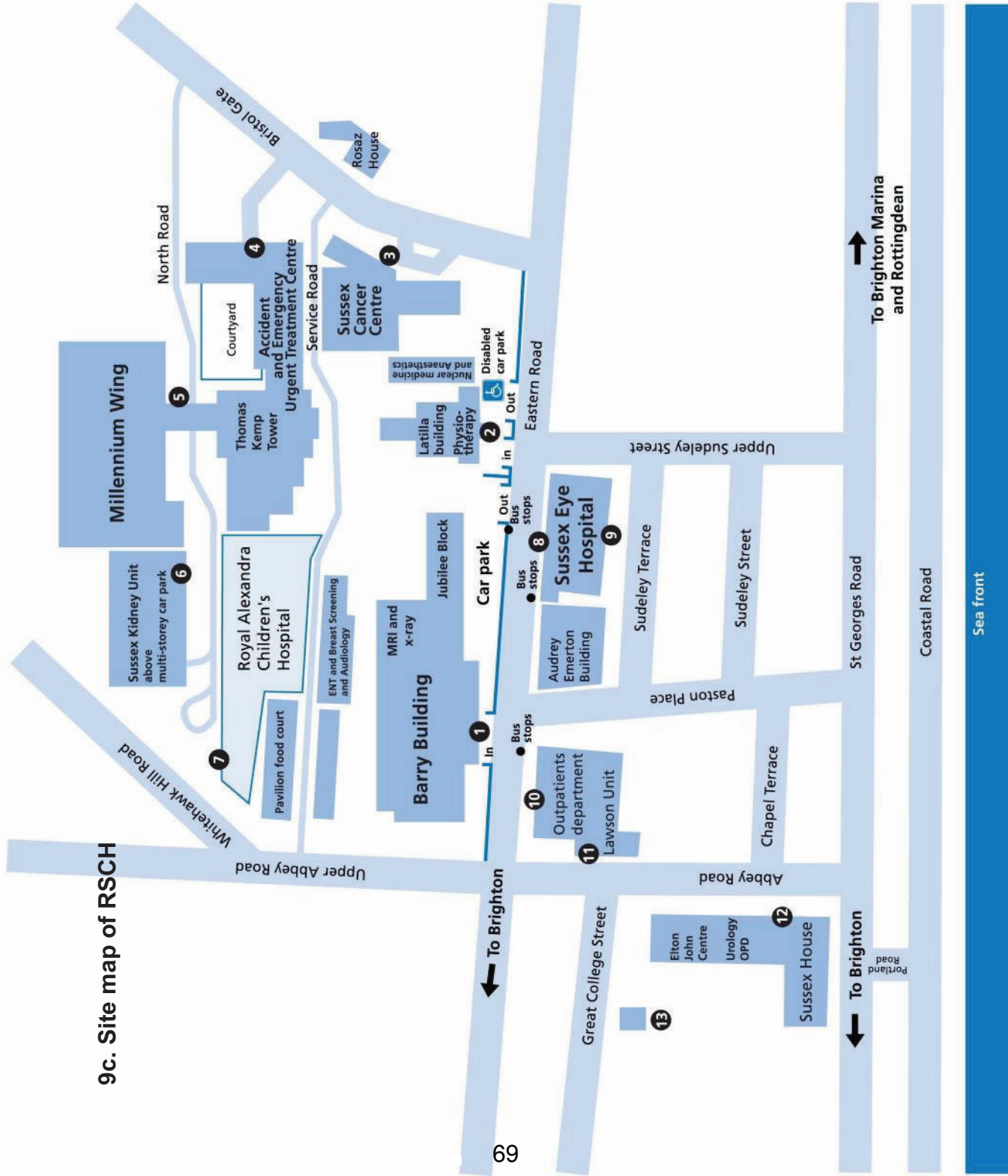
Q9. What do you think could be improved with car parking at this hospital?

Thank you for taking the time to answer our questions!

If you would like to be kept informed of what improvements or changes will be made as a result of this survey please complete your contact details.

Site maps of the Royal Sussex County Hospital, the Royal Alexandra Hospital and the Sussex Eye Hospital

9c. Site map of RSCH



- 1. Main Eastern Road entrance** for most wards, x-ray and MRI, breast unit, ENT and audiology outpatients and cardiology.
- 2. Latilla entrance** for physiotherapy and rheumatology outpatients.
- 3. Cancer Centre entrance** for chemotherapy and radiotherapy.
- 4. Emergency entrance and Thomas Kemp Tower** for accident and emergency, maternity, CT scanning, orthopaedic outpatients.
- 5. Millennium Wing** for cardiac surgery, orthopaedic surgery and digestive diseases.
- 6. Sussex Kidney Unit** and multi-storey car park.
- 7. Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital**
- 8. Sussex Eye Hospital entrance for eye inpatients** (via Eastern Road).
- 9. Sussex Eye Hospital entrance for eye outpatients** (via Sudeley Terrace).
- 10. Outpatients Department** for most medical and surgical outpatients, diabetes, blood tests, colposcopy and genito-urinary medicine.
- 11. Lawson Unit.**
- 12. Sussex House** for urology (including outpatients), Clinical Media Centre and the Elton John centre.
- 13. Sussex House Mobile Breast Screening Unit.** At the back of car park, access via Abbey Road.

9d.

Brighton 3T's Transport Assessment report: Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals. March 2009

<http://tiny.cc/rjf08>

9e.

RSCH Website information re transport and parking:

<http://www.bsuh.nhs.uk/hospitals/our-hospitals/royal-sussex-county-hospital/#RSCH-parking>

9f.

Help with travel costs

<http://www.bsuh.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/coming-into-hospital/help-with-travel-costs/>

9g.

Brighton 3T's Redevelopment Transportation Presentation: Hospital Liaison Group Meeting. 11th October 2010

<http://tiny.cc/2qjo5>

9h.

Siobhan Ryan; Health Argus article on car parking

<http://tiny.cc/5bfnn>

9i.

Which campaign for improved hospital car parking.

<http://www.which.co.uk/campaigns/food-and-health/hospital-car-parks---have-your-say/get-involved-with-our-car-park-campaign/>

9j.

Department of Health document Sept 2010. NHS Car Parking: Response to Consultation

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Responsestoconsultations/DH_119457

9k.

East Sussex LINK Report on Car parking charges at District General Hospital, Eastbourne and Conquest Hospital. Hastings. (Issue nos: IR 31 and IR 32)

<http://www.thecountylink.net/upload/reportofsurvey-Feb09.pdf>