

Patient exemption checking

Communications toolkit for
pharmacy teams in England

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Summary

From 1 September 2021, the temporary signature suspension is being lifted. This means that any time a patient makes a declaration that they are entitled to free or reduced cost NHS prescriptions they must sign the prescription token or FP10 form and produce evidence.

More information and full guidance is available on the ***NHSBSA website***.

Key messages

- From 1 September 2021, any time a patient makes a declaration that they are entitled to free or reduced cost NHS prescriptions, the pharmacy must ask them to sign the prescription token or FP10 form and to produce evidence. This is a legislative requirement under your terms of service.
- You must keep your patient records up to date and record and submit their valid exemption correctly. **Visit our website** for information and guidance on patient exemptions and your contractual obligations.
- If a patient incorrectly claims free NHS prescriptions and they subsequently aren't able to prove their exemption, they could face a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) of up to £100, as well as the original prescription charge.
- Receiving a PCN incorrectly can cause inconvenience and distress for a patient. Pharmacy staff already play a key role in checking prescriptions and this toolkit will help to support you.

Short copy (116 words)

From 1 September 2021, any time a patient makes a declaration that they are entitled to free or reduced cost NHS prescriptions, the pharmacy must ask them to sign the prescription token or FP10 form and to provide evidence.

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) has produced fresh guidance to help primary care contractors understand their legislative requirements, follow the correct procedure, and provide support to patients.

Not all benefits entitle people to free prescriptions. Patients can find out if they're entitled to free NHS prescriptions, NHS dental treatment and help with other NHS costs using the **online eligibility checker**.

Full guidance and information for pharmacy contractors and dispensing doctors is available on the **NHSBSA website**.

Long copy (395 words)

From 1 September 2021, any time a patient makes a declaration that they are entitled to free or reduced cost NHS prescriptions, the pharmacy must ask them to sign the prescription token or FP10 form and to produce evidence.

In response to the pandemic, and to help limit the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care approved a temporary measure in England to suspend the need for patients to sign prescription forms. The suspension was initially for a period of five months and was later extended to 31 August 2021.

The aim of the suspension was to protect primary care staff and patients, avoid cross-contamination and help minimise the handling of paperwork when collecting medicines or receiving dental and eye care.

The temporary signature suspension has now been lifted.

This means that, from 1 September 2021, any time a patient makes a declaration that they are exempt from paying for NHS prescriptions and treatment, pharmacy contractors and dispensing doctors must:

- ask to see evidence of their eligibility
- ask them to sign the declaration box on the paper FP10/Token
- specify the correct exemption category and indicate whether evidence was seen when submitting an EPS claim
- note on their point of care system if the patient shows a valid exemption certificate, along with the expiry date of the certificate.

This is a legislative requirement under your terms of service.

To coincide with the move, the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) has produced fresh guidance to help primary care contractors understand their legislative requirements, follow the correct procedure, and provide support to patients.

The rules around entitlement to free or reduced cost NHS prescriptions can be confusing. It's important to remember that not all benefits entitle people to help with their health costs.

Guidance for pharmacy contractors also includes making sure the patient has ticked the correct exemption box on the reverse of the FP10 or token, submitting the FP10 token in a timely manner, and information about Real Time Exemption Checking (RTEC) - an NHS electronic system which allows pharmacies to immediately check if a patient is eligible for free prescriptions.

Full guidance and information for pharmacy contractors and dispensing doctors is available on the ***NHSBSA website***.

For information about help with health costs, visit: ***www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-help-health-costs***

Information for patients about exemptions and the online eligibility checker can be found here: ***www.nhs.uk/CheckBeforeYouTick***

Suggested social media content

Suggested posts for communicating with pharmacy teams:

- # Any time a patient makes a declaration that they are entitled to free or reduced cost NHS prescriptions, the pharmacy must ask them to sign the prescription token or FP10 form and to produce evidence.
Visit: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/pharmacy-exemptions

- ♥ Is your patient exempt from paying for NHS prescriptions and treatment? The NHSBSA has produced guidance to help pharmacies understand their legislative requirements, follow the correct procedure, and provide support to patients.
Visit: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/pharmacy-exemptions

Suggested posts for patient facing channels:

- # Not all benefits entitle people to free or reduced cost NHS prescriptions. Find out if you're entitled using the online eligibility checker: www.nhs.uk/CheckBeforeYouTick
#CheckBeforeYouTick

- ♥ Are you entitled to free NHS prescriptions? Use the online eligibility checker to find out what you're entitled to.
Learn more: www.nhs.uk/CheckBeforeYouTick
#CheckBeforeYouTick

Social media images



Not all benefits entitle people to free prescriptions

Exemptions guidance for pharmacists:
www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/pharmacy-exemptions



Download



Not all benefits entitle people to free prescriptions

Find out if you're entitled using the online eligibility checker:
www.nhs.uk/CheckBeforeYouTick



Download



Is your patient exempt from paying for NHS prescriptions?

Exemptions guidance for pharmacists:
www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/pharmacy-exemptions



Download

Printable posters and leaflets

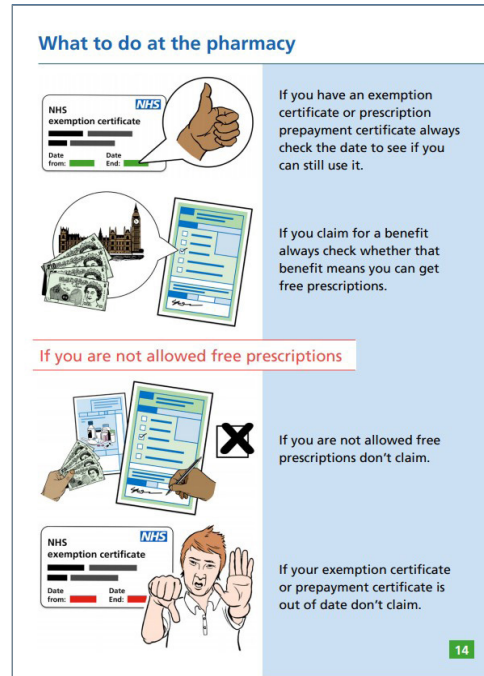
A series of patient-facing printable posters and leaflets are available to download from our website. These can be displayed in waiting rooms and high footfall areas.

Prescription 'check before you tick' leaflet




Download

Prescription 'check before you tick' easy read leaflet



Download

Universal Credit A4 poster



Universal Credit

Not everyone getting Universal Credit is entitled to free prescriptions. You're only entitled if your earnings during your **last assessment period** were:



- £435 or less
- £935 or less if your Universal Credit includes a payment for a child or you have limited capability for work


'Last assessment period' means the assessment period that ended immediately before the date you claim a free prescription.

As your earnings can change each assessment period, we recommend using the online eligibility checker every time you pick up a new prescription.

If you claim Universal Credit as a couple, the earnings limit applies to the joint income of you and your partner. Your earnings are shown on your statement as 'Your total take-home pay for this period'.

If you're eligible for free prescriptions because you get Universal Credit and your latest earnings are under the threshold, tick box U on the back of your prescription.






See if you're entitled to free prescriptions by going to www.nhs.uk/checkbeforeyoutick and using the free eligibility checker.

 Download

Universal Credit A5 flyer



Universal Credit



Not everyone getting Universal Credit is entitled to free prescriptions. You're only entitled if your earnings during your **last assessment period** were:


- £435 or less
- £935 or less if your Universal Credit includes a payment for a child or you have limited capability for work or work-related activity

'Last assessment period' means the assessment period that ended immediately before the date you claim a free prescription.

If you claim Universal Credit as a couple, the earnings limit applies to the joint income of you and your partner. Your earnings are shown on your statement as 'Your total take-home pay for this period'.

If you're eligible for free prescriptions because you get Universal Credit and your latest earnings are under the threshold, tick box U on the back of your prescription.





See if you're entitled to free prescriptions by going to www.nhs.uk/checkbeforeyoutick and using the free eligibility checker.

 Download

Digital resources

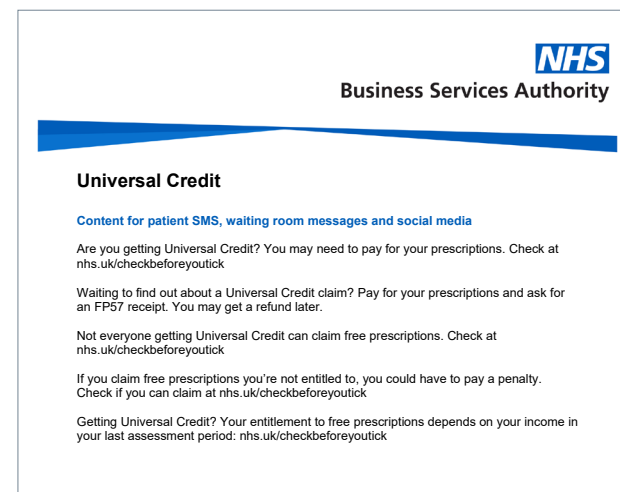
You can download digital resources to use across your digital platforms, including websites, social media channels and waiting room display screens.

Universal Credit waiting room screens



 Download

Universal Credit SMS and waiting room content



 Download

Contact

If you have any questions, comments or you receive any media enquiries, please contact the NHSBSA communications team:

 ***nhsbsa.communicationsteam@nhs.net***