

Communications toolkit:

Supporting your service users to understand eligibility to free NHS treatment

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Summary

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) is helping patients understand their eligibility for free NHS prescriptions and NHS dental treatment by encouraging them to use our free **online eligibility checker**.

There are many reasons why someone might be entitled to free NHS prescriptions and dental treatment. Following the recent rise in the number of people claiming Universal Credit (UC), we're particularly committed to making new UC claimants aware that they could be entitled to help with their NHS health costs.

We're also working to challenge the assumption that all benefits automatically entitle someone to free NHS prescriptions and dental treatment, as this is not accurate and can lead to patients receiving a penalty charge notice.

The best and easiest way to be sure that you can claim for free is to use the online eligibility checker at **www.nhs.uk/checkbeforeyoutick**.

If someone uses the eligibility checker and finds out they aren't entitled to free NHS treatment, there are other ways they might be able to get help with their NHS health costs, such as the NHS Low Income Scheme or a prescription prepayment certificate (PPC). We would like you to help us spread the message within your networks and with your clients and customers. The materials and resources in this toolkit will help people understand the rules around eligibility and support them to claim free treatment correctly.

Key messages

- Claims to Universal Credit (UC) have significantly increased during the pandemic. New UC claimants can check if they're eligible for free NHS prescriptions and dental treatment by using the NHSBSA's free online eligibility checker.
- Not all benefits entitle someone to free NHS treatment. You can make sure that you're entitled before you claim by using the NHSBSA's free online eligibility checker.
- If someone isn't eligible for free treatment through UC, they might be able to get help with their NHS health costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme. Find out more information at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme

Short copy (109 words)

Use this information in your newsletters, updates, blogs, or any other way you communicate with your service users.

People claiming Universal Credit are being encouraged to check if they're exempt from paying certain NHS charges.

Universal Credit claims have increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the latest government statistics showing that almost six million people* are now claiming the benefit.

If you're receiving Universal Credit, the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) is making it easier for you to find out what additional NHS support you're entitled to.

The online eligibility checker, available at www.nhs.uk/checkbeforeyoutick, tells you within minutes if you're eligible for free NHS prescriptions, NHS dental treatment and help with other NHS costs.

*5.9 million people on Universal Credit as of 8 July 2021 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/universal-credit-statistics-29-april-2013-to-8-july-2021/universal-credit-statistics-29-april-2013-to-8-july-2021>)

Long copy (336 words)

Use this information in your newsletters, updates, blogs, or any other way you communicate with your service users.

People claiming Universal Credit are being encouraged to check if they're exempt from paying certain NHS charges.

Universal Credit claims have increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the latest government statistics showing that almost six million people* are now claiming the benefit.

If you're receiving Universal Credit, the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) is making it easier for you to find out what additional NHS support you're entitled to.

The online eligibility checker, available at www.nhs.uk/checkbeforeyoutick, tells you within minutes if you're eligible for free NHS prescriptions, NHS dental treatment and help with other NHS costs.

Brendan Brown, director of Citizen Services at the NHSBSA, said: "There's a mistaken assumption that everyone claiming Universal Credit is automatically entitled to free NHS prescriptions, and that they don't have to pay NHS dental and optical charges. However, someone would only be exempt from paying these NHS charges if their earnings are within the defined threshold.

"With so many claiming Universal Credit for the first time, we're here to help people understand if they are entitled to free healthcare and how to claim correctly to avoid a possible penalty charge notice."

People claiming Universal Credit qualify for free prescriptions and dental treatment if their earnings during their last assessment period

(also known as take home pay) were £435 or less, or £935 or less if their Universal Credit includes a payment for a child or they have limited capability for work or work-related activity.

Universal Credit claimants whose working hours and income vary each month may drop in and out of eligibility, which is why it's important to use the online checker regularly.

Other financial support may be available for people whose earnings are over the threshold, such as the NHS Low Income Scheme or by purchasing a prescription pre-payment certificate (PPC).

A PPC covers the cost of all NHS prescriptions, regardless of how many you need.

Find out what you could be entitled to at [**www.nhs.uk/checkbeforeyoutick**](https://www.nhs.uk/checkbeforeyoutick)

Apply for a PPC at: [**www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/ppc**](https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/ppc)

Find out more about the NHS Low Income Scheme at: [**www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme**](https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme)

*5.9 million people on Universal Credit as of 8 July 2021 ([**https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/universal-credit-statistics-29-april-2013-to-8-july-2021/universal-credit-statistics-29-april-2013-to-8-july-2021**](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/universal-credit-statistics-29-april-2013-to-8-july-2021/universal-credit-statistics-29-april-2013-to-8-july-2021))

Suggested social media content

Use these suggested social media posts and images to promote the message on your social media channels. You can also follow **@NHShealthcosts** on twitter and **@NHSBSAHelpWithHealthCosts** on Facebook and share our content.



Have you started claiming Universal Credit?

You may be eligible for free NHS prescriptions and dental treatment. Use the @NHSBSA's free online checker to find out if you're entitled.

Check if you can get help: **www.nhs.uk/checkbeforeyoutick**



Can you claim free NHS prescriptions and dental treatment?

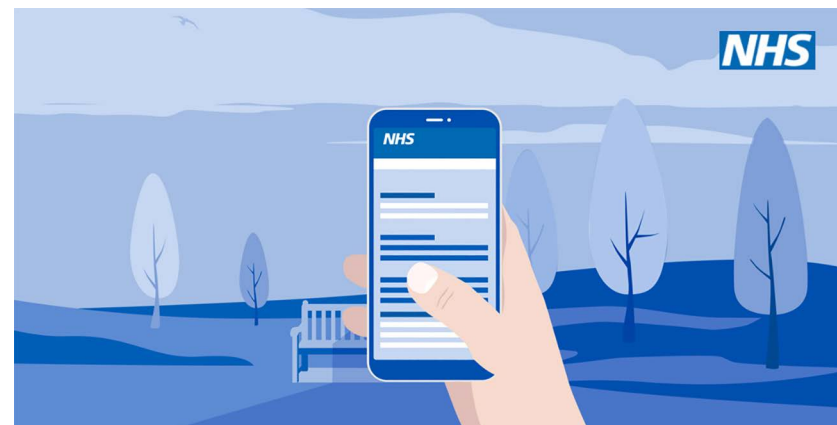
Use the @NHSBSA's online eligibility checker to find out: **www.nhs.uk/checkbeforeyoutick**



The NHS Low Income Scheme could help you pay for NHS prescriptions, dental treatment, sight tests and more.

Find out more: **www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme**

Social media images



Printable posters and leaflets

Print posters, leaflets and more from our website. Large print, easy read and BSL versions of our leaflets are also available. These can be displayed in community spaces, offices, and high footfall areas, and can be used to answer questions your service users may have about eligibility.

Check before you tick posters and leaflets:



NHS

Are you claiming free prescriptions?

Don't assume you're entitled.

You could have to pay up to £100 – as well as your prescription charge.

Check before you tick



NHS

Are you claiming free dental treatment?

Don't assume you're entitled.

If you claim when you're not entitled, even by mistake, you could face a penalty charge of £100 plus the cost of your treatment.

See inside for more information.



Check before you tick



NHS

Are you signing for free prescriptions?

You should check you are allowed free prescriptions.

easy read



If you are not allowed them and have signed for them, then you might have to pay a £100 penalty charge as well as the cost of the prescription.




NHS
Business Services Authority

Claiming free NHS dental care?



An easy read guide about who can have free NHS dental care and what happens if you wrongly claim.

Universal Credit A4 poster:



Universal Credit

Not everyone getting Universal Credit is entitled to free prescriptions and dental care. 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 free prescriptions or treatment.


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 meet these conditions, you're also entitled to:

- free NHS sight tests
- free NHS wigs and fabric supports
- help with the cost of glasses or contact lenses
- refunds of necessary travel costs to receive NHS treatment




Opening up work.



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

Universal Credit A5 flyer



Universal Credit

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


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Opening up work.



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Digital resources

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

Universal Credit waiting room screens

NHS

Universal Credit and free prescriptions



Don't assume you're entitled. You could have to pay up to £100 – as well as your prescription charge.

UC Universal Credit
Opening up work

This is a waiting room screen for NHS Universal Credit. It features the NHS logo at the top right. The main heading is 'Universal Credit and free prescriptions'. Below this is an illustration of various medicines (a bottle, a box, a tube, and pills) with a red sign that says '£100 penalty charge'. The text below the illustration reads: 'Don't assume you're entitled. You could have to pay up to £100 – as well as your prescription charge.' At the bottom right, there is the 'UC Universal Credit' logo and the slogan 'Opening up work'.

NHS

Universal Credit and free treatment



Don't assume you're entitled. You could have to pay up to £100 – as well as your treatment charge.

UC Universal Credit
Opening up work

This is a waiting room screen for NHS Universal Credit. It features the NHS logo at the top right. The main heading is 'Universal Credit and free treatment'. Below this is an illustration of dental hygiene products (toothpaste, toothbrush, floss) with a red sign that says '£100 penalty charge'. The text below the illustration reads: 'Don't assume you're entitled. You could have to pay up to £100 – as well as your treatment charge.' At the bottom right, there is the 'UC Universal Credit' logo and the slogan 'Opening up work'.

Contact

For questions, comments or support please contact the NHSBSA communications team at



nhsbsa.communicationsteam@nhs.net