

Protecting  
your NHS



***Point of Dispensing checks***  
***– a guide for pharmacists,  
dispensing doctors and  
their staff***

Revised by the NHS CFSMS



Counter Fraud Service

Please ensure that every member of staff who has responsibility for advising patients on completing form FP10 is fully acquainted with the contents of this guide.

As a pharmacist or member of pharmacy staff, you are required to ask patients if they have evidence to support their claim for exemption from prescription charges.

As a dispensing doctor or a member of their staff, or as an appliance contractor or hospital pharmacist, you are also required to carry out these checks.

*The term 'patient' is used throughout this guide to refer to both patients and customers, as appropriate.*

**Please direct any queries about this document to the NHS CFSMS Operational Project Team; email: [opt@cfsms.nhs.uk](mailto:opt@cfsms.nhs.uk)**

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Reducing loss of valuable NHS funds

The NHS Counter Fraud and Security Management Service (NHS CFSMS) has responsibility for all policy and operational matters related to the prevention, detection and investigation of fraud and corruption and the management of security in the National Health Service.

The strategic document *Countering Fraud in the NHS*, published in December 1998, sets out the comprehensive, integrated and professional approach to tackling all levels of fraud and corruption in the NHS.

**The high-level aims of the NHS CFSMS are:**

- **to protect the NHS by ensuring that resources intended for patient care and services are not lost to fraud or corruption, attaching the highest importance to working within a clearly defined professional and ethical framework and to winning the support of all those who provide or use NHS services**
- **the delivery of an environment for those who use or work in the NHS that is properly secure so that the highest possible standard of clinical care can be made available to patients.**

Point of Dispensing (PoD) checks were first introduced in April 1999. Checks on entitlement to exemption from NHS patient charges have proved very successful as part of the NHS strategy of reducing patient prescription fraud.

Results from risk measurement exercises show losses to patient prescription charge evasion reduced by 41% to below £70 million between November 1998 (before the checks were introduced) and July 1999 (after they were implemented).

Similar checks introduced by dentists in November 2000 helped to reduce patient evasion of NHS dental charges by 25% between March 2000 and January 2001. Checks introduced by opticians in February 2001 helped to reduce patient evasion of NHS optical charges by 23% between 2000 and 2002.

But there is still more that needs to be done to deter people from prescription charge evasion. The NHS CFSMS is determined to ensure that patient knowledge of the charge exemption process continues to improve, whilst also enhancing expertise and knowledge in pharmacies and dispensing practices. PoD checks will continue to be an important tool in deterring patient prescription fraud under the new initiatives introduced as part of the NHS Plan.

## 1.2 What are Point of Dispensing (PoD) checks?

These are checks carried out at the point of dispensing (PoD) to check if patients have evidence of their entitlement to free prescriptions. As a pharmacist or member of pharmacy staff<sup>1</sup>, you are required to ask patients if they have evidence to support their claim for exemption from prescription charges. As a dispensing doctor or a member of their staff<sup>2</sup>, or as an appliance contractor or hospital pharmacist, you are also required to carry out these checks.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'member of pharmacy staff' includes all counter assistants and other staff situated within the primary and secondary care pharmacy environment.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'dispensing doctor or a member of their staff' includes all counter assistants and other staff situated within a primary or secondary care pharmacy environment.

You should carry out a PoD check at the time a patient signs the form to declare that they do not have to pay NHS prescription charges.

**There is no question of refusing to dispense the prescribed item to patients who sign an exemption claim but do not have evidence with them. If patients are unsure whether they are entitled to free prescriptions, you should advise them to pay for their prescriptions and give them a receipt (FP57), in case they want to claim a refund later.**

**You will not be held responsible if patients do not provide evidence, or if they provide evidence which is false. If you are in any doubt as to whether the evidence is genuine or appropriate, you should mark the 'Evidence not seen' box on the back of the prescription form with an 'X'.**

**You are in no way responsible for the accuracy of the patient's declaration; this remains the responsibility of the patient. Patients found to have wrongly claimed help from the NHS with the cost of their NHS prescriptions will face a penalty charge and, in some cases, prosecution.**

£12.6 million was added to the global sum for pharmaceutical services in recognition of the effect of the introduction of PoD checks on the global value of the services provided by pharmacy contractors. This was negotiated and agreed with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC), which continues to support the programme.

### **1.3 Terms of Service for pharmacists**

Pharmacists and their staff are required under Paragraph 7(3) of their Terms of Service (see Schedule 1 Part 2 of the NHS (Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2005) to ask a person presenting a prescription form whether they have evidence to support their claim to exemption from prescription charges. Paragraph 5(a) of the Doctors' Terms of Service in Schedule 1 Part 3 of the regulations places a similar requirement on dispensing doctors and their staff.

The PSNC and British Medical Association (BMA) have fully supported the introduction and continued operation of PoD checks.

PoD checks are important as they ensure compliance with the Terms of Service. It is also important that they are used consistently; if patients are not routinely asked to produce evidence when making exemption claims, they may be less understanding when they visit a pharmacy or dispensing doctor that does follow the agreed procedures. Therefore, it is in the interests of the professions and the NHS to ensure that evidence is requested as a matter of routine.

## 1.4 The NHS CFSMS Operational Project Team

In September 2002, as part of its continued strategy to reduce NHS patient fraud, the NHS CFSMS created the Operational Project Team (OPT) (formerly the Patient Check Compliance Unit) with a remit to raise awareness of, and compliance with, Point of Service, Point of Dispensing and Point of Treatment checks in England and Wales.

**The main objective of the OPT is to ensure that, whenever a patient claims to be exempt from NHS charges, the correct procedure is followed to obtain evidence of that exemption.**

To achieve this objective, the OPT has engaged in a national programme of visits to pharmacies, dental practices and optical outlets, offering support and guidance to staff in relation to exemption checks.

The OPT also offers a unique opportunity for frontline NHS contractors to influence policy on all issues relating to patient charge exemptions, by using the comments and feedback provided by contractors to inform policy decisions and develop new and improved publicity material.

If its monitoring gives rise to concerns, the OPT may refer the matter to the health professional's Primary Care Trust (PCT). Normally, the PCT will examine the circumstances with the health professional and, where appropriate, offer further guidance and training. PoD checks are a mandatory requirement of pharmacists' Terms of Service. Where there is evidence of a breach of the Terms of Service, formal proceedings may be considered. PCTs are responsible for ensuring that any issues surrounding Terms of Service are resolved; in serious cases, the matter could be referred to a PCT disciplinary committee, which could recommend the withholding of funds, or a fine, which could amount to several hundred pounds.

## 1.5 Pharmacy Reward Scheme

The Pharmacy Reward Scheme, introduced in February 2003, allows pharmacists to claim a financial reward if they have identified and retained a fraudulent or stolen prescription form, thereby preventing fraud, or if they have provided valuable information to the investigation of fraud by reporting the incident.

If you identify what you reasonably believe to be a fraudulent or stolen prescription form, you may refuse to dispense under Regulation 59 of the NHS (Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2005. You may then claim a reward under the scheme provided the conditions set out in Part XIV of the Drugs Tariff are met. If you have dispensed, you can still claim a reward but, when making the claim, you will need to clarify why you felt unable to retain the form.

To make a claim under the Pharmacy Reward Scheme, you should contact the Prescription Pricing Authority (PPA) on 0191 203 5734 or 0800 068 6161.

## 1.6 Post-payment verification checks

All NHS prescriptions dispensed in the community are collated and processed by the PPA. Claims for exemption from prescription charges may be subject to post-payment verification checks, which are administered locally by the PCT.

If it is found that prescription charge exemption has been claimed incorrectly by the patient or their representative, the PCT may recover the original charge and impose a penalty charge in accordance with the Health Act 1999.

## 1.7 Where to obtain further information

The next section contains a list of people entitled to free prescriptions.

Further guidance, leaflets and posters are available in electronic format by visiting [www.cfsms.nhs.uk](http://www.cfsms.nhs.uk) and clicking on the logo shown below:



Other sources of information about patient exemption checks are detailed at the end of this guide, in the 'Useful contacts at a glance' section.

## 2 Entitlement to free prescriptions

### 2.1 NHS prescription charge exemption categories

The following categories of people are eligible for exemption from NHS prescription charges. These apply to patients only and are set out in the NHS (Charges for Drugs and Appliances) Regulations 2000:

- patients under 16
- patients aged 16, 17 or 18 in full-time education
- patients aged 60 or over
- patients with a valid NHS Prescription Charge Certificate – Maternity Exemption, showing that they are expectant mothers or have given birth within the last 12 months
- patients with a valid medical exemption certificate or an NHS Prescription Charge Certificate – Medical Exemption, issued from 1 October 2002
- patients with a valid NHS Prescription Charge Certificate – Pre-Payment Certificate
- patients with a valid exemption certificate showing that they receive a War Pension; exemption applies only for drugs and appliances to treat the disablement for which the certificate has been awarded.

### 2.2 NHS prescription charge remission categories

The following categories of people are eligible for remission of NHS prescription charges (this is set out in the NHS (Travelling Expenses and Remission of Charges) Regulations 1988 (as amended). The patient or partner may have made the claim for the qualifying benefit/credit and both of them will be entitled to free prescriptions. On the prescription form, you should ask for the name of the person receiving the benefit/credit because the patient may not be the recipient:

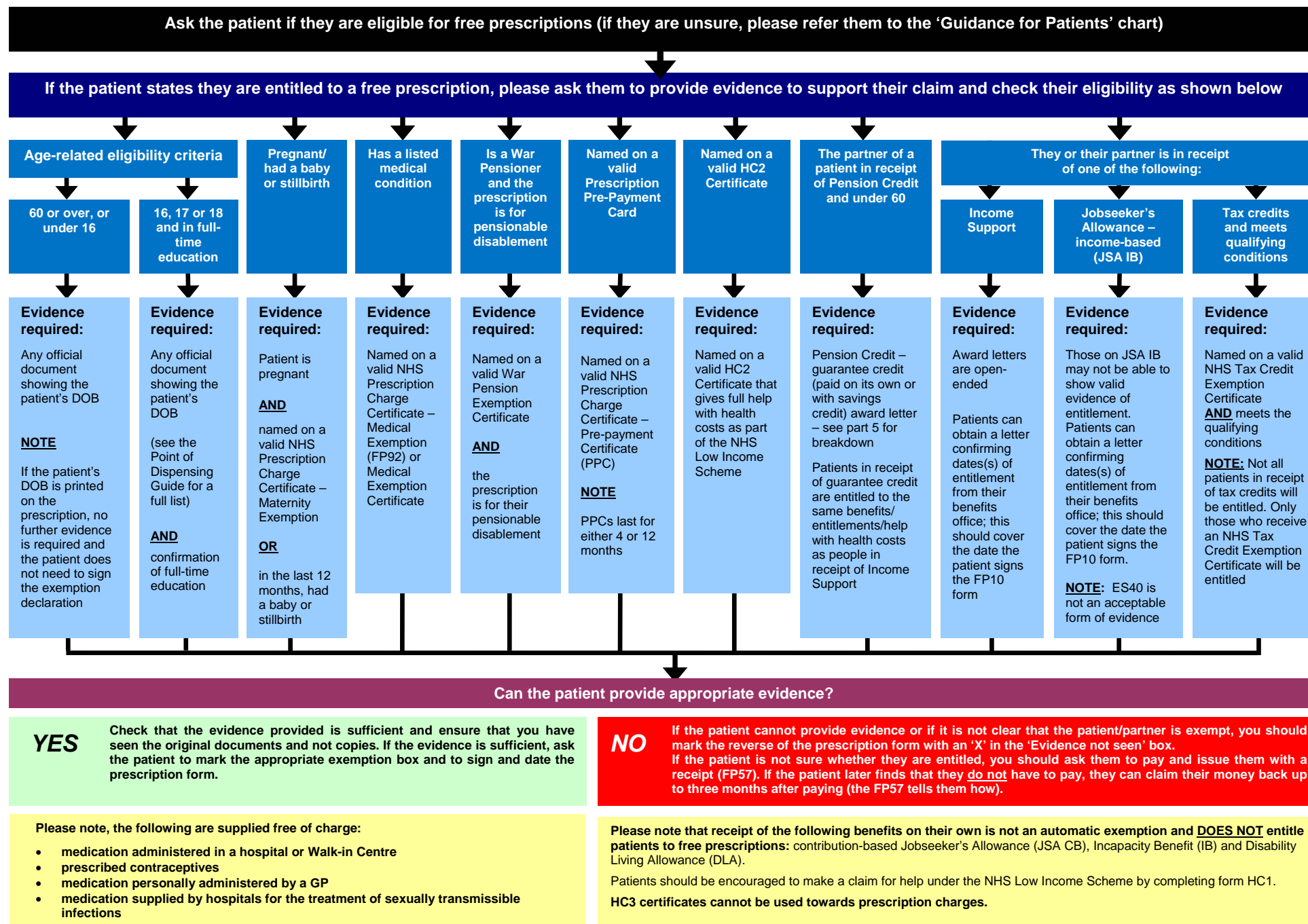
- patients (or their partners<sup>3</sup>) receiving Income Support
- patients (or their partners) receiving Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based)
- patients who are aged under 60 and the partner of a patient in receipt of Pension Credit – guarantee credit
- patients named on a valid NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate (if a partner is included in the claim, he/she will receive their own certificate)
- patients (or their partners) named on a valid NHS Low Income Scheme HC2 Certificate.

**The Civil Partnership Act became law on 18 November 2004 and came into force on 5 December 2005. The Act creates a new legal relationship of civil partnership, which two people of the same sex can form by signing a registration document. It is only available to same sex couples and is not the same as marriage; however, it does allow same sex couples to claim state benefits as a couple and, therefore, to obtain help with health costs as a couple.**

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<sup>3</sup> We use the term 'partner' to refer to someone who has a joint claim for a qualifying benefit; the partner must be named on the entitlement notice or exemption certificate to be eligible for help with health costs.

## 2.3 POINT OF DISPENSING CHECKS – ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST



## 3 Asking for evidence

### 3.1 When should evidence be requested?

You must ask patients for evidence when they sign the declaration on the prescription form and claim entitlement to remission of or exemption from prescription charges.

### 3.2 Cases where you do not always need to ask for evidence

**You do not need to ask for evidence if a valid certificate of exemption has already been shown and noted on the Patient Medical Record (PMR); for example:**

- NHS Prescription Charge Certificate – Medical Exemption (FP92)
- NHS Prescription Charge Certificate – Maternity Exemption
- War Pension Exemption Certificate
- NHS Prescription Charge Certificate – Pre-Payment Certificate
- NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate.

**Apart from the War Pension Certificate, which is for an indefinite period, all the above certificates have an expiry date. You should make a note of the type of certificate and its expiry date and should always check the PMR for this purpose.**

**You do not need to request evidence of exemption if the patient is:**

- under 16, and their age and date of birth are printed on the prescription, or the PMR shows that the patient's date of birth has previously been verified
- over 60, and their age and date of birth are printed on the prescription, or the PMR shows that the patient's date of birth has previously been verified.

**If the date of birth has been computer-generated on the prescription form or appears as part of an electronic prescription message (ETP), there is now no need for the patient to make the exemption declaration. Those patients claiming exemption on age grounds but whose date of birth is handwritten will have to continue to make a signed declaration. This also applies if the ETP does not contain the date of birth.**

### 3.3 Cases where evidence is always required

**You should always ask for evidence from patients who claim exemption because:**

- they are under 16, but their date of birth is not printed on the prescription and there is no record of the patient's date of birth on the PMR
- they are over 60, but their date of birth is not printed on the prescription and there is no record of the patient's date of birth on the PMR
- they or their partner is in receipt of Income Support, Pension Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based)
- they or their partner claim to hold a valid exemption certificate that has not previously been recorded on the PMR.

## Front of prescription form FP10 (England)

The image shows the front of a prescription form FP10 (England). The form has a blue background with a repeating pattern of small circles. A large, diagonal watermark reading "SPECIMEN" is overlaid on the center. A dashed black line points from a text box on the right to a circle around the "Age" and "DOB" fields in the top section.

Pharmacy Stamp

Age

Title, Forename, Surname & Address

DOB

Please don't stamp over age/DOB

Number of days' treatment

N.B. Ensure dose is stated

Endorsements

Signature of Prescriber

Date

For dispenser  
No. of  
Prescriptions  
on form

**NHS**

FP10SS0105

**Where the age and DOB is printed here there is no need for the patient to make the exemption declaration or to show any further proof of age.**

## Reverse of prescription form FP10 (England)

FP10SS0105

**NOTE** Patients who don't have to pay must fill in parts 1 and 3. Those who pay must fill in parts 2 and 3. Penalty charges may be applied if you make a wrongful claim for free prescriptions. If you're not sure about getting free prescriptions, pay and ask for an NHS receipt FP57. You can't get one later. The FP57 tells you about getting a refund.

**Part 1** The patient doesn't have to pay because he/she:

- A  is under 16 years of age
- B  is 16, 17 or 18 and in full-time education
- C  is 60 years of age or over
- D  has a valid maternity exemption certificate
- E  has a valid medical exemption certificate
- F  has a valid prescription pre-payment certificate
- G  has a valid War Pension exemption certificate
- L  is named on a current HC2 charges certificate
- X  was prescribed free-of-charge contraceptives
- H  \*gets Income Support (IS)
- K  \*gets income based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA (IB))
- M  \*is entitled to, or named on, a valid NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate
- S  \*has a partner who gets Pension Credit guarantee credit (PCGC)



Mark here with an 'X' if no evidence is provided by the patient.

\*Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ M / F /

\* Print the name of the person (either you or your partner) who gets IS, JSA (IB), PCGC or Tax Credit.

**Declaration**

*For patients who do not have to pay*

I declare that the information I have given on this form is correct and complete. I understand that if it is not, appropriate action may be taken. I confirm proper entitlement to exemption. To enable the NHS to check I have a valid exemption and to prevent and detect fraud and incorrectness, I consent to the disclosure of relevant information from this form to and by the Prescription Pricing Authority, the NHS Counter Fraud and Security Management Service, the Department for Work and Pensions and Local Authorities.

Now sign and fill in Part 3

**Part 2** I have paid £ \_\_\_\_\_ Now sign and fill in Part 3

**Part 3** Cross ONE box I am the patient  patient's representative

Sign here: \_\_\_\_\_ Date / /

Print name and address \_\_\_\_\_

*If different from overleaf* \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

### 3.4 Urgent dispensing

The urgent dispensing of drugs by the pharmacist is clearly defined in paragraph 6 of the Terms of Service; PoD checks should be conducted in accordance with this provision.

When a patient or their representative takes a prescription form to a dispensing outlet, they are required to complete the form to indicate the amount of the charge and to provide a signed declaration that either the charge has been paid or they are entitled to an exemption.

However, in the case of 'urgent' dispensing, the prescription form will not be available for the patient to complete in the same way.

In the event of drugs being urgently dispensed, you will be required to seek an acceptable alternative declaration from the patient that is in the spirit of that printed on the prescription form. The patient will be required to sign this and the record should be retained for verification.

Patients who complete such a declaration and claim exemption from the prescription charge will be liable for a penalty charge if their claim to exemption is incorrect in exactly the same way as if they had made the declaration on the prescription form.

### 3.5 Repeat dispensing

Patients who are eligible for repeat dispensing (RD) will have a 'master prescription' and a batch of repeat dispensing forms. The master will be kept by the pharmacist for the lifetime of the RD and the repeat forms will either be kept by the patient or retained by the pharmacist.

When a patient first presents an RD form, you should ask them whether they are exempt from prescription charges. If the patient claims to be exempt from NHS prescription charges, you should ask for valid evidence to support their claim. Patients should sign the declaration of exemption on the RD form.

If the patient presents valid evidence of exemption, you should keep a record of this on the PMR to refer to on the patient's subsequent RD visits.

If there is an accurate record of a patient's exemption on the PMR, evidence need not be provided for RD on subsequent visits, except in the case of patients claiming exemption under Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based). Patients receiving either of these benefits should be asked to provide evidence on each occasion to ensure their continued entitlement.

If you are in any doubt as to whether the evidence is genuine or relevant, you should dispense and simply mark the 'Evidence not seen' box with an 'X'.

### 3.6 Prescription collection services

The following guidance is applicable to any scheme that involves a pharmacy receiving or collecting prescription forms from a doctors' surgery at the request of a patient or their representative rather than directly from the patient or their representative.

You should be aware that your Terms of Service still require you to conduct PoD checks on patients requesting to be part of any prescription collection service.

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) has published guidance about the specific mechanics of prescription collection services in *Fact Sheet: Seven – Prescription Collection, Home Delivery and Repeat Medication Services*. The RPSGB Code of Ethics Service Specification 7 clearly requires a pharmacy to have written authorisation to receive and dispense a patient's prescription and we would suggest that such written authorisation should contain a declaration by the patient to confirm and prove their eligibility for help with NHS health costs.

All declarations of exemption and proof supporting such claims should be recorded on the PMR and reviewed on a regular basis as appropriate. In certain circumstances, such as a patient holding a valid medical exemption certificate, this will remove the need to ask the patient or their representative for evidence on every occasion.

However, in the case of Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based), you should ask the patient or their representative to provide evidence of their exemption on every occasion. This is because eligibility for these benefits can change on a fairly frequent basis.

### **3.7 Home delivery services**

A home delivery service is one that dispenses medicines to a patient or their representative somewhere other than the registered pharmacy premises; this applies to all delivery schemes and includes the use of rural collection points.

You should be aware that your Terms of Service still require you to conduct PoD checks on patients who request that their prescription is delivered to their home or to a collection point other than at the registered pharmacy premises.

The RPSGB has published guidance about the specific mechanics of home delivery services in *Fact Sheet: Seven – Prescription Collection, Home Delivery and Repeat Medication Services*. The RPSGB Code of Ethics Service Specification 8 clearly requires a pharmacy to have an audit trail from the original request for the service to each delivery made or attempted. We would suggest that you implement a standardised form for patients who ask to be included in the home delivery scheme. This form should contain a declaration by the patient to confirm their eligibility for help with NHS health costs.

All declarations of exemption and evidence supporting such claims should be recorded on the PMR and reviewed on a regular basis as appropriate. In certain circumstances, such as a patient holding a valid medical exemption certificate, this will remove the need to ask the patient or their representative for evidence on every occasion.

However, in the case of Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based), you should ask the patient or their representative to provide evidence of exemption on every occasion.

## 4 What evidence is appropriate?

The following section lists the documentary evidence required to prove entitlement to help with NHS prescription charges for each exemption/remission category.

The items of evidence listed should be generally available, but you should bear in mind the fact that some patients may be unable to provide certain items. For example, parents may be unwilling to allow a young person to carry a Child Benefit award letter to confirm their date of birth. Furthermore, the list is not exhaustive and patients may produce other forms of verification. You may use your discretion and accept alternative evidence if, in your opinion, it clearly establishes the grounds for claiming exemption from prescription charges. **Only original documents are acceptable, not photocopies.**

If you are in any doubt about the acceptability of the evidence offered, simply mark the back of the prescription form with an 'X' in the 'Evidence not seen' box and dispense in the normal way.

**You should also mark the 'Evidence not seen' box if a patient is clearly not entitled but, despite advice, insists on claiming and signs the declaration on the form.**

***You are not responsible for the accuracy of the patient's declaration; this remains the responsibility of the patient.***

### 4.1 Patients under 16

The majority of patients will have their date of birth and age included on the printed prescription forms and no further evidence is needed.

**If the date of birth has been computer-generated on the prescription form or appears as part of the ETP, there is now no need for the patient to make the exemption declaration. Those patients claiming exemption on age grounds but whose date of birth is handwritten will have to continue to make a signed declaration. This also applies if the ETP does not contain the date of birth.**

You need not request evidence if the patient is obviously under 16. If valid evidence has been shown, a note of this should be made on the PMR. There is then no need to request evidence on any subsequent occasion before the patient's 16th birthday.

You must ask for evidence of age whenever the prescription is hand-written and there is no record on the PMR that evidence has previously been seen – whether the date of birth is stated on the prescription or not.

If you are in any doubt about the patient's stated age or the validity of evidence, you should mark the 'Evidence not seen' box with an 'X'.

#### **Examples of acceptable evidence of age:**

- birth certificate
- Child Benefit entitlement notice
- NHS medical card – some PCTs no longer issue NHS medical cards
- passport
- travel concession card.

## 4.2 Patients aged 16, 17 or 18 and in full-time education

Patients who state that they are aged 16, 17 or 18 and in full-time education should provide you with evidence of their date of birth and educational status when seeking exemption from NHS charges.

If a young person is in qualifying, non-advanced, full-time education<sup>4</sup>, Child Benefit will be payable until their 19th birthday. The patient should show you a valid Child Benefit entitlement letter as evidence.

If the patient does not get Child Benefit, they should show proof of their date of birth (unless this is printed on the prescription form or has already been recorded on the PMR).

Young people in advanced education, i.e. post A-level, are not eligible for Child Benefit. They will need to produce evidence confirming their date of birth and that they are in full-time education.

Patients who are in receipt of Child Benefit by Automated Credit Transfer (ACT) directly into their bank or building society account will not necessarily have any proof of ongoing payments. An original award notice may be produced, which confirms the age of the patient.

There is no standard form of evidence which confirms that a patient aged 16, 17 or 18 is in full-time education; however, patients may be able to obtain a confirmatory letter from a school or college. Student Union cards are available to both full-time and part-time students and should not therefore be considered as evidence of entitlement. If there is any doubt, you should mark the 'Evidence not seen' box.

## 4.3 Foreign students studying in the UK who are entitled to access NHS primary care services

Under current regulations, anyone who comes to the UK to pursue a full-time course of study of at least six months' duration, or a course of study of any length that is substantially funded by the UK Government, will be deemed as ordinarily resident and fully entitled to free NHS hospital treatment in England. They are also eligible to access other NHS primary care services, such as pharmacy, dental and optical services.

In common with those ordinarily resident in the UK, anyone who meets the criteria of ordinarily resident, or who is covered by the scenario outlined above, will have to pay statutory NHS charges, e.g. prescription charges. However, they may qualify for exemption from such charges, just as those who are ordinarily resident would, if they meet the standard exemption criteria outlined in this guide.

In the case of a foreign student aged 16, 17 or 18 and in full-time education who is deemed to be ordinarily resident in the UK, the patient should provide you with evidence of their date of birth and educational status when seeking exemption from statutory NHS charges. If there is any doubt, or the patient cannot provide such evidence, you should mark the 'Evidence not seen' box on the prescription form.

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<sup>4</sup> The patient must be receiving full-time instruction from a recognised educational establishment, such as a school, college or university. To be a 'recognised establishment', the place of study must have a Department for Education and Skills (DfES) establishment number and be registered on the DfES database.

#### 4.4 Foreign students studying in the UK who are not entitled to access NHS primary care services

Students from countries with which the UK holds bilateral healthcare agreements who are studying in the UK for less than six months will only be entitled to free NHS hospital treatment if it is needed promptly (i.e. emergency treatment) for a condition that arose after their arrival in the UK. This applies to the patient's spouse and children (under the age of 16, or 19 if in further education) if they are living permanently with the patient in the UK for the duration of the patient's course. Those covered by the circumstances described are **not**, however, entitled to access non-emergency NHS primary care services without paying for them.

If the patient is here to study for less than six months on a course that is not substantially funded by the UK Government and they are from a country with which the UK does not hold a bilateral healthcare agreement, they will be charged in the same way as a private patient for any non-emergency treatment they receive at NHS primary care practices.

#### 4.5 Patients aged 60 or over

The majority of patients aged 60 or over will have their date of birth and age printed on the prescription form.

**If the date of birth has been computer-generated on the prescription form or appears as part of the ETP, there is now no need for the patient to make the exemption declaration. Those patients claiming exemption on age grounds but whose date of birth is handwritten will have to continue to make a signed declaration. This also applies if the ETP does not contain the date of birth.**

If a patient claims exemption from prescription charges because they are over 60, the date of birth may already have been recorded on the PMR. If the patient record shows that the date of birth has been confirmed by evidence previously shown, this is acceptable and there is no need to ask for evidence on any subsequent occasion. Valid evidence must show both the patient's name and their date of birth.

If you are in any doubt about the patient's stated age or the validity of evidence, you should mark the 'Evidence not seen' box with an 'X'.

#### **Examples of acceptable evidence of age:**

- birth certificate
- State Retirement Pension/Pension Credit\* entitlement letter
- NHS medical card – some PCTs no longer issue NHS medical cards
- driving licence
- travel card if clearly issued on appropriate grounds of age
- passport.

***\*Partners of patients under 60 years of age will only qualify for free prescriptions if they have been awarded Pension Credit with the guarantee credit element.***

**Patients who receive State Retirement Pension by Automated Credit Transfer (ACT) directly into their bank or building society account will not necessarily have any proof of ongoing payments. An original award notice may be produced, which confirms the age of the patient.**

## 4.6 Maternity exemption


A patient may claim exemption if she is an expectant mother or has given birth within the last 12 months. Valid evidence of exemption is the NHS Prescription Charge Certificate – Maternity Exemption.

The certificate of exemption is valid from the first day of the month in which the application was received, until 12 months after the expected date of birth. A 'valid from' and 'expiry date' are clearly shown on the exemption certificate.

- If the baby is born early, patients can continue to use their exemption certificate until it expires.
- If the baby is born late, patients can apply for an extension.
- If the patient applies for the certificate after the baby is born, it will be valid for 12 months from the baby's date of birth.

To avoid asking for exemption every time the patient needs a prescription, you may wish to make a note of the certificate number and expiry date on the PMR.

### NHS Prescription Charge Certificate – Maternity Exemption

<b>NHS Prescription Charge Certificate</b>			
Certificate Type:	Maternity Exemption		
Certificate No:	12345678900		
Name:	Title First Forename Surname		
Valid from:	03/10/02	Expires end:	02/02/03

Front

This card contains no machine readable data.

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## 4.7 Stillbirths and miscarriages

Women who have had a stillborn baby in the last 12 months are also entitled to exemption.

Legally, stillbirths occur from week 24 of the pregnancy onwards. If a woman has had a stillbirth, she will still have entitlement to exemption from NHS prescription charges until 12 months after the stillbirth. The patient should have a certificate of stillbirth, but she is unlikely to carry it with her.

A loss before week 24 of the pregnancy is classified as a miscarriage. If a pregnancy ends in a miscarriage, the patient is no longer eligible for exemption; the exemption certificate ceases to be valid and must be returned to the health authority.

If the patient is distressed or hesitant, you should not feel that you have to pursue the conversation; remember that the patient is not obliged to produce evidence. Simply mark the 'Evidence not seen' box.

Generally, the patient will still hold an NHS Prescription Charge Certificate – Maternity Exemption; this is acceptable as evidence of exemption until the date of expiry.

To avoid asking for exemption every time the patient needs a prescription, you may wish to make a note of the certificate and expiry date on the PMR.

## 4.8 Medical exemption

It is necessary for a patient to have an NHS Prescription Exemption Certificate – Medical Exemption, not simply a medical condition, to qualify for this exemption.

You should ask the patient for their evidence and note it on the PMR; there is then no need to ask to see evidence again for the duration of the medical exemption.


In practice, it is not always possible to deduce a specified medical condition with certainty from the drug regime, as a drug may be used to treat conditions other than the one specified.

If the patient indicates that they have a qualifying medical condition but does not have a medical exemption certificate, you should provide them with an application form – form FP92A. In the absence of evidence, simply mark the 'Evidence not seen' box on the reverse of the prescription form.

Medical exemption certificates are typically, although not always, valid for five years. A shorter period may be given if, for example, the patient is known to be leaving the country. You are asked to remind patients with a qualifying medical condition from time to time of the need to apply for an exemption certificate and to keep it up to date.

In a small minority of cases, improvements in the patient's health could mean that they lose their entitlement to medical exemption. It is the patient's responsibility to report any improvement in their health to the PPA. You are entitled to accept an exemption certificate as valid evidence until its date of expiry.

## NHS Prescription Charge Certificate – Medical Exemption

<b>NHS Prescription Charge Certificate</b>			
Certificate Type:	Medical Exemption		
Certificate No:	12345678900		
Name:	Title First Forename Surname		
Valid from:	03/10/02	Expires end:	02/02/03

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**Please note: the above certificate has replaced the FP92, which is being phased out and will expire in 09/07.**

### 4.9 Pre-payment certificate


You will be expected to request evidence on the first occasion for patients who claim exemption on the grounds of having a valid pre-payment certificate (PPC) and this, along with the expiry date, should be recorded on the PMR. You do not then need to ask to see the evidence again for the duration of the certificate.

If the PMR indicates that the PPC has expired or is nearing its expiry date, you should advise the patient to apply for a renewal.

If the certificate has expired, you need to ask the patient if they will pay for their prescription. If they say that they are applying for a new PPC, you should dispense their prescription and simply mark the 'Evidence not seen' box on the back of the prescription.

The patient may backdate their PPC up to one month from the date that they apply; otherwise, they may be liable for a penalty charge.

## NHS Prescription Charge Certificate – Pre-Payment Certificate

<b>NHS Prescription Charge Certificate</b>		
Certificate Type:	Pre-payment	
Certificate No:	12345678900	
Name:	Title First Forename Surname	
Valid from:	03/10/02	Expires end: 02/02/03

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### 4.10 War pension

Issuing War Pension Exemption Certificates is now the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence. They were previously issued by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The exemption certificate is only valid for prescriptions in respect of the pensionable disability, which is indicated on the exemption certificate. Other medicines should be paid for.

There have been a number of different versions of the War Pension Exemption Certificate and, as they are only issued once per person, the certificate may differ from patient to patient. If there is any doubt about the validity of the evidence provided, simply mark the 'Evidence not seen' box and dispense as normal.

### 4.11 Income Support

Income Support may be paid by giro cheque or order book, or by Automated Credit Transfer (ACT) directly into a bank or building society account. Some letters and documents issued by the DWP about Income Support, while relating to the patient (or their partner), may not show dates of entitlement and these are **not** acceptable evidence.

Entitlement to Income Support may stop at any time and evidence is only acceptable if it confirms receipt of Income Support **on the date the patient signs the prescription form.**

**Patients can obtain a letter from their Jobcentre Plus office confirming the dates of entitlement.**

## Automated Credit Transfer (ACT)

Patients who are paid by ACT are not issued with any notification of ongoing payment; therefore, you should simply mark the prescription form with an 'X' in the 'Evidence not seen' box.

**Patients can obtain a letter from their Jobcentre Plus office confirming current dates of entitlement.**

## Giro cheque

Most patients paid by giro cheque will have an accompanying letter FF260, FF260A or FF261. As payment is normally two weeks in arrears, these generally only show past entitlement and are, therefore, **not** acceptable evidence.

**Patients can obtain a letter from their Jobcentre Plus office confirming the dates of entitlement.**

## Order book

Patients (or their partners) who are in receipt of Income Support or Pension Credit paid by order book should show their order book as valid evidence of their entitlement to free prescriptions.

Order books show the types of benefit being paid and the period for which the particular benefit is payable. Income Support may be paid in combination with other benefits such as Incapacity Benefit, but all relevant benefits should be shown on the order book.

In addition, all Income Support order books carry a yellow page with information on NHS charge exemptions, entitled 'Help with NHS charges – This is your certificate of exemption'. Please note that this page is not valid evidence on its own if it has been removed from the order book, as it does not confirm identity and payable dates.

#### 4.12 Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based)

There are two types of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) – income-based and contribution-based. It is **only receipt of income-based JSA** that automatically entitles patients (and their partners) to exemption from prescription charges. JSA is paid only by giro cheque or ACT two weeks in arrears; therefore, patients may not always have proof of entitlement.

**The patient may show you their 'signing card' (ES40); this is not an acceptable form of evidence as it does not state which type of JSA the patient receives.**

#### 4.13 Tax credits

##### Working Tax Credit (WTC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC)

Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit replaced Working Families' Tax Credit and Disabled Person's Tax Credit from April 2003. Entitlement to tax credits is based on the family composition and the financial circumstances of the claimant.

Only some of those people entitled to tax credits are also entitled to help with health costs. Broadly speaking, the patients entitled to help are those who, under the old system, would have been entitled to Working Families' Tax Credit and Disabled Person's Tax Credit.

**Not all patients in receipt of tax credits will be entitled to free NHS prescriptions.**

**Patients (and their partners, if applicable) who are entitled to free NHS prescriptions will receive their own NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate.**

**Some single patients and couples without dependant children may be eligible for tax credits.**

Unlike Income Support, tax credits are awarded until the end of the financial year, although patients are required to notify HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) of any changes in their circumstances that may affect their benefit. The award notice (NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate) is valid evidence throughout the period shown on it.

A record of the dates of commencement and expiry of the certificate could be held on the PMR in order to prevent the need to check with the patient on every occasion.

Please note that any young person/s wishing to claim exemption on the basis that they are included in a parent's award for tax credits must ensure that they are named on a valid tax credit assessment notice from HMRC, in addition to the parent holding a valid NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate.

## NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate – accompanying letter



### Prescription Pricing Authority

Mr George Washington  
27 Whitehouse Road  
Monkseaton  
Whitley Bay  
Tyne and Wear  
NE25 2ZZ

Exemption Issue Office  
PO Box 1011  
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE  
NE99 2ZP  
DX 714 179 Newcastle 3

Tel: 0845 609 9299  
Fax: 0191 203 5507  
Web site: [www.ppa.org.uk](http://www.ppa.org.uk)

Our office is open between  
8.00am and 6.00pm

Certificate Number: **10236954236**

30 August 2005

Your ref: **JA372145**

#### Your NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate

Dear Mr Washington

Following your recent claim for tax credits, we have been notified by the Inland Revenue that you and your family meet the conditions for full help with health costs.

Please find attached NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificates for you (and your partner if you have one). The certificate(s) also entitle your child(ren) named to full help with health costs.

Children entitled to full help with health costs:

Georgina Washington  
Delaware Washington

Mr George Washington  
Certificate Number: **10236954236**  
If the above named certificate is not  
attached to this letter – contact us  
on the above number immediately

Please read the notes on the back of this letter carefully. They tell you what help the certificate entitles you to, what to do if you need to claim a refund, or if you need a replacement certificate.

EXEMPTION OFFICE

Mrs Gillian Washington  
Certificate Number: **10236954237**  
If the above named certificate is not  
attached to this letter – contact us  
on the above number immediately


TC01

Chairman: Aisle Gabraiti  
Chief Executive: Nick Sciotto  
Director: Alistair McDowall



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate

<b>NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate</b>			
Certificate No:	12345678900		
Name:	Title First Forename Surname		
Valid from:	03/10/02	Expires end:	02/02/03

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### 4.14 Partners of patients on Pension Credit (guarantee credit) who are under 60 years of age

From 6 October 2003, Pension Credit replaced Minimum Income Guarantee (Income Support for people aged 60 and over). Pension Credit consists of two elements – guarantee credit and savings credit, although Pension Credit awards can be of three types:

- guarantee credit (paid alone)
- savings credit (paid alone)
- guarantee credit and savings credit (paid together).

(Recipients of pension credits aged 60 or over are automatically exempt on age grounds – so this only applies to partners of Pension Credit (guarantee credit) recipients who are under 60.)

**People in receipt of Pension Credit guarantee credit (paid alone or with savings credit) are entitled to the same benefits/entitlements/help with health costs as people in receipt of Income Support. For PoD checks, part 5 of the Pension Credit award notice states which type of Pension Credit the patient has been awarded.**

#### 4.15 NHS Low Income Scheme – HC2 and HC3

Patients who are **not** entitled to help with health costs under any other category may apply for help under the NHS Low Income Scheme. Patients can receive either an HC2 (full help) or HC3 (partial help) certificate. NHS Low Income Scheme forms are available from Jobcentre Plus offices, NHS hospitals and PCTs. Doctors, dentists, pharmacists and opticians may also hold these claim forms.

**HC2** – certificate for full help with health costs. Only the person/s named on a valid HC2 Certificate is entitled to claim exemption from prescription charges.

**HC3** – certificate for partial help with health costs. **HC3 Certificates cannot be used towards prescription charges.**

#### 4.16 Asylum seekers

Asylum seekers have to pay for their prescriptions unless they are entitled to exemption from prescription charges.

Asylum seekers who are supported by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) are automatically sent an NHS Low Income Scheme HC2 Certificate, which entitles them to full help with their health costs, including free prescriptions. Upon expiry of an HC2 Certificate, an asylum seeker will need to contact their case worker to obtain a renewal.

Asylum seekers who are not supported by NASS and are not otherwise entitled to free prescriptions can apply for help under the Low Income Scheme using the claim form HC1.

The Refugee Council will provide an HC1. If there is not a Refugee Council in your area, the patient can get HC1 forms from the nearest Jobcentre Plus office, or by telephoning 08701 555 455.

#### 4.17 Northern Ireland Low Income Scheme

Patients may produce an HC2 Certificate issued by the Northern Ireland Low Income Scheme. They are entitled to full help with their health costs, including free prescriptions, but the certificate may look different as it may be hand-completed and may not bear a serial number. These certificates are acceptable in England as long as they carry a National Insurance Social Security office stamp.

# NHS Low Income Scheme – HC2 Certificate

## HC2 Certificate for full help with health costs

CERT NO.

You will need to quote this number if you have to get in touch with us

VALID FROM

VALID UNTIL

FOR

### ABOUT THIS CERTIFICATE

Using the information you gave us in your HC1 claim for help with health costs, we have worked out that you, and your partner if you have one, are entitled to this certificate for the following:

- free NHS prescriptions
- free NHS dental treatment
- free NHS sight tests
- the full value of a voucher towards the cost of glasses and contact lenses
- free NHS wigs and fabric supports
- refund of necessary costs of travel to receive NHS treatment under the care of a consultant (please note the note overleaf before you travel)

### IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET IN TOUCH WITH US

- always quote your current certificate number and the date by the 'valid from' box above
- if you have any queries about your claim, call us between 8.30 and 5.00 on or write to us at Patient Services, Prescription Pricing Authority, Sandyford House, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 1DB
- if you are not satisfied with our handling of your claim, please write to us at the above address and mark the envelope "Complaint"

### NOTE

We can only give information about your claim to another person with your permission

### HOW TO RENEW YOUR CERTIFICATE

Fill in another HC1 form - you can get one from a Job Centre Plus office, NHS hospital or by phoning our customer enquiry line on 0941 551 1566. Some dentists, opticians or doctors surgeries also have them.

Send it to us about 4 weeks before this certificate runs out. Check the 'valid until' box at the top of this certificate to see when it runs out.

If you apply for and receive a new certificate before this one runs out, you can use whichever one gives you most help. You don't have to use the new one straight away.

### CARE

Keep this certificate in a safe place and take it with you when you need any of the things listed above

## HC2

### USING THIS CERTIFICATE

### NOTE

Improper use of this certificate may lead to prosecution

### Free NHS prescriptions

Before you give your prescription to the pharmacist:

- fill in the back of the prescription form to say why you do not have to pay
- sign the prescription form
- you will be asked to show evidence of your entitlement to free prescriptions. Please show this certificate to your pharmacist or dispensing doctor.

### Free NHS dental treatment

Show this certificate to your dentist and write its number on the form that the dentist asks you to sign.

### Free NHS sight tests

When you go for your sight test, show this certificate and tell your optician that you are entitled to a free NHS sight test. You will be given a GOS1 form to fill in to apply for your free sight test. You will not get one unless you show your HC2 at the sight test.

### Glasses and contact lenses

If you need new glasses or contact lenses, help with the cost is provided through NHS optical vouchers. The value of your voucher will depend on your prescription - the person who tests your sight will be able to tell you how much this is. You can normally see your voucher at any optician, though not all opticians fit contact lenses. This certificate entitles you to the full value of an NHS optical voucher.

If you need new glasses or contact lenses:

- use form GOS1 to apply for an NHS optical voucher when you apply for your sight test
- when you use your voucher show this certificate to whoever supplies your glasses or contact lenses
- if your glasses or contact lenses cost the same as or less than the value of the voucher you will have to pay nothing
- if your glasses or contact lenses cost more than the value of the voucher you will have to pay the difference.

If you lose or damage your glasses or contact lenses:

- children under 16 are entitled to a voucher for replacement or repair
- you and anyone aged 16 or over might be entitled to a voucher to replacement or repairing glasses or contact lenses. See leaflet HC11 'Help with health costs' to find out more - you can get one from a Job Centre Plus office, NHS hospital, or Doctor's surgery.

### Free NHS wig and fabric supports

Show this certificate to the person who fits the NHS wig or fabric support for you.

### Travel to receive NHS treatment under the care of a consultant

If you need to travel to receive NHS treatment under the care of a consultant you can get help with the cost of travel. Tell someone at the place you are treated that you want to claim help with the cost of your journey and show this certificate. If for medical reasons you need someone to travel with you, their travel costs are counted with yours.

You can only get money back for costs that are necessary for your journey. If you are not sure, check before you travel. See leaflet HC11 to find out more - you can get one from a Job Centre Plus office, NHS hospital or by phoning 0870 555 455 and asking for HC11 Help with health costs.

If you are receiving NHS treatment under the care of a consultant at a private hospital, you will have to claim a refund of your travel costs using refund claim form HC3. You can get one from a Job Centre Plus office, NHS hospital or by phoning 0870 555 455 and asking for HC3 Help with health costs refund claim form. The form tells you what to do.

# NHS Low Income Scheme – HC3 Certificate

## HC3 Certificate for limited help with health costs

**CERT NO:** \_\_\_\_\_  
You will need to quote this number if you have to get in touch with us

**VALID FROM:** \_\_\_\_\_

**VALID UNTIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR:** \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE** This certificate does not affect any entitlement you have for other reasons such as age or medical condition. For example, if you are 65 or over you still get a free NHS sight test and NHS prescriptions.

**ABOUT THIS CERTIFICATE**

This certificate might help you by reducing the amount you have to pay towards your health costs.

Using the information you gave us in your HC1 claim form, we have worked out that you have to pay towards your health costs as below.

**A** **For sight tests you pay**  
Please read Part A overleaf before you go to the optician

**B** **For glasses or contact lenses you pay**  
Please read Part B overleaf before you go to the optician

**C** **For travel to receive NHS treatment or to see a consultant you pay**  
Please read Part C overleaf before you travel

**D** **For NHS dental treatment and NHS wigs or fabric supports you pay**  
Please read Part D overleaf before you go for treatment

**Towards a private sight test**

**Towards a voucher**

**In any one week**

**per course of treatment or prescribed item**


This certificate does not entitle you to free NHS prescriptions. Check leaflet HC11 'help with health costs' about Prescription Prepayment Certificates.

**NOTE** Improper use of this certificate may lead to prosecution.

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET IN TOUCH WITH US**

- always quote your certificate number and the date by the 'valid from' box above
- if you have any queries about your claim, call us between 8.30 and 5.00 on or write to us at: Patient Services, Prescription Pricing Authority, Sandford House, Westcote upon Avon, MK12 1DB
- if you are not satisfied with our handling of your claim, please write to us at the above address and mark the letter "complaint"
- if you want us to formally review our decision, please write to us and mark the envelope "review"

**NOTE** We can only give information about your claim to another person with your permission



## HC3

**HOW TO RENEW YOUR CERTIFICATE**

Fill in another HC1 form - you can get one from a Job Centre Plus office, NHS hospital or by phoning our customer enquiry line on 0845 450 1166. Some dentists, opticians or doctors also have them. Send it to us about 4 weeks before this certificate runs out. Check the 'valid until' box at the top of this certificate to see when it runs out.

**NOTE** If your circumstances change, you can fill in another HC1 at any time. You don't have to wait for this certificate to run out. If you apply for and receive a new certificate before this one runs out, you can use whichever one gives you most help.

**USING THIS CERTIFICATE**

**Part A** **Sight tests**

Show this certificate to the person who tests your sight and ask if you are entitled to any help with the cost. If you are, ask for a form to apply for this help. You then pay whichever is less:

- the amount by box **A**, plus any difference between the NHS fee and the private sight test cost, or
- the actual sight test cost

The person who tests your sight can tell you how much the next sight test fee is. After your sight test, you will be asked to sign to confirm that you have been given your prescription.

**Part B** **Glasses and contact lenses**

If you need new glasses or contact lenses, help towards the cost is provided through optical vouchers. The value of the voucher depends on your optical prescription. Ask the person who tests your sight the value of the voucher that matches your prescription.

The value of your voucher will be reduced by the amount by box **B**.

When you order your glasses or contact lenses, show this certificate and ask if you are entitled to any help. If you are, ask for a form to apply for an optical voucher.

After you get your glasses or contact lenses, you will be asked to sign to confirm that you have received them.

If your glasses or contact lenses cost more than the value of your voucher, you will have to pay the extra amount. If you are prescribed contact lenses you can get a special voucher, if that would give you more help than the value of your ordinary optical voucher.

If you lose or damage your glasses or contact lenses:

- children under 16 are entitled to a voucher for replacement or repair
- you and anyone aged 16 or over might be entitled to a voucher for replacement or repair. Details are in leaflet HC1 from Job Centre Plus offices, NHS hospitals or by phoning 0800 1 651 403 and asking for HC11 'help with health costs'. Your optician might also have one.

**Part C** **Travel to and from hospital to receive NHS treatment under the care of a consultant**

If you need to travel to receive NHS treatment under the care of a consultant, you may get help with the cost of your journey. You have to pay the amount by box **C** towards the cost of travel in any week. Tell someone at the place you are treated that you want to claim back the rest of the cost of your journey and show this certificate.

If, for medical reasons, you need someone to travel with you, their travel costs are counted with yours.

You can only get money back for costs that are necessary for your journey. If you are not sure, check before you travel. See leaflet HC11 'help with health costs' to find out more - you can get one from a Job Centre Plus office, NHS hospital or by phoning 0800 1 651 403 and asking for HC3 refund claim form.

**Part D** **NHS dental treatment and NHS wigs and fabric supports**

**NHS dental treatment** - for each course of treatment you will be asked to pay whichever is less:

- the actual NHS charge - ask your dentist how much this is, or
- the amount we have written by box **D** overleaf, or
- the maximum patient's charge - your dentist will be able to tell you how much this is. This amount is also in leaflet HC12 'charges and optical voucher value'.

On the form your dentist asks you to sign, write the number of this certificate and the amount by box **D** overleaf.

**NHS wigs and fabric supports** - for each wig or fabric support the most you have to pay is the amount by box **D**. The amount you have to pay could be lower than the cost of the treatment, wig or fabric support if the NHS charge is less - the person fitting the wig or fabric support can tell you how much this is.

**The following benefits do not entitle patients to free prescriptions:**

#### **4.18 Incapacity Benefit**

**The receipt of Incapacity Benefit on its own does not entitle patients to exemption from prescription charges, although some patients may think it does.**

They should be encouraged to make a claim for help under the NHS Low Income Scheme by completing form HC1, available from Jobcentre Plus offices, NHS hospitals and PCTs. Doctors, dentists, pharmacists and optical practitioners are also asked to hold these claim forms, which they can obtain from their PCT.

Some patients may be receiving Income Support along with Incapacity Benefit, which may be paid by giro cheque or ACT. These patients will be entitled to claim exemption from prescription charges. The benefits paid will be listed on their benefit entitlement letter and **must** include Income Support entitlement for the date/s they sign the FP10. Patients can obtain a letter from their Jobcentre Plus office confirming the dates of benefit entitlement.

#### **4.19 Jobseeker's Allowance (contribution-based)**

**Receipt of contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance on its own does not entitle patients to exemption from prescription charges.**

However, these patients may be entitled to help under the NHS Low Income Scheme and may wish to make a claim by completing an HC1 form, available from Jobcentre Plus offices, NHS hospitals and PCTs. Doctors, dentists, pharmacists and opticians may also hold these claim forms, which they can obtain from their PCT. A patient's JSA letter of entitlement from the DWP will show the type of JSA being paid.

## 5 Is the evidence acceptable?

**There are some basic checks to be made on any evidence presented by a patient:**

### 5.1 Identity

Is the patient's name printed on the evidence? Is it the same as the name printed on the prescription form?

For Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based), tax credits and the NHS Low Income Scheme, partners of beneficiaries are entitled to exemption from NHS charges. The partner may be named on the award notice (partners included in a tax credit claim who qualify for exemption from NHS health costs will have their own NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate with its own unique number).

If it is not clear from the evidence whether the patient is the beneficiary's partner, simply mark the reverse of the prescription form with an 'X' in the 'Evidence not seen' box to show that no evidence was produced.

The name and National Insurance number (NINO) of the person awarded the benefit/tax credit should be completed in full on the reverse of the FP10 prescription form; this will assist in the post-payment verification check process conducted by PCTs.

### 5.2 Date of entitlement

Is the patient exempt on the date on which the prescribed item is dispensed?

It will usually be clear from the evidence whether or not the patient is entitled to exemption from prescription charges on the relevant date – for example, from the dates printed on the NHS prescription charge certificate, medical exemption certificate or FP92 Certificate.

There may, however, be some instances when entitlement on the date of dispensing is not clear; for example, if a person aged 18 is unable to show that their studies are *full-time* on the day in question.

**If it is not clear from the evidence whether the patient is entitled to exemption from prescription charges on the relevant date, mark the 'Evidence not seen' box.**

When Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based) are paid by giro cheque, they are accompanied by a letter which states the period of entitlement. Income Support is paid one week in arrears and one week in advance, while Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based) is paid two weeks in arrears. Care must therefore be taken when checking to ensure that the relevant benefit is payable on the date that the person signs the prescription declaration, or on the date that the prescription is collected.

Those in receipt of Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based) benefits may instead be paid by Automatic Credit Transfer (ACT) and typically will not have any evidence available. Patients can, however, request confirmation of their benefit and the dates of entitlement from their local Jobcentre Plus office.

Most other letters and documents relating to DWP benefits, such as initial entitlement notices, are 'open' and do not include dates of entitlement. These are not acceptable evidence. If it is not clear from the evidence whether the patient is entitled to exemption from NHS prescription charges on the relevant date, you should mark the 'Evidence not seen' box.

### **5.3 Validity of evidence**

Does the evidence appear to be forged or counterfeit, or to have been altered or tampered with in any way?

Pharmacists should be alert to the possibility that, on rare occasions, they may be shown evidence that appears to have been altered in some way or appears not to be genuine. If there is any doubt whether evidence is valid and relates to the patient, you should mark the 'Evidence not seen' box.

In any case where it appears that there may be serious risk of intent to defraud the NHS or others, you should report the incident to the NHS Fraud and Corruption Reporting Line on 0800 028 4060.

### **5.4 Pharmacy Reward Scheme**

If you suspect that the prescription form has been stolen, forged or tampered with in any way, you should refuse to dispense, retain the prescription and claim under the Pharmacy Reward Scheme (PRS). Failure to do so is a breach of Terms of Service.

Even if the prescription is not found to be fraudulent, you will be reimbursed for the cost of the prescription.

To make a claim under the PRS, you should contact the PPA on 0191 203 5734 (manned line, 0900–1630) or 0800 068 6161 (24-hour answerphone service). Pharmacists or their staff who report fraudulent prescriptions may be eligible for a reward under the PRS.

## 6 Receipts and refunds

### FP57 form

New arrangements for paying prescription charge refunds, agreed with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC), were introduced in England and Wales on 1 April 2005. From this date, pharmacists and their staff in England and Wales became responsible for paying prescription charge refunds; the Post Office no longer performs this function.

### Revised form FP57

The FP57 receipt and claim form has been revised to describe the new procedure, which is that the patient or representative takes the form to any pharmacy for a refund.

PCTs will purchase supplies of revised FP57s and distribute them to dispensers. Dispensers will not be able to obtain these items via other routes. The reference number of the new form is FP57 0405. Until this version is ready, please continue to use form FP57 0403. Please note: when issuing this form, you must tell the patient to return it to a pharmacy in order to obtain a refund and not to a Post Office. As soon as you have supplies of the new form, destroy any remaining FP57 0403 forms in a secure manner (e.g. by shredding, or in accordance with local policy for confidential waste).

### Security of FP57 forms

FP57 forms are confidential items and should be stored in a secure location that is not accessible to the public. Only authorised staff may process prescription refunds. If a pad or form disappears, or cannot be accounted for, this must be reported as a matter of urgency to the PCT. You should be alert to the possibility of misuse of the forms.

### When to issue FP57 forms

An FP57 should only be issued if a patient (or representative) requests a receipt, if there is a genuine doubt about whether a patient is exempt from prescription charges, or if a patient has applied (or is thinking about applying) for a Prescription Charge Exemption Certificate or pre-payment certificate. Only if a refund may be required should a patient be issued with an FP57.

If a receipt is required by a carer or representative (e.g. to show that the charge was paid), a till receipt may be sufficient proof.

When a patient (or representative) states that they do not have to pay prescription charges because they are in an exempt group or hold a pre-payment certificate, they are not required to pay a charge simply because they do not have any evidence of entitlement. If a patient is prepared to sign to say they are exempt, they should complete and sign the declaration on the reverse of the prescription form, indicating the exemption category. You should then mark the 'Evidence not seen' box with an 'X'.

An FP57 should only be issued at the time that a prescription charge is paid, as subsequent requests may represent an attempt to obtain multiple refunds.

Patients who request an FP57 after the prescription charge was paid should be advised to write to the following address:

**Patient Services  
Prescription Pricing Authority  
Sandyford House  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE2 1DB**

or to telephone 0845 850 1166, to explain why they were unable to obtain an FP57. The PPA will review the claim and either send a payment directly to the patient or advise the patient why they do not qualify.

### **Issuing FP57s**

Part A of the form must be fully completed by the dispenser or an authorised member of staff. There must be no alterations to the amounts or the quantities shown on this part of the form. If a mistake is made in Part A, the form should be rendered unusable by writing the word 'CANCELLED' diagonally across it. The form should then be retained for audit purposes. The dispenser can initial alterations elsewhere on the form.

The following information must be present on an FP57 issued to a patient:

- the dispenser's stamp and date of payment
- the patient's name and address
- the prescription charge paid per item
- the number of charges paid
- the total amount paid.

### **Pharmacies processing FP57 forms for refunds**

Patients should preferably return the FP57 form to the community pharmacy that issued it. However, if this is not possible, they may take it to the most convenient pharmacy. This will normally be in the country where the charge was paid; however, pharmacists in England may make refunds for FP57s issued in Scotland and Wales. The paid FP57 form should be sent to the PPA in the normal way.

Community pharmacists should accept the claim even if the FP57 was issued by a hospital or other NHS organisation. If a dispensing doctor or appliance contractor has taken a payment and the patient requires a refund, the dispensing doctor or appliance contractor must provide the patient with an FP57. The patient should go to a community pharmacy to obtain the refund.

When a patient presents an FP57 form for payment, you should check:

- the serial number on the form, to ensure it is in the same format as those on the forms held by that pharmacy
- that there are no alterations to the amounts or quantities in Part A and the form appears genuine, e.g. there is no white border indicating that it is a 'home-produced' copy.

**If the form does not appear genuine, you should phone the NHS Fraud and Corruption Reporting Line on 0800 028 4060.**

### **If the form is genuine, take the following steps:**

- Check that the claim is being made within three months of the date on which the charge was paid or the patient has an authorised form (LIS04(P)) from Patient Services.
- Request evidence of entitlement to exemption, or sight of form LIS04(P), authorising payment.
- Check that the evidence relates to the patient and covers the date on which the charge was paid.
- Note on the FP57 what evidence was produced (e.g. Tax Credit Exemption Certificate) and any reference numbers on the exemption document, where applicable.
- Note on the FP57 the LIS04(P) form reference number and date, if applicable.
- Ask the person claiming the refund to print their name and address in Part F.
- Ask the patient (or their representative) to pay the amount shown in Part A of the FP57.
- Ask the patient (or their representative) to sign and date Part F.
- Ensure that the pharmacist or member of staff authorised to make refunds stamps the FP57 and prints and signs their name in Part F.

### **Time limit for making claims**

A refund must be claimed within three months of the date on which the prescription charge was paid (e.g. if the charge is paid on 1 January, the refund must be claimed by 31 March). If more than three months have elapsed between the time the charge was paid and time the FP57 is presented for payment, the refund may not be paid unless the patient has a form LIS04(P).

In the event of a late claim, patients will need to send the FP57 form to **Patient Services, Prescription Pricing Authority, Sandyford House, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1DB** and explain why they did not claim the refund within the three-month time limit. Patient Services will review the claim and either authorise a refund by sending form LIS04(P) or advise the patient why they do not qualify.

### **Old-style FP57s**

You may be presented with an old-style FP57 form, which is orange/black and has the reference number FP57 0403 in the top left-hand corner. The refund may still be paid, as long as the form is presented within three months of the charge being paid or the patient has an authorised form LIS04(P).

### **Claiming payment from the PPA**

Send all paid FP57s to the PPA each month with FP10s for processing. The FP34C 'Submission Document' (previously referred to as the invoice) has been revised to show the number of FP57 claims refunded and the total value of the refunds made.

FP57 0405 Receipt and Refund claim for NHS prescription charges

**Part A**  
Receipt

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE DISPENSING PRACTITIONER (OR THEIR STAFF) AT THE TIME OF DISPENSING.**  
*This form should only be used in premises in England or Scotland. You must fully complete, stamp and date Part A. If you make a mistake in Sections I, II, or III below, do not alter the form. Use a new FP57 and destroy the incorrect one.*

Patient's name and address as it appears on the prescription form	Title: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Other			Dispenser's stamp	
	Forename:				
	Surname:				
	Address:				
			Postcode:		
<b>Warning – Alterations in this section cannot be accepted</b>	Prescription Charge per item	Number of Charges paid (in words)	Total amount paid		Date prescription charge was paid
	£    .		£    .		
	Section i	Section ii	Section iii		

**Part B** Guidance for patients (or their representatives) – How to get a refund

Step 1	Make sure that all the details have been filled in Part A (receipt) above <u>before</u> you leave the dispenser's premises								
Step 2	If you have a valid reason for exemption, you have <b>three months</b> from the date the prescription charge was paid in which to claim a refund. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are a War Pensioner, go to Part D overleaf</li> <li>• Anyone else must get a refund from a pharmacy. Please go to Step 3</li> </ul>								
Step 3	The person who goes to get the refund <b>must</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Before going to a pharmacy</b>, obtain proof of why the patient can have a refund and make sure Parts E + F of this form have been filled in; then</li> <li>• Take this form and proof of why the patient can have a refund to a pharmacy</li> </ul> <b>See Part E boxes overleaf and then check below to see what evidence you need to take to a pharmacy. The evidence must be for the patient named above</b> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>Boxes 1 or 3</b></td> <td>Evidence of the patient's age, e.g. birth certificate, passport or medical card</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Box 2</b></td> <td>Evidence of age and educational status (age as above plus a student card or letter from school/college)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Boxes 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8</b></td> <td>The certificate issued to the patient</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Boxes 10, 11 or 13</b></td> <td>An order book, Award Notice or letter from your Jobcentre Plus office showing that the patient or their partner was entitled to a relevant benefit on the date (see Part A) the prescription charge was paid.</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Boxes 1 or 3</b>	Evidence of the patient's age, e.g. birth certificate, passport or medical card	<b>Box 2</b>	Evidence of age and educational status (age as above plus a student card or letter from school/college)	<b>Boxes 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8</b>	The certificate issued to the patient	<b>Boxes 10, 11 or 13</b>	An order book, Award Notice or letter from your Jobcentre Plus office showing that the patient or their partner was entitled to a relevant benefit on the date (see Part A) the prescription charge was paid.
<b>Boxes 1 or 3</b>	Evidence of the patient's age, e.g. birth certificate, passport or medical card								
<b>Box 2</b>	Evidence of age and educational status (age as above plus a student card or letter from school/college)								
<b>Boxes 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8</b>	The certificate issued to the patient								
<b>Boxes 10, 11 or 13</b>	An order book, Award Notice or letter from your Jobcentre Plus office showing that the patient or their partner was entitled to a relevant benefit on the date (see Part A) the prescription charge was paid.								

**Part C** Guidance for patients who do not qualify under Part B

If boxes 1-11 or 13 overleaf don't apply, you may still be able to get a refund if, when the charge was paid, you were on a low income and had savings below the limit which applied on that day. To find out more, pick up a form HC1 from your Jobcentre Plus office, or write to Department of Health, PO Box 777, London SE1 6XH to get one sent to you. The HC1 form will give you information about current limits on savings.

To make a low income refund claim, complete claim form HC1, and, on this form, tick Part E, Box 12 and complete part F. Send both forms to Patient Services, Sandyford House, Newcastle upon Tyne. NE2 1DB (a pre-paid envelope is provided with the HC1). If you are entitled to a refund, Patient Services will return this form with a letter. Take the letter and form to a pharmacy to get the refund.

123456789

**Part D War Pensioners only**

The patient named in Part A did not have to pay prescription charges because on the date the charge was paid (see date in Part A) the patient held a war pension exemption certificate and the prescription(s) was for the treatment of the pensionable disability.

Signature.....Date / /

Now send this form to the Veterans Agency, Norcross, Blackpool. FY5 3WP

**Part E Patient details to be completed by the patient or their representative**

<i>(Tick the relevant box that applied on the date the charge was paid)</i>		<i>Refunding Pharmacy Use Only</i>
1	The patient was under 16 years of age	<i>What evidence was seen?</i>
2	The patient was 16, 17 or 18 in full-time education	
3	The patient was 60 years of age or over <i>Write in patient's date of birth: / /</i>	
4	The patient held a valid maternity exemption certificate	<i>Certificate number or name of authorising authority</i>
5	The patient held a valid medical exemption certificate	
6	The patient held a valid prescription pre-payment certificate	
7	The patient was named on a current HC2 charges certificate	
8	The patient or his/her partner was entitled to, or named on, a valid NHS Tax Credit (TC) Exemption Certificate	<i>What evidence was seen?</i>
10	*The patient or his/her partner was getting Income Support (IS)	
11	*The patient or his/her partner was getting income based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA(IB))	
13	*The patient had a partner getting Pension Credit Guarantee Credit (PCGC) *Name of person getting IS, JSA(IB), or PCGC:..... *Their date of birth or N.I. number:.....	<i>Date and ref. number on LIS04(P) letter of authorisation</i>
12	The patient was exempt, as confirmed by a letter from Patient Services – See Part C overleaf <i>Patient Service's authorising stamp here -</i>	
		<i>Date: / /</i>
		<i>Ref No:.....</i>

**Part F Declaration by the patient or their representative**  
*Penalty Charges - Patients found to have wrongly claimed a refund will face penalty charges and, in some cases, prosecution under powers introduced by the Health Act 1999*

<input type="checkbox"/>	I am the patient, or	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am the representative	<i>Please tick as appropriate</i>
<p>I confirm that I have proper entitlement to the exemption above and to the refund of the prescription charge(s) paid overleaf. I declare that the information given on this form is correct and complete and I understand that if it is not, appropriate action may be taken. For the purposes of checking this and the prevention and detection of fraud and incorrectness, I consent to the disclosure of relevant information from this form to and by the Prescription Pricing Authority, the NHS Counter Fraud and Security Management Service, the Department for Work and Pensions and Local Authorities.</p>				
<i>Signed:</i>	<input type="text"/>	<i>Date:</i>	/ /	<i>Stamp of refunding pharmacy</i>
<i>Please print in block capitals, if different from overleaf</i>	<i>Name:</i>			
	<i>Address:</i>			
	<i>Postcode:</i>			
	<i>Refunding pharmacy use only. Amount paid (as in Part A overleaf)</i>			
	£.....	<i>Print:</i>		
		<i>Sign:</i>		

**Appendix A – LIS04(P) Letter**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Patient Services  
Sandyford House  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
NE2 1DB

Telephone: (0845) 610 \_\_\_\_\_  
Fax: (0191) 203 5507  
Our office is open between  
8.30am and 5.00pm

If you get in touch with us please  
use this reference number:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

**Your claim for a refund of NHS prescription charges**

Thank you for your claim for a refund of NHS prescription charges paid by you / your partner on the following date(s):

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

The refund will be made to you by:

- any pharmacy. Take this letter and your FP57 / WP57 / PS7 receipt(s) for the prescription(s) listed above to a pharmacy. They will pay you the money.
- \_\_\_\_\_ They will post the money to you.
- the Scottish Executive. They will post the money to you.

Refunds made by post may take several weeks. If you have any queries please contact the office stated above. You can find their address in the telephone directory.

These refunds are usually made in the form of a cheque. If you do not have an account into which you can deposit the cheque, please contact them so that alternative arrangements can be made for payment.

If you have future NHS prescription charges, you should show proof of your entitlement, such as your benefit book, NHS Tax Credit exemption certificate or HC2 certificate, at the time you collect your prescription and ask if you are entitled to any help.

If we have ticked this box  we have sent you a certificate with this letter. The certificate tells you how much help you can get with health costs.

Yours sincerely

PPA/PS Authorisation Stamp

This form will only be  
authenticated for  
pharmacy prescription

## 7 Questions, answers and scenerios

### Introduction

This section includes a number of questions, answers and scenarios that relate to carrying out PoD checks. It aims to cover the types of issues most likely to arise, which should help with the smooth running of the checking process.

PoD checks were introduced in pharmacies in April 1999; similarly, Point of Treatment checks were introduced in dental surgeries on 13 November 2000 and Point of Service checks in optical services in February 2001. Many patients will, therefore, already be familiar with the need to bring evidence with them. For others, however, this will be a new procedure. Although some patients may have become accustomed to being asked to show evidence, they may still need explanation or reassurance.

You will need to deal tactfully with those who have difficulties understanding the checks and, in particular, should bear in mind the special needs of any patients who have a learning disability or mental illness. Posters and patient leaflets are available (see section 10: 'Useful information at a glance').

The 'Q&A briefing for pharmacists: Point of Dispensing checks' table is also available as a separate document at [www.cfsms.nhs.uk](http://www.cfsms.nhs.uk).

## 7.1 Q&A briefing for pharmacists: Point of Dispensing checks

<p><b>What are Point of Dispensing checks?</b></p>	<p>Pharmaceutical Point of Dispensing (PoD) checks were introduced in England and Wales on 1 April 1999.</p> <p>A PoD check is a simple check that is made when a patient (or their representative) signs a declaration to say that they are entitled to free prescriptions. Every patient (or representative) claiming exemption from payment should be asked to show evidence to support their claim.</p>
<p><b>Why should I perform the checks?</b></p>	<p>The checks serve to remind patients of their responsibilities when they seek help with health costs and have reduced pharmaceutical patient fraud by 60% (a saving of £70 million). These checks are a requirement for pharmacists under their Terms of Service.</p>
<p><b>Who performs the checks?</b></p>	<p>They should be performed by whichever member of staff routinely manages the completion of the FP10 forms with patients or their representatives.</p>
<p><b>How do I (or my staff) perform the checks?</b></p>	<p>You should ask the patient to show proof to support their claim of eligibility for help with prescription costs. If it is not clear from the evidence provided that the patient is entitled or if the patient cannot provide evidence to support their claim for help, you should mark the FP10 form with an 'X' in the 'Evidence not seen' box. This is also relevant to patients who are the partners of those in receipt of a benefit that qualifies them for exemption e.g. Income Support.</p> <p>If no evidence is provided, you should ask the patient to bring evidence with them next time they visit.</p>
<p><b>How do I know what is 'acceptable proof' of exemption/remission?</b></p>	<p>Some <b>basic</b> checks include confirming that the patient's name is printed on the evidence, confirming the date of entitlement and checking the validity of the evidence, i.e. does it appear to have been forged or tampered with in any way? Only original documents are acceptable, not photocopies.</p>
<p><b>What about regular patients who I know are exempt?</b></p>	<p>Entitlement to benefits such as Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) can change on a daily basis.</p> <p>By confirming their continued exemption, you will also be helping the patient to avoid a costly penalty charge in the event that, for whatever reason, they are no longer exempt.</p>
<p><b>If no evidence is provided, should I charge the patient?</b></p>	<p>You should simply provide the service in the normal way, making sure to mark with an 'X' the 'Evidence not seen' box on the form.</p> <p>You should ask the patient to bring evidence with them next time they visit.</p> <p>Age-related exemptions only require a PoD check if the patient's date of birth is not printed on the FP10.</p>
<p><b>Will I be responsible for a wrongful claim?</b></p>	<p>You are not responsible for the accuracy of the patient's declaration; this will always be the responsibility of the patient.</p>

<p><b>What if the patient is not sure whether they are entitled?</b></p>	<p>If the patient is not sure whether they are entitled to help with prescription costs, you should ask them to pay and, at the time the charge is paid, issue them with an FP57 receipt. Inform the patient that they must take the receipt, along with the relevant proof of exemption, to a pharmacy within three months in order to obtain a refund.</p>
<p><b>I am having a problem with the new Working Tax Credit/Child Tax Credit</b></p>	<p>Working Tax Credit (WTC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) may entitle patients to help with health costs if they meet certain qualifying conditions.</p> <p>Those entitled will <b>receive a small white card called a ‘Tax Credit Exemption Certificate’ as evidence of their entitlement.</b></p> <p>Presently, to qualify for help with health costs, a patient’s annual income must be £15,050 or less (with effect from 6 April 2005) <b>and one of the following</b> must apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they receive both WTC and CTC</li> <li>• they receive WTC which includes a disability or severe disability element</li> <li>• they receive CTC on its own because they are not eligible for WTC.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I am having a problem with the new Pension Credit guarantee credit (paid on its own or with savings credit)</b></p>	<p>Pension Credit consists of two elements – guarantee credit and savings credit. Awards may be one of three types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• guarantee credit on its own</li> <li>• guarantee and savings credit paid together</li> <li>• savings credit.</li> </ul> <p>Patients receiving <b>guarantee credit</b> (paid on its own or with savings credit) will be entitled to help with health costs. Partners who are under 60 years of age will need to show the award notice as proof of entitlement.</p> <p>Patients receiving <b>savings credit</b> paid on its own <b>are not</b> entitled to help with health costs.</p> <p>Only the award notice (section 5) is valid proof of entitlement, as this clearly shows which type of Pension Credit the patient receives.</p>
<p><b>Do people in receipt of Incapacity Benefit get help with health costs?</b></p>	<p>Benefits such as Incapacity Benefit, Disability Living Allowance and contribution-based Jobseeker’s Allowance do not automatically qualify patients for help with health costs.</p>
<p><b>Do HC3 Certificates entitle the holder to free prescriptions?</b></p>	<p>No, whilst HC3 Certificates do entitle patients to partial exemption from some NHS charges, they do not entitle patients to free prescriptions.</p>

<p><b>What do I do if the patient informs me that they have no proof of entitlement to exemption?</b></p>	<p>Income-based JSA, Income Support and Pension Credit are nearly always paid directly into recipients' bank accounts.</p> <p>If the patient is receiving income-based JSA or Income Support which is paid directly into their bank account, they can obtain an award letter from their local Jobcentre Plus office specifying the type of benefit they are receiving, which can be presented as proof of exemption.</p> <p>Remember, you should not withhold services or charge the patient because they (or their representative) are unable to provide evidence of their entitlement. If the patient does not have an award letter confirming proof of exemption, you should provide the service in the normal way, making sure to mark with an 'X' the 'Evidence not seen' box on the form.</p> <p>You should always ask for evidence as, even if none is provided at the time, this acts as an important deterrent.</p>
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## Patient scenarios

### Section

- 7.2 Patients who refuse or challenge the request to provide evidence of entitlement
- 7.3 Patients who are sensitive about showing evidence
- 7.4 Patients whose first language is not English
- 7.5 Asylum seekers
- 7.6 Patients who are blind or partially sighted
- 7.7 People signing on behalf of a patient
- 7.8 Elderly patients

## 7.2 Patients who refuse or challenge the request to provide evidence of entitlement

- Pharmacy staff:** Do you pay for your prescriptions?
- Patient:** No.
- Pharmacy staff:** Well, the NHS has introduced checks which mean that I have to ask you to show some evidence of why you do not need to pay. Do you have any documents with you to confirm that you do not have to pay?
- Patient:** No, I haven't; what's this all about?
- Pharmacy staff:** Some people have been claiming that they do not have to pay when they are not, in fact, entitled to free prescriptions.
- Patient:** I don't care about that. That's got nothing to do with me. How was I supposed to know about this anyway?
- Pharmacy staff:** Chemists have been doing these checks for a while now and there has been publicity about the checks. More information about help with health costs is available from the Health Costs Advice Line on 0845 850 1166 or in this HC81 leaflet.
- Patient:** I haven't got anything with me. Can I have my prescription or not?
- Pharmacy staff:** Don't worry, just sign the form to say why you don't have to pay and we will give you your prescription in the usual way. Please bring your evidence in on your next visit. However, if you are not entitled to free prescriptions, you may have to pay a penalty charge.
- Action:** **Mark the 'Evidence not seen' box with an 'X'.**
- Action:** **If the patient becomes abusive or aggressive, simply dispense, and mark the 'Evidence not seen' box with an 'X'.**

You should report any incident of abusive or aggressive behaviour (i.e. physical assault<sup>5</sup> or non-physical assault<sup>6</sup>) to the patient's PCT in line with the NHS Security Management Service's strategy. This reporting should be in addition to your current reporting procedures using your own management system.

The NHS Security Management Service (NHS SMS) has overall responsibility for all policy and operational matters related to the management of security in the NHS. For further information on the NHS SMS, please refer to the website [www.cfsms.nhs.uk](http://www.cfsms.nhs.uk).

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<sup>5</sup> Physical assault: 'The intentional application of force to the person of another, without lawful justification, resulting in physical injury or personal discomfort' (*Secretary of State Directions on work to tackle violence against staff and professionals who work in or provide services to the NHS*, Department of Health 2003)

<sup>6</sup> Non-physical assault: 'The use of inappropriate words or behaviour causing distress and/or constituting harassment' (*Secretary of State Directions on work to tackle violence against staff and professionals who work in or provide services to the NHS*, Department of Health 2003)

### 7.3 Patients who are sensitive about showing evidence

- Pharmacy staff:** Do you pay for your prescriptions?
- Patient:** No.
- Pharmacy staff:** Do you know about the checks to confirm whether patients are entitled to exemption from NHS prescription charges?
- Patient:** No.
- Pharmacy staff:** Well, the NHS has introduced checks which mean that if you do not pay for your prescription, I must ask you for the evidence to confirm why you are exempt.
- Action:** **If the patient is hesitant, you may talk about this in a more private area, if available. We suggest that you show them the NHS counter display, *Point of Dispensing checks – guidance for patients*, which lists all the exemption categories along with information about how and where to get the relevant evidence.**
- Pharmacy staff:** If you do not have any evidence with you, please point to your exemption on this list.
- Patient:** I don't want to talk about it.
- Pharmacy staff:** Don't worry; just sign the form to say why you don't have to pay and we can give you your prescription in the normal way. Please bring your evidence with you next time you need a prescription.
- Action:** **If the patient is distressed or hesitant, you should not feel that you have to pursue the conversation; remember that the patient is not obliged to produce evidence. Simply mark the 'Evidence not seen' box with an 'X'.**
- Action:** **If you have any reason to be suspicious, please contact the Patient Exemption Reporting Line on 08702 400 114.**

## 7.4 Patients whose first language is not English

**Pharmacy staff:** Do you pay for your prescriptions?

**Patient:** Indicates that they do not understand.

**Action:** **In the absence of a translator, you can show the patient the relevant bilingual HC81 leaflet, or the translated version of the NHS counter display, *Point of Dispensing checks – guidance for patients*, to see if they understand.**

The HC81(Pharm) leaflets are available in numerous languages. Copies can be downloaded from the NHS CFSMS website, [www.cfsms.nhs.uk](http://www.cfsms.nhs.uk).

To order the leaflets, see section 9 'Useful information at a glance'.

**Action:** **The patient should be encouraged to pay for the prescription and issued with an FP57 receipt.**

## 7.5 Asylum seekers or their representatives

**Pharmacy staff:** Do you pay for your prescriptions?

**Patient/representative:** No.

**Pharmacy staff:** Are you aware that the NHS has introduced checks which mean that we need to ask for evidence to confirm that patients claiming exemptions do not have to pay for their prescriptions? Do you have any evidence with you?

**Patient/representative:** But asylum seekers don't have to pay for prescriptions.

**Pharmacy staff:** Asylum seekers have to pay the same as anybody else, unless they are in one of the specified groups entitled to exemption from or remission of NHS prescription charges.

**Patient/representative could be shown the relevant HC81 leaflet or the translated part of the NHS counter display, *Point of Dispensing checks – guidance for patients*.**

**Note:** If an asylum seeker is supported by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), NASS will automatically issue an HC2 NHS Low Income Scheme Certificate, which can be produced as proof of exemption.

If an asylum seeker is not supported by NASS and is not entitled to free prescriptions, help may be available via the NHS Low Income Scheme. The Refugee Council can provide an NHS Low Income Scheme HC1 form. If there is not a Refugee Council in the local area, HC1 forms are available from the nearest Jobcentre Plus office, or can be requested by phoning 08701 555 455.

**Pharmacy staff:** Which exemption/remission category are you in?

**Action:** **Show the asylum seeker or representative the exemption/remission categories, using either an HC81 leaflet or the translated version of the NHS counter display, *Point of Dispensing checks – guidance for patients*, and explain to them what evidence is needed.**

**Patient/representative:** It's HC2, but I don't have any documents available now.

**Pharmacy staff:** Don't worry, the prescription can be dispensed as usual, but please bring the evidence next time you come.

**Action:** **Simply mark the 'Evidence not seen' box with an 'X'.**

## 7.6 Patients who are blind or partially sighted

- Pharmacy staff:** Do you pay for your prescriptions?
- Patient:** No.
- Pharmacy staff:** Do you know about the checks to confirm whether patients are entitled to exemption from NHS prescription charges?
- Patient:** I have heard something about them. What exactly is happening?
- Pharmacy staff:** The NHS has introduced checks which mean that we need to ask you for evidence to confirm that you do not need to pay for your prescriptions. Do you have a document with you which confirms that you do not have to pay?
- Patient:** Either produces the evidence or says:  
  
I'm sorry, but I do not understand what to show you.
- Action:** **Explain the exemption categories and which proof of entitlement is appropriate or say:**  
  
Don't worry, just let me know why you are exempt and sign the form to confirm why you don't have to pay, and we can give you your prescription anyway. Please bring your [specify the appropriate evidence] with you the next time you have to collect a prescription.
- Note:** If the patient is still unclear about what to bring, they may want to contact the Health Costs Advice Line on **0845 850 1166** or the Department of Health publications order line on **08701 555 455**, which can supply a Braille leaflet, explanatory audio cassette or disk on request.
- Action:** **Simply mark the 'Evidence not seen' box with an 'X'.**

## 7.7 People signing on behalf of a patient

- Pharmacy staff:** Does the patient pay for their prescriptions?
- Patient representative:** No.
- Pharmacy staff:** Are you aware that the NHS has introduced checks which mean that we need to ask for evidence to confirm that [name of patient] does not have to pay for their prescriptions? Do you have that evidence with you?
- Patient representative:** No.
- Pharmacy staff:** Why do you believe he/she does not have to pay for prescriptions?
- Action:** **Explain to the representative what evidence is needed, using an HC81 leaflet or the NHS counter display, *Point of Dispensing checks – guidance for patients*.**
- Patient representative:** I do not have that document with me today.
- Pharmacy staff:** Don't worry, [name of patient] will receive their prescription as usual. Please indicate on the form why they don't have to pay, sign to confirm this and bring the evidence next time.
- Action:** **Simply mark the 'Evidence not seen' box with an 'X'.**

## 7.8 Elderly patients

- Pharmacy staff:** Do you pay for your prescriptions?
- Note:** If the date of birth has been computer-generated on the prescription form or appears as part of the ETP and the patient is over 60, there is no need for the patient to make the exemption declaration. No further proof of age is required.
- Those patients who are claiming exemption on age grounds but whose date of birth is handwritten will have to continue to make a signed declaration. This also applies if the ETP does not contain the date of birth.
- Patient:** No.
- Pharmacy staff:** Have you heard about the checks on prescription exemption?
- Patient:** No, I haven't.
- Pharmacy staff:** Well, the NHS has introduced checks which mean that we need to ask you to bring a piece of evidence to prove that you do not need to pay for your prescriptions. Why is it that you do not pay for your prescriptions?
- Patient:** I don't pay for my prescriptions because I'm 67 and haven't done for years.
- Pharmacy staff:** If your doctor has not put your age on the prescription, I'm afraid we still need to ask you for proof of your age. If you don't have any proof with you, we can give you your prescription anyway, but it would be helpful if you could bring some evidence with you next time.
- Patient:** What can I bring as valid evidence?
- Pharmacy staff:** Almost any form of official identification with your name and date of birth or age printed on it, such as your NHS medical card or birth certificate.
- Note:** You may wish to inform the patient that once you have seen evidence of their age and recorded it on the PMR, you will not need to ask for it again.
- Action:** **Simply mark the 'Evidence not seen' box with an 'X'.**

## **8 What are the penalties for patient evasion of NHS costs?**

### **8.1 The penalty charge explained**

On 1 November 1999, two provisions to deter patient fraud were introduced in England – a penalty charge and a new criminal offence. Both apply to all NHS patient costs arising on or after 1 November 1999.

If patients are found to have claimed entitlement incorrectly, PCTs will ask them to pay the full amount of any unpaid NHS costs. Patients are now also liable to pay a penalty charge in addition to the original charge. The penalty is five times the amount wrongly claimed, up to a maximum of £100. A further surcharge will be imposed if the total is not paid within a specified period. Failure to respond to a Penalty Notice may result in civil recovery action being taken through the County Court and the patient may be liable for additional court costs.

The penalty charge may be imposed if a patient has claimed entitlement incorrectly; there does not need to be any proof of criminal fraudulent intent. Representatives signing on behalf of patients will not be held responsible for false statements made on behalf of patients. The onus is on the patient to provide the correct information. The circumstances of each case will be carefully considered before payment of a penalty is pursued.

The new criminal offence makes evasion of NHS charges and costs a specific offence for trial in a Magistrates' Court for the first time. Those convicted will be liable to pay a fine of up to £2,500. It is intended to reserve criminal prosecution for serious cases and persistent fraudulent offenders.

Since August 2001, over 160,000 penalty charge notices have been issued for evasion of prescription charges.

### **8.2 Who will be checking exemption claims?**

Since 1 April 2005, PCTs have been responsible for conducting post-payment checks to verify patient entitlement to remission of or exemption from NHS prescription charges. In many cases, the PCT will not need to contact patients in order to carry out these checks and, where entitlement is confirmed, patients will be unaware that any action has been taken. The PCT is also responsible for administering penalty charges.

PCTs select a proportion of prescription forms to check, verifying the circumstances in which a patient has claimed exemption or remission. This includes exemption claims where evidence appears to have been shown, i.e. where the 'Evidence not seen' box is not marked.

Established liaison arrangements with agencies such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), HM Revenue & Customs and the Pension Service, which hold records relating to Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, tax credits and Pension Credit, allow the PCT to refute or substantiate the exemption/remission claimed.

If it is found that prescription charge exemption has been claimed incorrectly, the PCT may impose a penalty charge on the patient.

### 8.3 Who can receive a penalty charge?

***There does not need to be any proof of criminal intent***, liability is normally incurred simply by an incorrect claim to exemption. Penalties may therefore be imposed on any patient.

Patients have responsibilities towards the NHS as well as rights. It is the patient's responsibility to ensure that they claim exemption from or remission of NHS charges correctly. A person will be liable for a penalty charge if they have acted wrongfully, or carelessly, in relation to the original charge.

Ignorance of the rules relating to NHS health costs is not a valid defence.

## 9 Useful contacts at a glance

This section draws together the reference information given in various sections of the guide and lists some useful contact numbers for patients and health professionals.

- **Health Costs Advice Line:** for more information on help with health costs, phone the Health Costs Advice Line (for patients and practitioners) on **0845 850 1166**
- **Medical and Maternity Exemption Certificate enquiries:** **0845 601 8076**
- **NHS Low Income Scheme (HC2 and HC3 Certificates)**

To apply, or to make an enquiry, write to:

Patient Services  
Prescription Pricing Authority  
Sandyford House  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE21DB

Tel: **0845 850 1166**

- **War Pension Exemption Certificates**

To apply, or to make an enquiry, write to:

The Veterans' Agency  
Norcross  
Blackpool  
FY5 3WP

Tel: **0800 169 2277**, fax: **01253 330 561**

For people with hearing or speech difficulties: **0800 169 3458**

- **NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificates (PPA)**  
For enquiries about existing certificates, phone: **0845 609 9299** (patients should have their tax credit award notice to hand)
- **HM Revenue & Customs – Tax Credit Helpline**  
To apply, or to enquire about entitlement to tax credits, phone: **0845 300 3900**
- **DWP Pension Service – Pension Credit Application Helpline**  
To apply for Pension Credits, phone: **0800 99 1234**  
Text phone: **0800 169 0133**
- **DWP Pension Service**  
For queries about existing awards of Pension Credit, phone: **0845 606 0265**
- **NHS Fraud and Corruption Reporting Line: 0800 028 4060**  
(Confidential calls to freephone number)
- **Patient Exemption Reporting Line: 08702 400 114**  
(Confidential calls charged at national rate)

## Useful sources of information

The following documents are available from the Department of Health website, [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

HC11(TC)                    *New Tax Credits: Help with health costs*

HC12                        *NHS charges and optical voucher values*

Copies of the above leaflets are available from DH Publications:

Telephone: 08701 555 455, fax: 01623 724 524, email: [dh@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dh@prolog.uk.com)

The HC81 series of leaflets can be ordered in hard copy by:

email:                    [cfsms@prolog.uk.com](mailto:cfsms@prolog.uk.com)

Telephone:            0845 601 6702

Fax:                      01623 724524

The following documents are available to download from the NHS CFSMS website in Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Croatian, English, Farsi, French, Kurdish/Sorani, Portuguese, Punjabi, Serbian, Somali, Spanish, Turkish and Urdu:

HC81(Pharm)            *Help with the cost of NHS prescriptions – how to claim*

HC81(Op)                *Help with the cost of NHS optical services – how to claim*

HC81(D)                 *Help with the cost of NHS dental charges – how to claim*

The following documents are available to download from the NHS CFSMS website in English only:

HC11                      *Help with Health Costs*

HC11                      *Help with Health Costs (A Quick Guide for Students)*

Further information in the form of Q&A briefings, guides and counter aides is also available.

Visit [www.cfsms.nhs.uk](http://www.cfsms.nhs.uk) and look for this logo:



