



Business Services Authority

16 December 2008

Help With Health Costs

Sandyford House
Archbold Terrace
Jesmond
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE
NE2 1DB
DX 714180 Newcastle 3

Tel: 0845 610 1195

Fax: 0191 203 5507

Web site: www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk

Our ref: NHSBSA- 0108

Gateway ref: NHSBSA/HWHC/05

Dear Colleague

CANCER PATIENTS: new exemption from prescription charges from 1 April 2009

Following the Prime Minister's announcement that people battling cancer will be entitled to exemption from prescription charges, I am writing to outline the arrangements that we will be putting in place on behalf of the Department of Health.

The medical exemption application form (FP92A) will be revised to include the new exemption and will be distributed for February 2009. Forms will be marked as 1 January 2009 version and earlier versions will no longer be accepted. Applications from cancer patients may be accepted as soon as the revised version of the form is available. However, locally amended versions of the current form cannot be accepted.

Exemption certificates for cancer patients will be valid from 1 April 2009. We expect a large number of existing cancer patients to apply for a certificate during February and March and we will make arrangements so applications received up to 24 March 2009 will be processed for certificates to be issued by 1 April. Applications from cancer patients received after 24 March will be processed as quickly as possible and a certificate issued that starts from 1 April.

The normal arrangements will apply to cancer patients diagnosed on or after 1 April 2009 except that certificates cannot start before 1 April 2009. From 1 May, applications from cancer patients will be processed in the same way as all other applications for medical exemption with the exemption certificate backdated to start one month prior to the date we receive the application.

Arrangements for other patients applying for an exemption certificate have not changed except that they should use the new version of the application form as soon as it is available.

We would ask you to take action as follows.



Chair: Paul Rich
Chief Executive: Nick Scholte

General practitioners and dispensing doctors

We will send a pad of new FP92As direct to each doctor via your practice for February. Please run down stocks of the current FP92As and destroy securely any remaining old versions of the forms as soon as you receive the new version. Please order supplies of envelope PPAEXENV from your PCT/Trust supply unit in the normal way. We will be producing a poster to let cancer patients know that application forms are available. It would be helpful if you could display this in practice premises to alert patients to the new entitlement. As soon as the forms are available, it would also be helpful if you could ask relevant patients when they attend appointments if they have applied for an exemption certificate (to avoid patients being overlooked or duplicating applications already made via a Trust) and if not, give them an application form.

Important note: FP92A applications are processed using Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR) technology. To ensure we are able to deal with the increase in applications it is important that stickers are not used to show patient details, as these cannot be processed through ICR, neither can handwritten additions to the list of conditions.

PCTs

We will send sufficient pads direct to every GP and dispensing doctor for the foreseeable future but any repeat orders will be via PCTs. You may wish to hold a small reserve supply of FP92As which can be ordered in the normal way. Please destroy securely existing stocks of FP92As. Please ensure you have sufficient stocks of envelopes PPAEXENV to meet temporarily increased demand.

Trust Oncology Departments via Chief Pharmacists

As patients attend appointments, it would be helpful if you could ask if they have applied for an exemption certificate (to avoid patients being overlooked or duplicating applications already made via their GP) and, if not, give them an application form. We will provide pads of forms if you let us have your contact details at medicalproject@ppa.nhs.uk and let us know how many pads you will need by 9th January 2009. Envelopes for dispatch of the forms are available from the Trust/PCT forms supply unit. We will be providing a poster to let patients know that application forms are available. It would be helpful if you could display this in a suitable location. Please let us know how many copies you would like.

Pharmacies

We know from feedback that patients enjoy the convenience of being able to access healthcare information at their local pharmacy, and also be able to buy prescription prepayment certificates (PPCs) locally through the PPC Direct scheme. We would appreciate your help in letting patients know about the help available now and the new exemption from 1 April 2009.

Patient information – raising awareness

Until next April, it is important that cancer patients don't miss out on help with their prescription costs – involving front-line NHS staff and pharmacies is key to getting the message across. We would appreciate any action you can take to alert cancer patients to the new arrangements.

Help is currently available in the ways described below with benefit based exemption (eg for recipients of income-related employment and support allowance or income support) continuing unchanged.

NHS Low Income Scheme (claim form HC1)

The NHS Low Income Scheme provides help for those who don't automatically qualify for help with health costs such as prescription charges, but who find it difficult to pay. Anyone can apply using claim form HC1 as long as they don't have savings or capital of more than £16,000 (£22,250 for those permanently in a care home).

For anyone who has difficulty completing forms, we provide a form completion service - patients can call us on **0845 850 1166** and we will complete the form on their behalf.

Pre-payment certificates (application form FP95)

Patients who have to pay for their prescriptions can save money with a pre-payment certificate (PPC). A PPC costs £102.50 for 12 months. This can be paid either up front in full, or by 10 monthly direct debit instalments of £10.25. A three month PPC for £27.85 is also available. Patients who will be exempt from next April may prefer to buy a three month PPC although refunds will be available after April in respect of complete months unexpired.

Either PPC can save money for anyone who needs more than 14 items in 12 months or more than 3 items in three months. For greater convenience, patients can apply:

- on-line at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk
- by calling the PPC order line on **0845 850 0030**
- through a pharmacy registered to sell PPCs

Contact details for forms and patient literature

You can order supplies of the HC1 and FP95 PPC application forms from your usual Forms Supply Unit.

The leaflet HC12, ***Quick Guide to Help with Health Costs***, and poster HC10 are also available from the same address. Please arrange for these to be displayed in the public areas of the surgery/Trust.

Next steps

We will contact you again in the New Year when the new forms are available. Meanwhile, if you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely



Terry Luck
Customer Services Manager

e-mail: medicalproject@ppa.nhs.uk