



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From the Baroness Blackwood
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Innovation*

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

020 7210 4850

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PO-1176503

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Caroline Lucas MP

By email to: caroline.lucas.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Caroline

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 May to Matt Hancock about prescription charges for people with asthma.

I appreciate your concerns and am grateful to you for taking the time to raise these.

The list of medical conditions for which patients are exempt from prescription charges was introduced in 1968 after being agreed in discussion with the medical profession and has remained largely unchanged since then.

The Government has no current plans to amend the list of medical conditions that confer exemption. I realise that this issue raises some strong feelings, particularly for those with long-term conditions who are not exempt from charges. However, there are exemptions available to support people on low incomes, as well as exemptions on age grounds.

It is possible that some patients may be able to access other help that is available. People on a low income can seek help under the NHS Low Income Scheme, which provides help with health costs on an income-related basis. The level of help available is based on a comparison between a person's income and requirements at the time a claim is received, or at the time a charge was paid if a refund is claimed. Additionally, a number of Department for Work and Pensions benefits and certain tax credits also provide entitlement to free prescriptions.

People who have to pay NHS prescription charges and need many prescription items could save money with a prescription prepayment certificate (PPC). A three-monthly PPC costs £29.10 and an annual PPC costs £104. The annual PPC will save people

money if they need 12 items in 12 months. For example, if someone needs two items per month they will save £112 with an annual PPC, and if three items are needed per month the saving is £220. To help spread the cost, people can pay for an annual PPC by ten monthly direct debits. PPCs can be obtained by calling 0300 330 1341 (local rates), online through the NHS Business Services Authority's (NHS BSA's) website at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk, or by asking a registered pharmacist (listed on the NHS BSA website) for an application form (FP95).

More information about the extensive arrangements for providing help with NHS prescription charges and other health costs can be found on the NHS website at www.nhs.uk/healthcosts.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Best wish

Nicola

NICOLA BLACKWOOD