



Party leader name

13 June 2024

Dear [Party Leader],

RE: Commitment to review the prescription charges exemption list

We are writing to you as members of the Prescription Charges Coalition on behalf of tens of thousands of people in England who are struggling to pay for their essential medications, to urge you to commit to scrapping prescription charges for all long-term conditions.

There are over 26 million people in the UK living with at least one long-term condition. Many will be eligible for free prescriptions, but the prescription charges exemption list hasn't been updated in over 50 years, other than cancer in 2009. This means that tens of thousands of people with conditions such as Parkinson's, cystic fibrosis (CF), HIV, sickle cell, Crohn's and Colitis, MS, asthma or heart, kidney or lung disease have to pay a higher price to stay alive.

As an example CF is just one condition that illustrates how outdated the exemptions list is. In 1968, CF was primarily a childhood condition, meaning that those with it were not expected to reach adulthood and have to pay for their prescriptions, so the condition wasn't included. Today, there are more adults than children with CF who are required to pay for lifesaving medication their entire life.

Working-age people with long-term conditions are disproportionately affected by prescription charges as they need regular and on-going medication - for instance people who have lung, kidney or heart transplants must take anti-rejection medicines to stay alive. While the majority of prescriptions are dispensed for free, the remaining 11% are paid for almost entirely by working-age people with long-term conditions. It's important to note that England also remains the only country in the UK that still charges for vital medication.

[Research the Coalition conducted last year](#) found that due to prescription costs, 1 in 10 people with long-term conditions had skipped their medication. This has led to half of these individuals taking time off work due to worsening health and a third developing additional physical or mental health problems. We also found that many people are unaware that Prescription Prepayment Certificates exist and struggle to afford the upfront cost, or find a 10 month direct debit a barrier.

[York Health Economics Consortium](#) found that scrapping prescription charges for people with Parkinson's and Inflammatory Bowel Disease alone could save the NHS £100 million, free up 20,000 GP appointments, and avoid 3,000 A&E visits over five years. And the [latest YouGov polling on prescription charges](#) in May 2024 shows that almost 90% of the British public think there shouldn't be a charge for prescriptions.

It is clear the prescription charge exemption system needs urgent reform as it is not meeting the needs of people with long-term conditions and is putting their health and quality of life at risk. It also takes time away from health professionals who want to focus on patient care.

We believe no one should be made to pay for medication they cannot live without and urge you to scrap prescription charges for people with long-term conditions in England, to align with the rest of the UK. In the short term, will you commit to reviewing the prescription charge exemptions list, to ensure it meets the needs of patients and the NHS?

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss these matters further.



Yours sincerely,

Members of the Prescription Charges Coalition

1. Henry Gregg, Asthma + Lung UK
2. Tony Thornburn OBE, Beçhet's UK
3. Pamela Healy OBE, British Liver Trust
4. Ruth Wakeman, Crohn's & Colitis UK
5. David Ramsden, Cystic Fibrosis Trust
6. Des Quinn, Fibromyalgia Action UK (FMA UK)
7. Samantha Barber, Gene People
8. John Hibbs, The Hibbs Lupus Trust
9. Susan Walsh, Immunodeficiency UK
10. Paul Bristow, Kidney Care UK
11. Angie Davidson, Lupus Trust
12. Andy Barrick, Multiple System Atrophy Trust
13. Irene Oakley, Myositis UK
14. Andrea Brown, National Kidney Federation
15. Sadé Asker – National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society
16. Sharon Brennan, National Voices
17. Caroline Rassell, Parkinson's UK
18. Rachel Power, Patients Association
19. Alison Jones, Pharmacists Defence Association
20. Kamila Hawthorne, Royal College of General Practitioners
21. Tase Oputu, Royal Pharmaceutical Society
22. Sue Farrington, Scleroderma & Raynaud's UK (SRUK)
23. Romaine Maharaj, UK Thalassaemia Society (UKTS)
24. Carl Beech, Spotlight YOPD