

New Arrangements to Income Support & Income-Based Job Seekers Allowance Exemptions (April 2026)

Income Support (IS) and income-based JSA end from 1st April 2026

- Prescription exemption eligibility based on these ends on 14th April 2026 (2-week run-on)
- From 15th April 2026, these are no longer valid exemption categories
- Patients will mainly move to Universal Credit, which does NOT automatically entitle them to free prescriptions. See [here](#) for further information
- The exemption for prescriptions dispensed on or before the 14th April 2026 remains valid

Actions for pharmacy teams

1. Update dispensing & checking processes

- From 15th April 2026 Stop accepting IS / income-based JSA exemptions
- Ensure the pharmacy team understands:
 - Box H (IS) and K (JSA IB) are no longer valid after this date
 - Check exemption declarations more carefully during the transition period
- The NHSBSA have confirmed that:
 - Where older versions of FP10 forms (e.g. version O515, including older dental FP10D and green forms) are still in circulation and do not include Box U, patients declaring Universal Credit should continue to tick Box K (Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance)
 - These declarations will continue to be recognised correctly by NHSBSA systems, so patients will not receive a penalty charge notice
- Review all exemptions at the end of the month before your final submission

2. IT & system readiness

- Expect:
 - PMR systems to be updated to remove these options
 - FP10/EPS tokens to be updated (timing TBC)
- Make sure staff don't manually override or select outdated categories
- Use [Real Time Exemption Checking \(RTEC\)](#) if this is enabled on your IT system

3. Use NHSBSA comms materials

- Display the official poster in pharmacy to prompt conversations

4. Staff training

- Brief all team members (including counter staff) on:
 - The cut-off date (14th April 2026)
 - What to do if a patient still ticks an old box
 - How to signpost appropriately

Key messages for patients

'These benefits no longer automatically entitle them to free prescriptions after mid-April 2026.'

Explain:

- They may need to pay unless they qualify another way
- Making an incorrect declaration will result in a penalty charge
- Being on Universal Credit does NOT automatically mean free prescriptions

What patients should do

- Check eligibility for free prescriptions under other criteria (e.g. low-income schemes)
- Consider:
 - HC2/HC3 (NHS Low Income Scheme)
 - Prepayment Certificate (PPC) if they pay regularly
- If unsure refer to NHSBSA / gov.uk / support services
- Use the [eligibility checker](#)
- Review their Universal Credit Award Letter



Remember: if you submit an incomplete declaration the prescription will be switched to paid.

Further information:

- [CPE News](#)
- [CPE Dispensing Factsheet: Exemptions from prescription charges](#)
- [NHSBSA Poster](#)
- [What must I do if I've incorrectly claimed for prescription items when I was not exempt?](#)
- [Why have I been sent an enquiry letter or Penalty Charge Notice \(PCN\)?](#)