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Prescription charges for people with long-term conditions

Thank you for contacting me about prescription charges for people with long-term conditions.

I understand that the prescription charge has recently increased by 20 pence, from £8.40 to £8.60 for each medicine or appliance dispensed. However, there is also an extensive system of prescription charge exemptions in England. This includes provision for people on low incomes who can apply for free prescriptions through the NHS Low Income Scheme, or who get free prescriptions due to the receipt of certain benefits. The system of exemptions taken as a whole means that 90 per cent of prescription items are dispensed without charge.

However, it is also the case that prescription charges generate a valuable income to the NHS budget of several hundred million pounds per year – money contributing to patient care that would have to be found elsewhere if these charges were abolished.

The Government currently has no plans to make any amendments to the list of medical conditions which provide exemption from the prescription charge.

You may be interested to know that there is already a provision in place for people who require multiple prescriptions, such as those with long-term conditions who have to pay charges. The Prescription Prepayment Certificate allows holders to pay no further charge at the point of dispensing, with no limit of the number of items which can be obtained under the certificate. The Government has supported this scheme by freezing the cost of the PPC for another year, meaning that a holder of a 12-month PPC can get all the prescriptions they need for roughly £2 per week. I believe these are constructive measures to help those most in need.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP