

## Introduction of prescription charges



**Prescription charges will be introduced across Ramstein, Brussels, Brunssum and SHAPE (Mons) on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2015. This will bring these four communities in to line with existing MOD policy. All charges and exemptions will be in accordance with NHS (England) guidelines. Prescription charges will also be introduced across all other European Joint Support Unit (EJSU) communities in due course and current planning indicates that this will not be before 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015.**

Mr Hewlett, AD Plans, HQ BFG Health Service said, 'I appreciate that this initiative will not be welcomed universally across the EJSU community, but following the successful introduction of prescription charging in British Forces Germany in 2014 work has been ongoing to ensure that the system of collection which is now being introduced does not disadvantage EJSU personnel when compared to colleagues serving in England'.

The introduction of prescription charges will not affect serving members of the forces nor any other individual who would normally be exempt from paying for prescriptions while serving in England. This means that all patients who are not exempt will be required to pay prescription charges as if they were serving in England. A full list of exemptions is included in the following FAQs and includes children under the age of 16, individuals suffering certain chronic illnesses, and those in receipt of certain benefits. It is estimated that some 80% of the EJSU population will fall into one of the exemption categories.

The current rate for a single prescription is £8.20 and where payment is made in Euros this will be converted at the prevailing Forces Fixed Rate.

In the future, when individuals who do not fall into one of the exempted categories collect their prescription drugs they will be issued with an invoice. The invoice can be paid in Sterling or Euros, at the bank, online, by UK cheque or in some locations by PayPal. There will be no facility to pay the prescription charge at the point of collection of the drugs – the various ways to pay will be shown on the invoice. Payment will need to be made within ten working days of receipt. If the invoice is still not paid within thirty days this will become a debt against the individual, penalties will apply and further recovery action taken.

If individuals know that they will have to pay for a lot of prescriptions it may be cheaper to buy a Prescription Prepayment Certificate (PPC); essentially a prescription 'season ticket'. A PPC covers payment for all of an individuals' prescriptions no matter how many items they need. It can be purchased to cover either a 3 or 12 month period. Please speak to your local medical centre or medical administration office for more information on how to purchase a PPC.

It is anticipated that you will understandably have a number of questions, the most common of which are addressed in the FAQs. However, If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact HQ BFG Health Service at: [BFGHealthSvcs-Feedback@mod.uk](mailto:BFGHealthSvcs-Feedback@mod.uk).

[ENDS}

Notes to editor:

- Photos: *Source: Kumar Sriskandan / Alamy*



## Prescription charges FAQ:

### **Why do I need to start paying for my prescriptions?**

Existing MOD policy requires prescription charges to be collected from individuals while posted overseas, except where exemptions apply and in accordance with NHS (England) guidelines. The revised healthcare arrangements which were implemented wef 1 Apr 13 by Project HC2013 provided an opportunity to comply with MOD policy. Since 1 Apr 13 work has been ongoing to ensure that the system of collection which is now being introduced does not disadvantage European Joint Support Unit (EJSU) personnel when compared to colleagues serving in England. It is anticipated that you will understandably have a number of questions, the most common of which are addressed below. If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact HQ BFG Health Service at: [BFGHealthSvc-Feedback@mod.uk](mailto:BFGHealthSvc-Feedback@mod.uk)

### **I am from Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales; why do I have to pay?**

The MOD has decided to adopt the NHS (England) guidance and in line with that you will be required to pay in accordance with NHS (England) policy, unless in an exempt category.

### **I am currently serving in Naples. Will I be required to pay for my prescriptions?**

The charges are being applied (except where exemptions apply) to all patients supported by BFG Health Service. The introduction of the charges has already been successfully applied to patients in BFG. The charges are being rolled out in manageable increments; Phase 1 – BFG, Phase 2 – Ramstein, Brunssum, SHAPE, Brussels, Phase 3 – the remainder of the EJSU community based in Europe. Phase 3 will not be implemented before 1 Sep 15 and when implementation does take place it will be supported by communications which are specific to the community.

### **Is prescription charging being introduced in other overseas commands?**

MOD policy requires prescription charges to be collected from all personnel serving overseas, except where exemptions apply. It is for the other overseas commands to establish how this might best be achieved.

### **How much is the cost of a prescription?**

In accordance with NHS (England) guidelines the cost of a prescription is currently £8.20.

### **Will this change the process of getting my prescribed drugs?**

If you collect your prescription drugs from a medical centre dispensary you will be issued with an invoice there which you will have ten days to pay. If the prescription is collected from a host nation pharmacy then an invoice will be sent to you by the medical administration office. The invoice will contain direction on how to pay and what to do if you feel you are exempted from prescription charging. If you collect your prescription from a host nation pharmacy and pay at the point of collection and you are exempted from prescription charging you can reclaim the cost in the usual

way. If you are not exempted and pay above the current rate of prescription charging you are entitled to claim the difference.

### **How will I be able to pay?**

A number of methods of payment will be available to you:

- In person at your local European bank or online.
- Into a UK bank account through online banking.
- By UK cheque.
- Personnel based in Brunssum, Brussels and SHAPE will have the option of paying via PayPal

Euro payments will be converted at the Forces Fixed Rate which is prevailing at the time the invoice is issued. Details of all payment options will be shown on the invoice and the sum due will be shown in both Sterling and Euros.

### **Can I pay my prescription charge in cash?**

Unfortunately you will not be able to pay cash directly at the dispensary or host nation pharmacy.

### **Can I use my debit card to pay my prescription charge at the dispensary?**

It is not possible to pay by debit card at the dispensary or host nation pharmacy.

### **How long do I have to pay?**

You will be issued with an invoice on collection of your prescription, which you will have ten days to pay. If the invoice is still unpaid in thirty days this will become a debt against you, penalties will apply and further recovery action taken.

### **Where will the money go?**

All monies collected will be credited to the Defence Budget.

### **Who is entitled to free prescriptions?**

You are entitled to free prescriptions if at the time the prescription is dispensed you are:

- A serving member of HM Forces.
- Under 16.
- 16 -18 in full time education.
- Aged 60 and over.
- Pregnant or have had a baby in the last 12 months and hold a valid Maternity Exemption Certificate (MatEx).
- Hold a valid war pension exemption certificate and the prescription is for your accepted disability.
- Individuals with certain medical conditions who hold a valid Medical Exemption Certificate.
- Named on the current HC2 Charges Certificate.
- Job seekers registered with a benefit office in the UK who are in possession of an E303.
- Prescribed contraceptive.
- Prescribed treatment of a sexually transmitted infection or tuberculosis (TB).
- Medication administered at hospital or out of hours Defence Dental Services.

**I believe I am medically exempted from prescription charging.**

Individuals with certain medical conditions are entitled to free NHS (England) prescriptions and it will be no different in EJSU. Those individuals who hold a valid Medical Exemption Certificate or have completed a declaration indicating they suffer from one of the medical conditions listed below are exempt:

- A permanent fistula (for example caecostomy, colostomy, laryngostomy or ileostomy) requiring continuous surgical dressing or requiring an appliance.
- A form of hypoadrenalism (for example Addison's disease) for which specific substitution therapy is essential.
- Diabetes insipidus or other forms of hypopituitarism.
- Diabetes mellitus, except where treatment is by diet alone.
- Hypoparathyroidism.
- Myasthenia gravis.
- Myxoedema (that is, hypothyroidism requiring thyroid hormone replacement).
- Epilepsy requiring continuous anticonvulsive therapy.
- A continuing physical disability which means the person cannot go out without the help of another person. Temporary disabilities do not count even if they last for several months.
- If you are undergoing treatment for cancer; the effects of cancer; or the effects of cancer treatment.

### **Is there any help available with prescription costs?**

If you know you'll have to pay for a lot of prescriptions it may be cheaper to buy a Prescription Prepayment Certificate (PPC); essentially a prescription 'season ticket'. A PPC covers you for all of your own prescriptions no matter how many items you need. Details on how to apply for a PPC will be available from your local Medical Centre or medical administration office.

### **Can I use my UK NHS Prescription Prepayment Certificate (PPC) and can I purchase one in EJSU?**

Yes, a valid UK NHS PPC will be recognised in EJSU. However, an EJSU PPC purchased through your local Medical Centre or medical administration office will not be valid in the UK, but any outstanding credit on EJSU PPCs on posting will be refunded. Please speak to your dispensary team at the local medical centre or medical administration office for more information.

### **How much will an EJSU PPC cost?**

The cost will be in line with NHS (England) guidelines. Currently a three month PPC will cost £29.10 saving you money if you need four or more items in three months. A twelve month PPC is £104 and saves money if fourteen or more items are needed in twelve months.

### **How long does it take to get a PPC?**

You may ask the medical centre or medical administration office for a PPC instead of paying a single prescription charge.

### **Can I apply for a NHS Prescription Prepayment Certificate (PPC) online?**

Although it looks like you would be able to do this through the NHS (England) site, you are required to state that you are a resident of England on the web-site. We recommend that patients arrange a PPC through their medical centre or medical administration office

### **Can I use my Prescription Prepayment Certificate in the UK?**

At the moment there is no reciprocal arrangement to enable you to use the EJSU PPC in the UK. If you are posted, then you will be able to write to HQ BFGHS to claim a refund if there is over a month to go before the PPC expires. You will be required to provide a copy of your certificate to support the claim. Additionally, should you need to obtain prescribed medication on a visit to UK you will not be able to use your EJSU PPC. In these circumstances you should pay for the medication in UK and then make a claim via JPA/HRMS to obtain reimbursement. You should retain associated receipts for audit purposes. Contractor personnel should apply for a refund directly from SO2 Perf Man 1, HQ BFGHS, BFPO 39. A copy of your EJSU PPC and the receipt for the UK purchased medication should accompany your application.

### **Can my son/daughter/spouse/parent use my Prescription Prepayment Certificate (PPC)?**

No, this is not possible as a PPC is issued to allow for the payment of medicines for only the individual named on the PPC.

### **Can I have 6/12 months supply of my drugs to save money?**

Medication will be prescribed in line with BFG Health Service Medicines Management Policy which currently permits up to 3 months supply of medication.

### **If I have started a course of treatment, when will the charges apply to me?**

Any medicines prescribed before 11 May 2015 will be dispensed free of charge and medicine prescribed on or after this date will be subject to the new arrangements. On implementation of the arrangements, repeat prescriptions will be charged at the prevailing rate.

### **Are there circumstances when I will incur multiple charges for the same prescription?**

There are a small number of circumstances when in accordance with NHS (England) guidelines there is a requirement to raise multiple charges. On the rare occasion that this happens, dispensary staff in the Medical Centre or at the medical administration office will explain this to you.

### **Over the counter drugs available in UK are not stocked in my local NAAFI or host nation pharmacy. Will I now have to pay prescription charges for these?**

Prescription charges will be raised in accordance with NHS (England) guidelines for all drugs which are dispensed by your Medical Centre or Host Nation pharmacy. Individuals may of course obtain the same products locally cheaper than the cost of a prescription. The Host Nation pharmacy and/or your Medical Centre will be able to advise on the compatibility of over the counter drugs available from the Host Nation.

### **How often will these prescription charges change?**

The rate charged in BFG will continue to mirror NHS (England) prescription charges.

### **Does this apply to dental prescriptions?**

Yes. The charge will apply to all prescriptions unless you fall into one of the exemption categories.