

# All you need to know about: Changes to proof of exemption

Our Dispensing and Supply Team explains how changes to certificates proving exemption from the prescription charge may affect community pharmacy teams.

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHS BSA) is making changes to the types of proof of exemption.

The white plastic cards currently in use for prescription prepayment certificates, maternity exemption certificates, medical exemption certificates and Tax Credit Exemption Certificates will soon be phased out. The plastic cards will begin to be replaced by a double-sided A4 paper certificate from March 2018 as an interim measure, in a move towards using digital certificates in the future.



From March 2018, Tax Credit Exemption Certificates will be the first exemption to be changed from plastic card to a double-sided A4 paper certificate. Other certificates currently using plastic cards will follow once NHS BSA has evaluated the success of the paper Tax Credit Exemption Certificates.

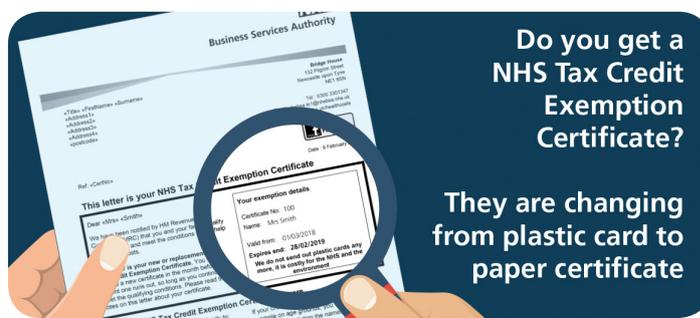
Separately, NHS BSA are currently trialling digital certificates for prescription prepayment certificates and maternity exemption certificates in the Northumberland area (see information on the digital maternity exemption service at: [ow.ly/zfEp30iL65P](http://ow.ly/zfEp30iL65P)).

## Why are NHS BSA changing the types of proof of exemption?

Making this switch is part of the NHS BSA service improvement programme. Replacing the plastic cards will generate savings for the NHS and reduce the impact on the environment. White plastic cards will continue to be issued to certain patient groups (such as those without internet access).

## What types of exemption certificate might I see?

Certificate type	Guidance notes
 Existing plastic exemption cards	Accepted as long as they are within their expiry date.
 Paper certificates	The double-sided A4 paper certificate will contain very similar information to that currently held on the plastic cards.
 Digital certificates	Digital version of exemption certificate instead of a plastic card. It could be on the screen of their smartphone or a printed copy, and it will include the patient's name and an expiry date.



Do you get a NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate?

They are changing from plastic card to paper certificate

Image courtesy of NHS Help with Health Costs

## How long will it take phase out the current plastic exemption cards?

NHS BSA envisage it taking up to five years for the plastic cards to be fully phased out so in the meantime the proof of exemption mentioned above should be accepted as long as they are within their expiry date.

## What if the certificate is torn/damaged?

So long as the details are visible, and the number and expiry dates are clear then they can be accepted as proof of prescription exemption.

## And finally, please remember:

Community pharmacy teams are reminded it is the patient's responsibility to make an accurate declaration. Terms of Service require that pharmacy teams, before supplying the drug or appliance, advise the person who has been asked to provide the evidence of entitlement to exemption that NHS checks are routinely undertaken to verify that persons are exempt from payment of NHS prescription charges as part of the relevant arrangements for preventing or detecting fraud or error.

Where patients do not have evidence or where there is doubt over whether the evidence provided is appropriate, mark the 'Evidence Not Seen' box on the reverse of the prescription. Pharmacy staff need not refuse to dispense items on the basis that the patient does not provide evidence of their entitlement to free prescriptions.

For more information on the changes to exemption certificates, please visit: [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/changes-proof-exemption](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/changes-proof-exemption)

## PSNC resources:

Exemptions from the prescription charge webpage  
[psnc.org.uk/chargeexemptions](http://psnc.org.uk/chargeexemptions)

Exemption status for EPS prescriptions  
[psnc.org.uk/epsexemption](http://psnc.org.uk/epsexemption)

Dispensing Factsheet: Checking Prescription Exemption Status  
[psnc.org.uk/exemptionsfactsheet](http://psnc.org.uk/exemptionsfactsheet)