



**Chief Executive**

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Our Ref: AS/WF/CL DCC/SE/HD

Your Ref:

Date: 24 April 2006

Dear Ms Runciman

## **Review of NHS Prescription Charges and Exemption Arrangements in Scotland**

Please see comments below in response to the consultation paper on the above subject.

In general, the Executive's position on the principle of patient contribution to the cost of prescriptions appears fair, as long as this is underpinned by effective exemptions and arrangements to ensure affordability for those who have substantial needs for medication. The current system does contain a number of anomalies and the commitment to address these is welcomed.

In response to the particular issues raised:

### **1. Review of exemptions related to medical conditions**

It would appear reasonable that the list of chronic conditions which qualify patients for exemption should be extended, but there is a case that exemptions should only apply to prescriptions which directly or indirectly relate to the qualifying condition (including those which treat the side effects of main treatment) rather than all prescriptions including those unrelated to the qualifying condition. An expert group should decide and keep under review the list of drugs or categories of drugs which relate to each chronic condition.

### **2. Economic Need - Affordability**

Extending exemption from prescription charges to all persons holding an LIS HC3 certificate would address affordability without placing a major financial burden on the NHS.

It is also acknowledged that the pre-payment certificate system needs to be changed, with all of the options set out in the consultation paper being worthy of consideration, and that there is a case for a cap on the charges a patient is required to pay over a set period of time to assist high users. The development of electronic charge tracking systems would facilitate these changes but the detail of these (for example the level of the cap on charges) would require further consideration to ensure a balance between affordability to the patient and cost to the NHS.

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3. **Ability to Pay**

There is a case to extend exemption from prescription charges to people in full time education and training (not just young people) on the basis that their income will be low and that no one should be deterred from accessing education and training or appropriate health care on the basis of their income. However it seems reasonable that this exemption should not apply to people who are being paid in full by their employer while undergoing training in the same way as they would be if at work.

The view that straightforward age related exemptions are anomalous, in terms of a policy that people who are in a financial position to contribute should do so, is acknowledged in principle. However the Scottish Executive may need to have regard to the public acceptability of changing the exemptions for persons aged 60 or over.

Yours sincerely



**Chief Executive**

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## RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM: REVIEW OF NHS PRESCRIPTION CHARGES AND EXEMPTION ARRANGEMENTS IN SCOTLAND

Please complete the details below and return it with your response. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately. Thank you for your help.

Name: ALEX STEPHEN , CHIEF EXECUTIVE , DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

Postal Address: 21 CITY SQUARE , DUNDEE DD1 3BY

1. Are you responding: (please tick one box)
- (a) as an individual  go to Q2a/b and then Q4
- (b) **on behalf of** a group/organisation  go to Q3 and then Q4

### INDIVIDUALS

- 2a. Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Executive library and/or on the Scottish Executive website)?

Yes (go to 2b below)

No, not at all  We will treat your response as confidential

- 2b. Where *confidentiality is not requested*, we will make your response available to the public on the following basis (**please tick one** of the following boxes)

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

Yes, make my response available, but not my name or address

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

### ON BEHALF OF GROUPS OR ORGANISATIONS:

- 3 The name and address of your organisation *will be* made available to the public (in the Scottish Executive library and/or on the Scottish Executive website). Are you also content for your **response** to be made available?

Yes

No  We will treat your response as confidential

### SHARING RESPONSES/FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

- 4 We will share your response internally with other Scottish Executive policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Scottish Executive to contact you again in the future in relation to this consultation response?

Yes

No