

Withdrawal of IS & Income-based JSA Exemption Categories

Contractors need to be aware of the changes to prescription exemption eligibility.

Some existing tokens may still have the (old) box H and box K available on the back.

And some box H and all box K claims are no longer valid - see below.

Following guidance from Community Pharmacy England (CPE) and DWP, contractors are advised of upcoming changes to NHS prescription charge exemption categories.

Key Change

From 15 April 2026:

Income Support (Box H) and Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (Box K) will no longer be valid exemption categories

Transitional Period

Valid until: 14 April 2026 (inclusive)

A 2-week run-on period applies

Prescriptions dispensed on or before this date:

- Remain valid for exemption
- Can be submitted for payment after this date

Post-Implementation (From 15 April 2026)

Contractors must ensure:

- IS and JSA (IB) are not accepted as valid exemptions
- These categories are not selected on EPS or paper forms

Valid Alternative

- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) remains valid
- Continue using Box H where applicable

Contractors should:

1. Staff Briefing

Ensure all pharmacy staff are aware of:

Removal of IS & JSA (IB) exemption categories

2. Patient Communication

Display NHSBSA posters in pharmacy

3. System Readiness

Prepare for:

FP10 & EPS token updates

PMR system changes to remove/hide invalid categories

4. Eligibility Checks

Use Real Time Exemption Checking (RTEC) where available

Direct patients to NHSBSA eligibility checker

Handling Uncertain Eligibility

If a patient's exemption status is unclear:

- Advise payment of prescription charges
- Issue an [FP57 receipt and refund form](#) at point of payment

Important

Universal Credit does not automatically confer exemption - eligibility must be assessed per NHSBSA criteria.

Support Resources

- [NHSBSA eligibility checker](#)
- CPE [Dispensing Factsheet: Exemptions from the prescription charge](#)
- [NHSBSA poster](#)
- [Real Time Exemption Checking \(RTEC\)](#), this can be used to check whether a patient has a valid exemption before dispensing their prescription.

Please ensure full compliance by 15 April 2026. Further updates will be shared once system and form changes are confirmed.



**Received
benefits?**



**Check before claiming
free NHS prescriptions**

Legacy benefits such as Jobseekers Allowance, Tax Credits and Income Support were replaced by Universal Credit in April 2026. If you claimed free NHS prescriptions due to receiving a legacy benefit, check you're still entitled before continuing to claim.

Scan the QR code or go to
www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/check



CP BSOL - Contractor Information

For contractor guidance, service updates, local resources, and information to support patients, please visit the CP BSOL website.

[Visit CP BSOL Website](#)

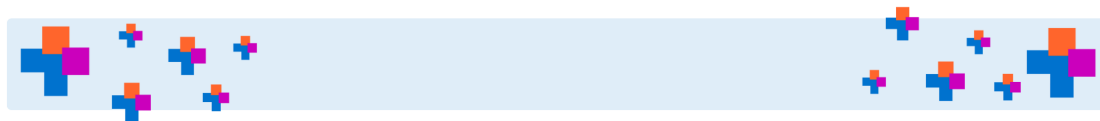
Community Pharmacy Birmingham & Solihull

Representing community pharmacy contractors across Birmingham and Solihull in partnership with the [NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board](#) and nationally with [Community Pharmacy England](#).



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