



Lord Bethell of Romford
Department of Health and Social Care
By email

19 March 2020

Dear Lord Bethell,

Re: Emergency suspension of prescription charges

Congratulations on your recent appointment and the Prescription Charges Coalition (PCC) looks forward to working with you in the coming months. We are a group of 48 organisations calling on the government to abolish prescription charges for people with long-term conditions in England.

The Coalition is calling for an emergency suspension of prescription charges with immediate effect for all people with long-term conditions in England, to aid the efforts of Public Health England in delaying the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Prescription Charges Coalition research shows that the charges discourage people from collecting the vital medication they need to stay well. A third of people with long-term conditions skip collecting their medication because of the cost¹.

At a time when it is critical for everyone to be taking the medication they need to stay well, we urge the government to implement this simple measure to aid medication adherence by patients with long-term conditions.

This is a public health emergency, but even more so for people with asthma, HIV, those who have had or are awaiting a transplant, others who are immunosuppressed, or have auto-immune rheumatic diseases and conditions caused by primary immunodeficiencies. Simple measures like removing prescription charges with immediate effect could make all the difference for this at-risk group.²

We also acknowledge that the NHS is under immense strain as a result of coronavirus and would suggest any action to reduce the numbers of emergency admissions at this critical time should be taken, to aid in quelling this pressure.

I look forward to your response.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Cockram".

Laura Cockram
Chair of the Prescription Charges Coalition

Cc. Jon Ashworth MP, Shadow Health Secretary

¹ Prescription Charges Coalition, 'Still Paying the Price Prescription Charges and People with Long-Term Conditions', (2017)

² Department of Health and Social Care, 'Coronavirus: action plan A guide to what you can expect across the UK', (2020)