

Free Prescriptions for Visually Impaired People

If you are on a low income you may be able to get free NHS prescriptions. For example, if you are on Income Support or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, you are automatically entitled to free prescriptions. If, however, you do not qualify on low income grounds, then you may still be eligible for an exemption. You can be exempted from prescription charges if you have:

"a continuing physical disability which prevents [you] from leaving [your] residence without the help of another person"
[NHS(CDA) Regs 1989]

We think that blind and partially sighted people should qualify through this condition. Even if you are able to use familiar routes you may need some form of help. You may need a fully sighted person to help you cross a road, to avoid everyday obstacles, to find your way in the dark, to read bus numbers or timetables, and so on. The regulations only specify that you should need 'help'. There is no requirement that this help should take the form of continuous supervision or guidance. We think that if you need some form of help each time you go out, then you should qualify.

How do I apply?

You can obtain the application form FP92A (EC92A in Scotland or FP92W in Wales) from your GP, hospital or pharmacist. You have to complete the form then ask your GP to sign it to confirm that you fall into an exempt category. Your doctor must be of the opinion that your visual impairment is a '*continuing physical disability*' which means that you cannot go out without help. It is possible that your doctor is reluctant to sign such a declaration. For this reason we have produced a standard letter which you can take to your doctor. The letter explains about the mobility problems of visually impaired people. If your doctor refuses outright then you should contact us for further advice.

After signing the form your doctor will send it to the NHS Business Services Authority. You will then be issued with an exemption certificate FP92 (EC92 in Scotland). You should take the certificate to the chemist whenever you go to collect your prescriptions.

Unlike mainstream social security benefits there is no statutory appeals system with these exemptions so if you encounter any problems in obtaining an exemption, contact us on our National Freephone Helpline **0800 915 4666** or email **benefit.check@actionforblindpeople.org.uk**

**Welfare Rights Service
Action for Blind People
14-16 Verney Road
London SE16 3DZ**

**National Freephone Helpline: 0800 915 4666
Website: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk
Email: benefit.check@actionforblindpeople.org.uk**

Registered Charity No. 205913



Action for blind people

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14 - 16 Verney Road London SE16 3DZ

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Website: www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk

Dear Doctor,

Exemption from NHS Prescription Charges

As you may be aware, people who have a *"continuing physical disability which prevents [them] from leaving home without the help of another person"* are exempt from NHS prescription charges. **Action for Blind People** believes that all blind and partially sighted people will require some form of outdoor assistance and should therefore qualify. Please note that the new term for being registered blind or partially sighted is 'severely sight impaired' and 'sight impaired' (please see our Registration Briefing for further information). However, we refer to the old terms throughout this fact sheet as many people are still unfamiliar with the new terms.

Whether someone is registered partially sighted or blind they will encounter a variety of hazards when they leave their home. Negotiating everyday outdoor obstacles, in both familiar and unfamiliar locations, is an ever-present problem. The most common obstacles are pillars, posts, parked cars, dustbins, gates left open, overhanging branches and other pedestrians. Equally problematic are holes in the road, loose or uneven paving and kerb stones, road works, steps, stairs, and wet road surfaces. Even if someone is proficient in using a long cane or has a guide dog they will never be able to anticipate all these hazards. Thus, in order to ensure the safety of a visually impaired person, outdoor guidance and supervision is required.

Blind and partially sighted people will usually encounter difficulties crossing roads unassisted. Busy roads are particularly dangerous. It is often difficult to identify oncoming traffic, especially cyclists. It is also quite difficult for a blind or partially sighted person to judge the speed of approaching vehicles and assess whether traffic has stopped to let them cross.

Another problem is following directions. All blind and partially sighted people will experience problems finding their way from one place to another on their own. Common difficulties are reading maps, bus or train numbers and destinations, public notice boards, timetables, street or shop signs and door numbers.

Different lighting conditions will considerably affect the ability of blind and partially sighted people to operate independently. Most partially sighted people

will have their mobility substantially restricted in the dark. Other lighting conditions which are normally problematic are rainy or overcast conditions, dim artificial light and bright sunlight or glare.

The problems I have described are fairly common to all blind and partially sighted people. In effect, therefore, people with visual impairments will usually need another person to provide guidance or supervision both in unfamiliar areas and in the dark or poor light. Even on familiar routes no-one can ensure that the streets are free from potential hazards and obstacles. I would therefore request that you sign form FP92A (EC92A in Scotland or FP92W in Wales) to confirm that your client needs outdoor help on account of their disability.

Yours sincerely

David Feast
Welfare Rights Manager