

Pharmacy First: Navigating eligibility and consultation fees



Introduction

The Pharmacy First service offers an accessible avenue for patients to receive consultation for seven common minor ailments. As a pharmacist, understanding the eligibility and gateway criteria is crucial to ensure that patients receive timely care, and that you can secure the consultation fee.

This module will outline the eligibility criteria, gateway criteria, and provide practical steps from patient referral or walk-in, to reimbursement.

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Understanding patient eligibility

Identifying patients who meet the eligibility criteria is the first step towards providing care. Eligibility is primarily based on the clinical condition and the patient's age. Here are the conditions and the corresponding age ranges:

Clinical pathway	Age range
Acute Otitis Media (excluding distance selling pharmacies)	1 to 17 years
Impetigo	1 year +
Infected insect bites	1 year +
Shingles	18 years +
Acute sinusitis	12 years +
Acute sore throat	5 years +
Uncomplicated urinary tract infections	Women 16-64 years



Gateway criteria for service provision

Pharmacists are required to fulfil specific criteria to ensure they are eligible for consultation fees. Understanding and adhering to these gateway criteria is essential for the provision of high-quality care and for securing reimbursement.



Completing a full consultation

- Conduct an in-depth consultation for each patient, adhering strictly to the clinical pathways provided by the NHS Pharmacy First Service.
- Use clinical judgment and expertise to assess the patient's condition accurately, ensuring that treatment or advice is appropriate and based on the latest clinical guidance.



Making appropriate records

- Detailed and accurate documentation of each consultation is mandatory.
- This includes patient information, the nature of the consultation, advice given, medications prescribed (if any) and follow-up actions.



Correct treatment or advice

- Provide treatment or advice that aligns with the service's guidelines for the seven common conditions.
- Decisions should be informed by the patient's specific needs and the pharmacist's clinical assessment, with a focus on safety and efficacy.

Documentation and record-keeping best practices

Effective documentation and record-keeping are critical components of the Pharmacy First Service, ensuring both compliance with NHS standards, and the delivery of patient-centred care.

Key aspects of documentation:

Patient information:

Record all relevant patient details, including name, date of birth, NHS number (if available), and a summary of the health issue presented.

Consultation details:

Include the date and time of the consultation, the clinical assessment, any advice given, and the outcome of the consultation (e.g. medication dispensed, referral made).

Medication records:

For medications prescribed or dispensed, detail the name, dosage, quantity, and instructions for use. Highlight any patient-specific considerations such as allergies or contraindications.

Follow-up actions:

Document any recommendations for follow-up care, whether with the pharmacy, the patient's GP, or another healthcare provider.



Record-keeping best practices:



Ensure that records are stored securely and are accessible only to authorised personnel to protect patient confidentiality.



Use the NHS assured Pharmacy First IT system for all documentation to ensure consistency and security of records.



Regularly review and update records to reflect any changes in the patient's condition or treatment plan.



Engage in continuous training and updates on documentation practices to remain compliant with NHS guidelines and best practices.

Importance of accurate documentation:

Supports the continuity of care by providing a comprehensive record of patient interactions and treatments.

Facilitates the claim process for consultation fees by providing clear, auditable evidence of service provision.

Enhances patient safety by ensuring that all clinical decisions and actions are well-documented and informed by the patient's health record.



Reimbursement and funding clarifications

Effective financial management under the NHS Pharmacy First Service hinges on a comprehensive grasp of claiming procedures, the structured funding approach, and the specifics of medication reimbursement.

Claiming the consultation fee:

Pharmacists must submit claims for consultation fees through the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) Manage Your Service (MYS) portal, providing necessary documentation of the service provided.

Detailed records of consultations are crucial for supporting claims, emphasising the importance of accurate and comprehensive documentation practices.

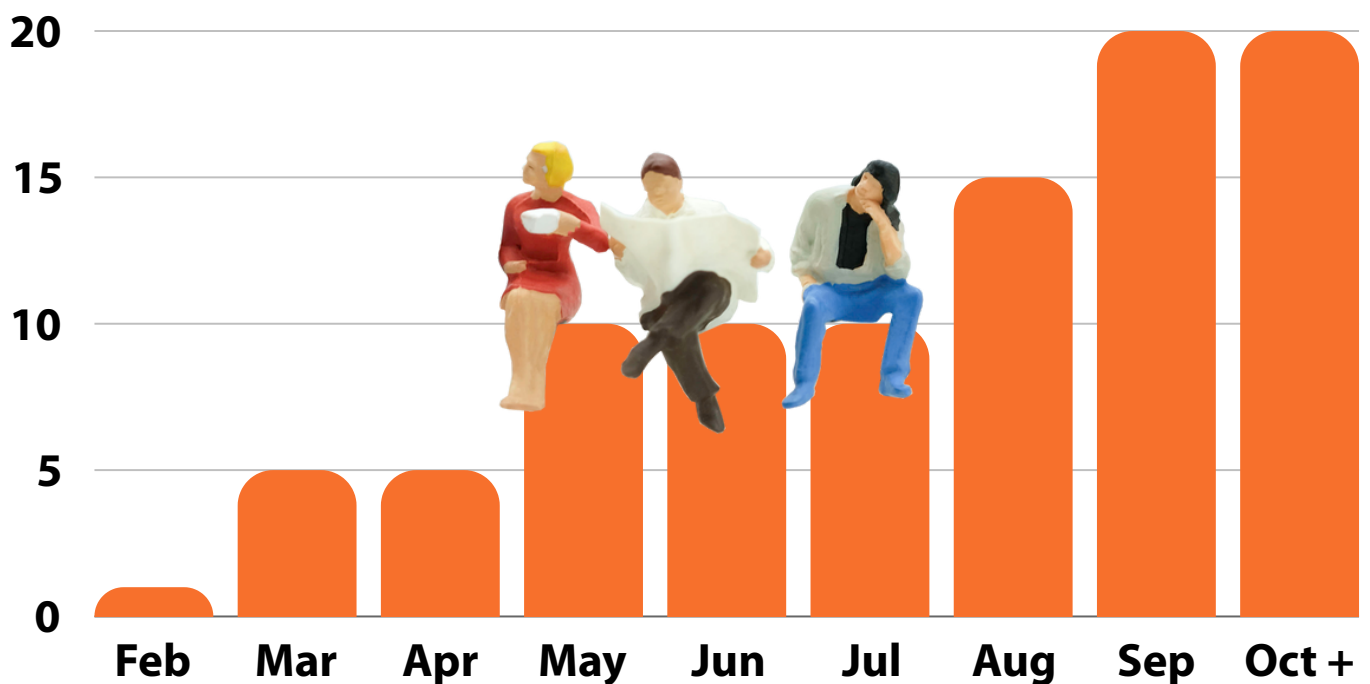


Understanding the funding structure:

The funding structure, comprising block payments, consultation fees, and reimbursement for NHS medicine supplied, necessitates a minimum number of consultations (see graph below).

Pharmacists are reimbursed for medicines supplied under the service per the Drug Tariff guidelines. This includes medicines dispensed under patient group directions (PGDs) or clinical protocols.

Minimum number of consultations passing the gateway point to receive £1,000 monthly payment



Visit the [Community Pharmacy England](#) website for the latest information on Pharmacy First

Financial management best practices:



Ensure accurate financial records and billing practices to comply with NHS payment requirements, regularly reviewing and updating these processes.



Maintain detailed records of all services provided, including consultations and medicines supplied, to facilitate timely and accurate claims for reimbursement.



In a nutshell – Five top tips

1

Know your eligibility criteria: Always verify a patient's age and assess their condition against the service's clinical pathways to determine eligibility for the Pharmacy First service. Remember, some conditions have specific age restrictions, and Distance Selling Pharmacies have exceptions for certain consultations.

2

Follow gateway criteria diligently: Ensure a thorough consultation is completed, documented, and the appropriate treatment or advice is given. These are your key gateway criteria for unlocking the consultation fee. Each step must be met with precision to ensure service quality and eligibility for reimbursement.

3

Document efficiently and accurately: Keep detailed records of consultations, including patient details, assessments, medications, and advice provided. Use the NHS assured Pharmacy First IT system to maintain consistency and security in your records. Accurate documentation is vital for both patient care and claiming your fee.

4

Understand the financial process: Familiarise yourself with the claims process through the NHSBSA MYS portal and keep abreast of the Drug Tariff for medication reimbursement. Understanding this process will aid in financial management and ensure timely reimbursement for services provided.

5

Stay informed and updated: The NHS Pharmacy First Service's guidelines and tariffs can change. Engage in continuous professional development, keep your clinical knowledge up-to-date, and stay informed on policy updates.