MINI BULLETIN - 16 April 2024

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has announced that from**1st May 2024**, the NHS prescription charge will **increase to £9.90 per prescription item**(note: some items may incur more than one charge).

For [**prescriptions dispensed in April 2024**](https://emea01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcpe.org.uk%2Four-news%2Fnhs-prescription-charge-of-9-65-to-roll-over-into-april%2F&data=05%7C02%7C%7Cd2d0bd634e4f4ef9622508dc5de9aead%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638488505447269197%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=04O%2BxMVIVNgUXFshIuZvtm11hSlVxdO1d4gZdEwIG1o%3D&reserved=0), the NHS prescription charge will remain at £9.65.

Assorted elections are scheduled to take place in England on **Thursday, 02 May 2024**.

**NHS is advised that during the pre-election period, there should be:**

·        No new announcements of policy or strategy

·        No announcements on large and/or contentious procurement contracts

·       No participation by NHS representatives in debates and events that may be politically controversial, whether at national or local level.

These restrictions apply in all cases other than where postponement would be detrimental to the effective running of the local NHS, or wasteful of public money.

Communications activities necessary for operational delivery purposes should continue as normal.

**You should consider:**

·        **Requests for information:** These should always be handled in an impartial manner so that information is made available to all candidates. Information should be factual, and candidates should be responded to in a timely manner.

·       **Briefing MPs and Ministers:** These should be handled as per the usual process, ensuring any information shared is factual.

·        **Consultations:** No consultations should be launched during the pre-election period unless they are considered essential. Ongoing consultations should continue but should not be promoted. Consultation periods can be extended if it is expected that the pre-election period will impact negatively on the quality of the consultation. Consultation responses should not be published until after the pre-election period comes to an end.

·       **Media handling:** Avoid proactive media work on issues that may be contentious. Reactive lines should be factual and where possible, in line with previous lines.

·       **Events:** Avoid attending events where you may be asked to respond to questions about policy or on matters of public controversy. This may mean withdrawing from previously agreed engagements.

·       **Visits from Politicians:** The decision to host visits is at your discretion. The same approach must be applied to all visit requests from candidates/parties to avoid any question of bias. This means, if you agree to a visit from a candidate, all other candidates should be invited to visit. Any visits should not interfere with the day-to-day running of your service and you should be mindful of patient privacy and dignity.

·       **Social media and web:** Nothing contentious should be posted on your website or social media accounts. Updates/posts, including blogs, should only convey essential factual information.

·       **Campaigns:** Do not undertake major publicity campaigns unless time critical (ie a public health emergency).

·       **Board meetings:** Board meetings should be confined to discussing matters that need a board decision or require board oversight. Public board discussions on matters of future strategy should be deferred.

·        **Appointments of Board Members and Non-Executive Directors:** Appointments can continue as per the usual process unless you are concerned appointments may flare up local political sensitivities, in which case, you may wish to postpone until after the elections. Exercise sensitivity over the timing of any announcements.

·        **Foundation Trust Governor elections:** There is nothing to prevent Foundation Trust Governor elections taking place. As above, exercise caution if there are concerns these may become political. Again, any announcements should be carefully considered during this period.

·        **Marketing:** Printed materials, such as posters and leaflets, promoting contentious policy or proposed policy should not be given fresh circulation, but can be retained and issued in small numbers on request. Films and other media produced by the NHS, including the NHS logo, should not be made available for use by candidates/parties.

·        **Staff activism:** NHS employees are free to undertake political activism in a personal capacity but should not involve their organisation or create the impression of their organisation’s involvement or endorsement.