

Have You Received an NHS Penalty Charge?

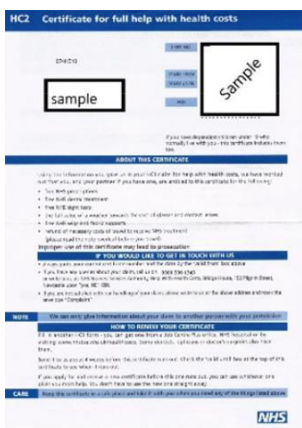
What is a penalty charge?

A penalty charge is a fine you receive as a result of not paying for a prescription when the NHS think that you should. This is usually as a result of **ticking the wrong box** on the prescription form. The penalty charge can be **anything up to £100** and the NHS will charge you an extra £50 if you do not pay within 28 days of receiving the penalty charge notice.

Challenging a Penalty Charge

It may be possible to challenge your penalty charge. For example, if you think you are entitled to free prescriptions or you were confused about which box to tick on the form.

There are a few reasons why you can challenge the penalty charge that you have received:

<p>1 You are entitled to NHS free prescriptions</p> <p>You might like to refer to the other side of this leaflet to help you work out if you are entitled to free NHS prescriptions.</p>	<p>2 You have a Prepayment Certificate</p> <p>These certificates are evidence that you have already paid a fee up front in order to receive prescriptions. It means you do not have to pay every time you go to collect a prescription.</p>
<p>3 You have a valid In date Certificate</p> <p>An example of a certificate that entitle you to free NHS Prescriptions is a HC2 form. These are for people with low incomes.</p>  <p>The image shows a sample HC2 Certificate for full help with health costs. It includes sections for 'ABOUT THIS CERTIFICATE', 'HOW TO ACCESS YOUR CERTIFICATE', and 'CALL'.</p>	<p>4 You have exceptional reasons not to pay</p> <p>This list is only some of the possible exceptional reasons that you might have. If you believe you have an exceptional reason then you should try to challenge the penalty charge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• English is not your first language so you were genuinely confused as to which box to tick• You could not read due to illiteracy.• You suffer with a mental health condition which affected your ability to understand which box to tick.• You were on Contribution-based Employment Support Allowance (ESA) but it was unreasonable for you to understand whether you were on Contribution-based ESA or Income Related ESA.

Make sure to **check the date** your penalty charge was issued. If you don't pay the charge within **28 days**, it will **go up by 50%**. However, this will not happen if you have already lodged a challenge during the 28-day period!

You can **call (03003301368)** the NHS business team or **write a letter (NHSBSA, PO Box 321, Darlington, DL98 1AL)** or **email (nhsbsa.dentalbecs@nhsbsa.nhs.uk)**. It may be better to write an email or a letter instead of calling. You should keep the letter or email as evidence that you challenged the penalty charge. You can see an example of a template letter on the CIAS website (<https://covadvice.org.uk/>).

If your challenge is unsuccessful, you can use the NHS Complaints procedures to take the matter further or when this has been exhausted, you can go to the Health Ombudsman for further assistance.