



Dear Colleague

COMMUNITY PHARMACY SERVICES – AMENDMENTS TO PHARMACY FIRST REMUNERATION MODEL AND INTRODUCTION OF PHARMACY FIRST PLUS ACTIVITY POT

Purpose

1. This circular informs Health Boards and community pharmacy contractors of amendments to weightings for the NHS Pharmacy First Scotland service and the introduction of an activity-based remuneration pot for NHS Pharmacy First Plus independent prescribing activity.

Background

2. The common clinical conditions independent prescriber service, also known as Pharmacy First Plus, was introduced in Scotland in August 2020. [Circular PCA \(P\)\(2020\) 16](#) set out the associated funding and service specification. As indicated in the circular, it has been the intention of the Scottish Government, in association with Community Pharmacy Scotland and Health Boards, to extend the service as the cohort of qualified independent prescriber pharmacists increases and experience is gained in its scope and delivery. This will be done in a step-wise manner, with a new service specification and any associated changes to terms and conditions being published in 2026.
3. As a first step in service redevelopment, this circular introduces changes to claiming and remuneration.

31 October 2025

Addresses

For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards
Director of Practitioner
Services, NHS NSS

For information

Directors of Finance, NHS
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Detail

NHS Pharmacy First Scotland Service – Weightings

4. From 1 November 2025, the weighting for **PGD advice and referral activity** will be set to 1. Treatment will continue to be weighted at 5.
5. Pharmacy contractors and their teams are reminded of their responsibilities towards supporting the Anti-Microbial Resistance Action Plan. Antibiotic treatments should only be supplied when absolutely necessary, and all “advice only” and “referral” outcomes **must** be recorded and claimed for to support monitoring and evaluation.

NHS Pharmacy First Scotland Service – Introduction of an Upper Activity Threshold

6. An upper threshold for activity claims is being introduced to ensure a more equitable distribution of the existing NHS PFS activity pot.
7. Where weighted activity exceeds 1,000 in a calendar month, each activity point beyond this threshold will reduce to 0.1. For the avoidance of doubt, this calculation will include claims for Advice, Referral and Treatment for both standard and PGD consultations as well as Advice and Referral claims for the NHS PFS Plus independent prescribing service.
8. Details on Treatment claims for the NHS PFS Plus service going forward are provided below. Colleagues at NSS Practitioner Services Division (PSD) will work towards an implementation date of December 1st 2025 for this change.
9. The Scottish Government will monitor activity over the six months from implementation to gauge whether this action has had the desired effect and commits to review the implementation of this arrangement.

Independent Prescribing Remuneration Model - Arrangements from 1 November 2025

10. The existing base payment of £3,000 per month will continue to be made to the contractor named on a Board's pharmaceutical list at the first day of that month for each full month the service is made available in the community pharmacy. Where the service starts during the month, claimed activity will be recognised and paid.
11. Any eligible contractor who wishes to sign up for the service should complete the form found at Annex B of the [August 2020 circular](#). As a reminder, this form must only be submitted and the service must only be commenced once the prescribing IP is able to prescribe as an IP on the NHS. This will require a prescriber code and, until such times as a prescribing system is developed to support this service electronically, a prescription pad provided by the Health Board for the express purpose of delivering NHS PFS Plus.
12. Should a contractor have an independent prescriber employed but does not expect to meet the minimum requirement of 25 hours per week of service availability for a minimum of 45 weeks per year, that contractor may now offer the service in line with all other requirements of the service specification and be remunerated for claimed activity. However, the contractor will not be eligible for the monthly £3,000 base

payment. Future arrangements with regards to remuneration for hours of operation will be discussed and agreed between CPS and the Scottish Government in 2026.

13. From 1 November 2025, contractors delivering the service as specified will also receive an activity payment from a newly established monthly pot for IP prescribing activity, initially agreed at £0.5m. There is no minimum activity threshold set to access the NHS PFS Plus activity payment pot.
14. As described above, Advice and Referral claims will continue to be paid from the NHS PFS activity pot with a relative weighting of 1. Where an independent prescriber has decided that it is absolutely necessary to treat a common clinical condition, they may submit an NHS Pharmacy First Plus "Supply" claim using the Universal Claim Framework (UCF) to access the newly established pot. Eligible outcomes include where prescriptions are written on NHS Board-issued IP pads for the supply of:
 - a. a Prescription-Only Medicine (POM)
 - b. a P/GSL product which does **not** appear on the NHS PFS approved list
 - c. a P/GSL product which **does** appear on the approved list **but** is being used outwith its P or GSL license restrictions.
15. The activity fee will be capped at £40 per intervention and will have a minimum value of £30. The fee rate and weightings will be reviewed after six months and regularly thereafter.
16. Pharmacy contractors and their teams are reminded of their responsibility to work within established NHS prescribing guidance and local formularies. Contractors must also ensure that consultations resulting in Advice or Referral continue to be recorded to support service monitoring and evaluation.
17. National Services Scotland has confirmed the described activity model will be implemented for December 2025 dispensing month paid calendar month February 2026. In February 2026, contractors will receive payment for activity carried out in December as well as a retrospective payment for eligible activity from November.
18. [Circular PCA\(2025\) 18](#) noted that an activity pot for NHS Pharmacy First Plus would be introduced from October 2025. To ensure the full delivery of the activity pot value for the financial year, a balancing payment will be made to each contractor set against the monthly figure of £0.5m for the month of October 2025 only. This will be distributed as a proportion of the dispensing pool allocation for October, paid in December.

Claiming

19. Each consultation will continue to be recorded on the Universal Claim Framework (UCF) module used to record Pharmacy First Plus (IP) consultations described in [Circular PCA\(P\)\(2024\) 32](#).
20. The only change to claiming practice will be for IP consultations where the only treatment provided is a licensed use of a P/GSL item that appears on the NHS PFS approved list. These items should be processed via the Standard service module, with an **Advice Only** claim for NHS PFS Plus also being submitted to indicate that the consultation was carried out by an IP Pharmacist.

21. Contractors are reminded of their responsibility to ensure that all eligible NHS PFS activity is recorded for data auditing and evaluation purposes.

Service Specification

22. In 2026, an updated service specification for NHS Pharmacy First Scotland and its IP component will be agreed and published to bring together various adjustments made since the initial August 2020 circular and to introduce prospective changes to the service model.

Consultation

23. Community Pharmacy Scotland has been consulted on the Drug Tariff amendments and the contents of this circular.

Action

24. Health Boards are asked to:

- note the contents of this circular; and
- copy to all community pharmacy contractors on their pharmaceutical list, Health and Social Care Partnerships and the Area Pharmaceutical Board.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alison Strath', is positioned above the printed name.

**PROFESSOR ALISON STRATH FRPharmS
CHIEF PHARMACEUTICAL OFFICER**