

To all Community Pharmacies

28 September 2012

Dear Community Pharmacist

Re: Accelerated Pharmacy Payment Project (APP project)

The European Union Late Payment Directive 2000/35/EC requires that public and private sectors pay a bill for goods or services within 30 days. Contractors have always been given a Special Advance payment to allow for the fact that the current payment cycle is 60 days. Following the recent consultation on adjusting the special advance^[1] in which there was a recommendation to move to a 30 day payment schedule, the Business Services Organisation, Community Pharmacy Northern Ireland and the Health and Social Care Board have been working together to identify better ways of making prompt payments to community pharmacy contractors through the Accelerated Payment Project (APP).

The aim of APP is to enable the payment of prescriptions submitted to the BSO within a “30 day” payment term, which would mean that payment would be made on the last working day of the month following the month in which the prescriptions were dispensed. A 30 day payment schedule would deliver an accelerated payment with timely payment-related information to contractors, timely financial and professional information to the HSC Board and would obviate the need for special advance payments, such that this facility will be removed going forward.

Delivery of the Project will depend upon:

^[1]<http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/consult/Past%20Consultations/Past%20Consultations/index.html>

1. Improved quality of submissions by contractors, such that contractors submissions can be prepared and scanned within a much shorter period by BSO
2. Introduction of two submission dates for prescriptions, with at least 60% of prescriptions in the first submission
3. Changes in processes and working patterns at BSO
4. A high level of auto-coding to reduce manual input at BSO

Good submissions

Guidance has been issued recently to all contractors in respect of improving submissions through the Good Submission Poster and further information was provided at the recent roadshows. The Guidance can also be found on the BSO website.

Dual submissions

A pilot, testing the feasibility of dual submissions using a courier service, was undertaken in July and August and has recently been evaluated. The evaluation demonstrated that pharmacies provided with a courier service were more likely to achieve the submission deadlines than those using their normal arrangements. As a result of this evaluation, HSCB, BSO and CPNI, have jointly decided that a courier service will be rolled out to all community pharmacies and that all pharmacies will be requested to make dual submissions by November 2012.

This will be a tight timescale for all pharmacies to achieve, however it is necessary to have adequate time to test all the other aspects of the process changes necessary to make two payments to contractors during March 2013, and then according to a "30 day" schedule on an ongoing basis.

The roll out programme will be as follows:

Month	Dual Submission Contractors
September 2012	All 30 pilot pharmacies and all Boots branches
October 2012	In addition to above, all Medicare, Lloyds Pharmacy, Clear Pharmacy, Cooperative Pharmacy, McKeever's Pharmacy, Bradley Pharmacy, Gordons Chemists, Northern Pharmacies and McKay Pharmacy branches
November 2012	All pharmacy contractors in NI

We recognise that this change in submission may require significant change in your business processes and advise that you start to prepare for these changes immediately.

The submission schedule is detailed below:

Year	PRESCRIPTION MONTH	1st Courier Collection Date	2nd Courier Collection Date
2012	September	Monday 24th September	Friday 5th October
2012	October	Wednesday 24th October	Tuesday 6th November
2012	November	Friday 23rd November	Thursday 6th December
2012	December	Friday 21st December	Monday 7th January
2013	January	Thursday 24th January	Wednesday 6th February
2013	February	Monday 25th February	Wednesday 6th March
2013	March	Monday 25th March	Friday 5th April

Prescriptions should be prepared and ready for collection by the courier at 9am on the date of collection.

The roll out of dual submission and the quality of submissions will be formally evaluated on a monthly basis.

BSO will be in direct contact with individual contractors about what is needed to deliver dual submission and will provide information on the BSO website to support all contractors.

Changes in processes and working patterns at BSO

BSO staff are already endeavouring to complete their processes earlier than required by the current payment schedule and, in order to do so, need to have receipt of submissions within the stipulated timescales. BSO systems and processes will be subjected to robust testing during the months leading up to the implementation of an accelerated payment.

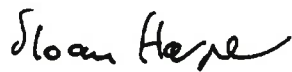
Auto-coding

A high level of auto-coding is required to reduce manual data input at BSO. Contractors are asked to ensure that bar-codes on prescriptions are not defaced or altered in any way.

The Implementation Team will also produce guidance for GP colleagues regarding the aims of the project, detailing how practices can support pharmacists in making timely submissions.

Your co-operation with this important Project is requested and would be much appreciated.

Yours faithfully



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HSCB



Ms Teresa Molloy
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Mr G F Greene
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cc. Accelerated Pharmacy Payment Implementation Board Members
APP Implementation Team

