

# Help with Health Costs



Sight Test  
and Glasses

## Are your patients entitled to claim?

If your patients claim free health service treatment that they're not entitled to, they could be facing penalty charges of up to £150 – as well as the original treatment charge. By following the guidance below, you can protect both your patients and health service funds.

### Do

- Ensure that point of treatment checks are carried out and that staff carrying out these checks are familiar with exemption criteria.
- Request supporting evidence as this acts as an effective deterrent to those simply trying to avoid payment. e.g. a valid award notice from the Jobs and Benefit Office or Pension Service. If proof is not provided tick the 'evidence not seen' box and ask the patient to bring it on their next visit.
- Ensure that the correct exemption category is accurately recorded on the claim form. Failure to do so may result in unnecessary exemption checks by the BSO and incorrect letters being issued to patients.
- Ask patients to confirm that the personal details you hold for them are correct.
- Display Help with Health Costs materials and encourage patients to read the supporting materials before making a declaration.

### Do Not

- Do not prompt patients as to which benefit(s) they may be in receipt of. Patients should only be advised as to which benefits qualify for help with health costs.
- Do not assume that a patient on Universal Credit or Pension Credit is automatically exempt.
- Patients in receipt of Universal Credit must have earnings under the relevant income threshold to qualify for help with costs. Pension Credit Savings Credit does not qualify a patient for help with costs.
- Do not assume that a patient who was previously exempt from charges is still entitled – circumstances change.
- Do not assume that someone who does not work is automatically entitled.
- Do not sign the form on behalf of the patient, the declaration is the patient's agreement to receive NHS ophthalmic treatment and must only be signed by the patient or their representative.
- Do not turn a blind eye. If you suspect that a patient is intentionally misclaiming help with health costs, call the HSC Fraud Hotline on 0800 096 33 96.

## Further Information

If you are still unsure if a patient qualifies for help with health costs please contact the Exemptions Team:

Telephone : 028 9536 1645

Email : [exemptions.team@hscni.net](mailto:exemptions.team@hscni.net)



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# Help with Health Costs

## Exemption Checking Guide



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A patient is entitled if they are named on an award of:	Suitable evidence
Universal Credit	<p>A full award notice from Jobcentre Plus confirming that the patient is named or included in an award of Universal Credit on the date(s) of treatment, and shows that the Take Home pay was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• £435* or less, or</li><li>• £935* or less if there is a child element or a limited capability for work</li></ul> <p>*Correct at time of issue January 2026 - may be subject to change over time.</p>
Income Support, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance	A full award letter from the Jobs and Benefit Office confirming that the patient is named or included in an award of Income Support, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance on the date(s) of treatment.
Pension Credit Guarantee Credit	A full award letter from the Pension Service confirming that the patient is named or included in an award of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit on the date(s) of treatment.
HC2 Certificate	A HC2 certificate with the patient's name on it, which is valid on the date(s) of treatment.
HC3 Certificate (partial assistance)	A HC3 certificate with the patient's name on it, which is valid on the date(s) of treatment and shows the maximum amount the patient is expected to pay towards their treatment charge.
A patient is entitled if they are:	Suitable evidence
Under 16	Any official document showing their name and date of birth, such as a birth certificate, medical card or passport.
Aged 16-18 and in full time education	Proof that the patient is a full-time student e.g. a copy of a letter from the school or college.
Aged 60 or over	Any official document showing their name and date of birth, such as a birth certificate, medical card or passport.

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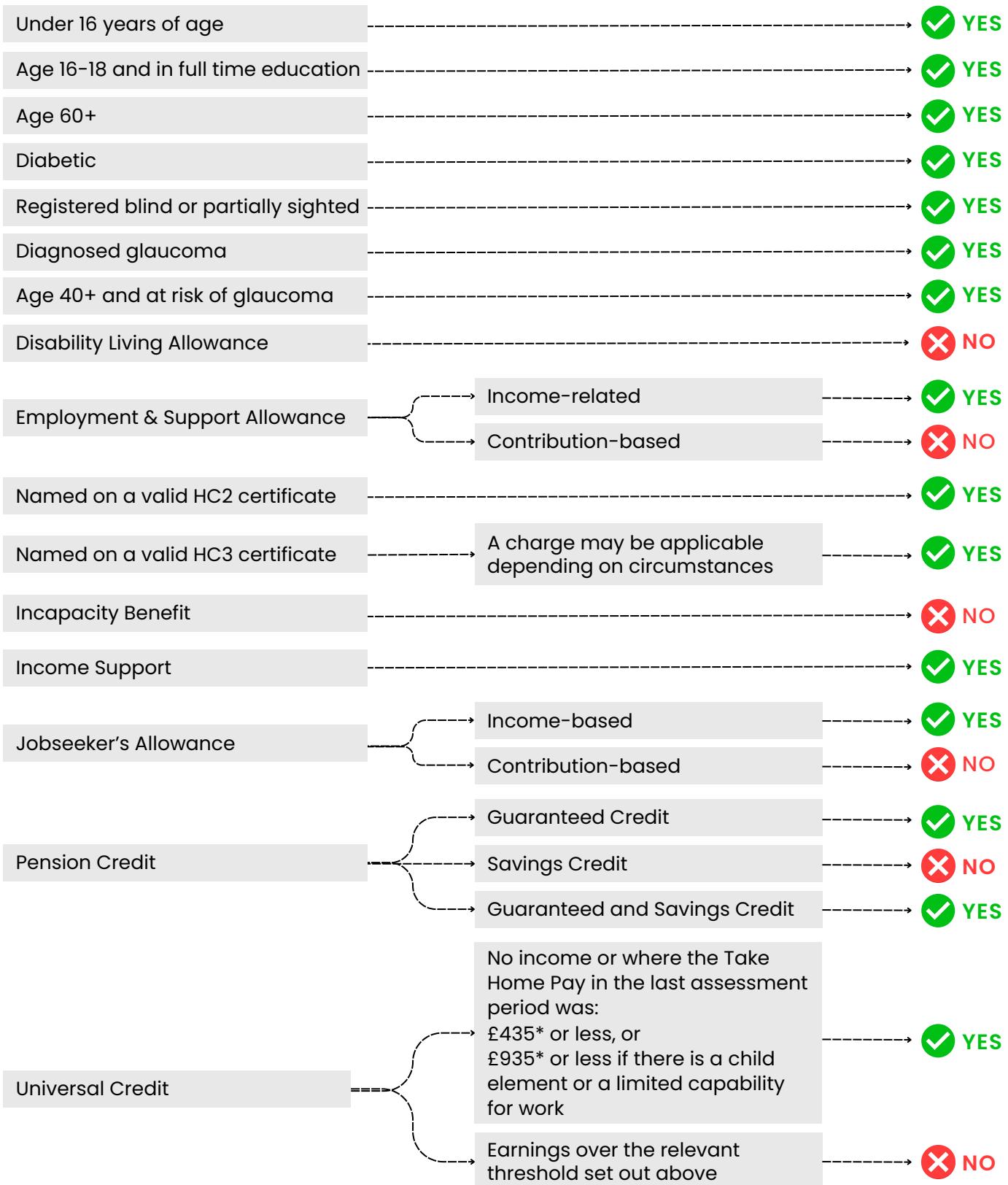
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# Help with Health Costs



Sight Test

## Exemption Check Quick Reference Guide



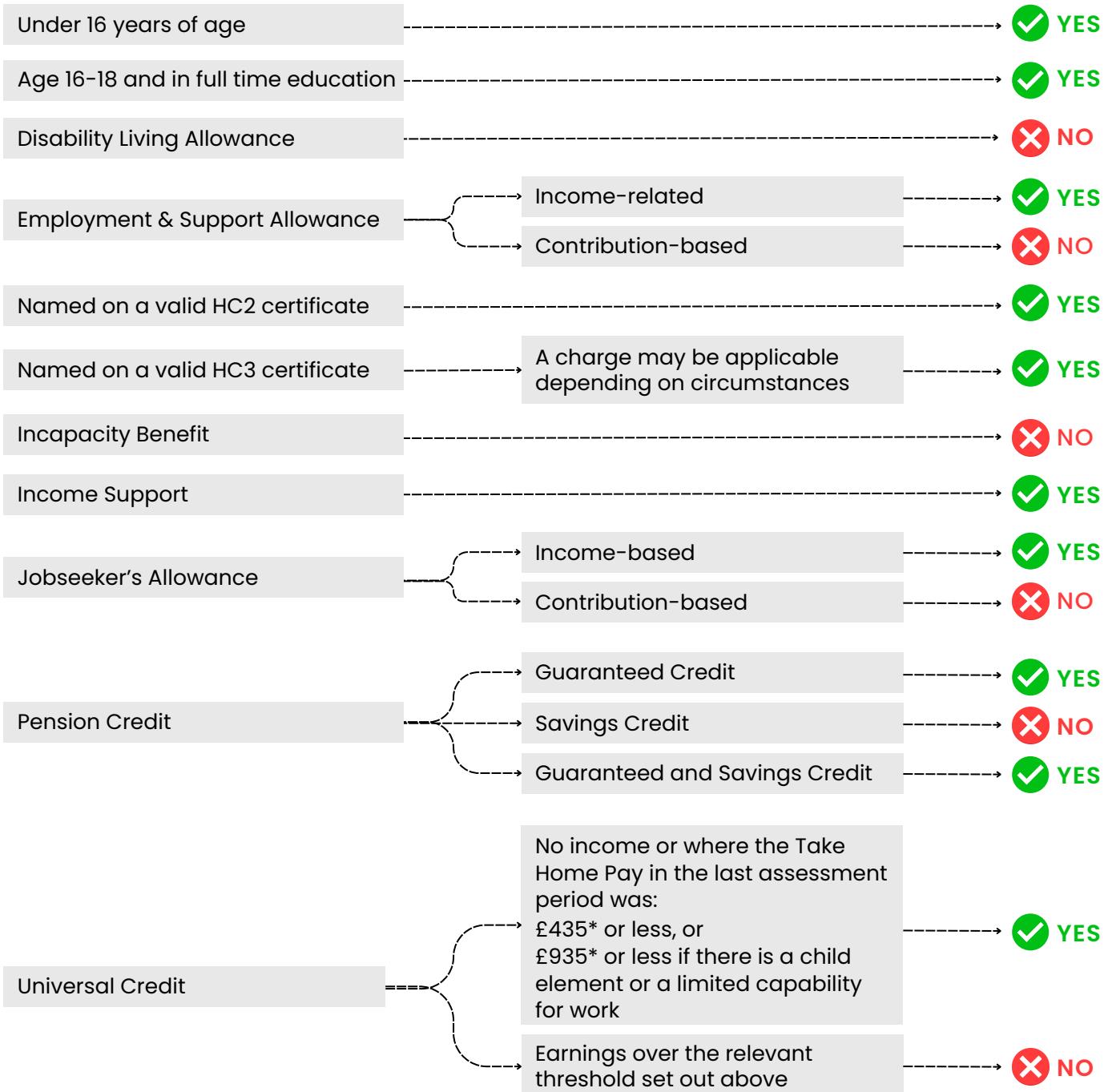
\*Correct at time of issue January 2026  
May be subject to change over time.

# Help with Health Costs



Glasses and  
Contacts

## Exemption Check Quick Reference Guide



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# Help with Health Costs



Sight Test

## Are you entitled to claim?

If you are claiming help with the cost of a sight test, it is your responsibility to check that you are entitled to help before you declare that you do not have to pay.

Routine checks are carried out by the Business Services Organisation. If you claim free treatment that you are not entitled to, you could face penalty charges of up to £150, in addition to the original treatment charge. It is therefore in your best interest to claim correctly.

## Who is entitled?

You are entitled to free or reduced cost treatment if you:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are named or included in an award of Universal Credit and in the last assessment period the Take Home Pay was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• £435* or less, or</li><li>• £935* or less if there is a child element or a limited capability for work</li></ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are named on a valid HC3 Certificate (offering partial assistance with charges)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are named or included in an award of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are under 16 years of age
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are named or included in an award of Income Support, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are aged 16, 17 or 18 and in full time education
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are named on a valid HC2 Certificate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are aged 60 years or over
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are diagnosed diabetic
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are diagnosed as having glaucoma
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are aged 40 or over and have a parent, brother, sister, son or daughter with glaucoma
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are registered blind or partially sighted
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> have been prescribed complex lenses

Not all benefits entitle you to free treatment. You are not entitled to claim help with health costs if you only receive, or are included in, an award of:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Incapacity Benefit
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carers Allowance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pension Credit Saving Credit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disability Living Allowance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Housing Benefit
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Universal Credit and the Take Home Pay is above the relevant threshold set out above	

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# Help with Health Costs



Glasses and  
Contacts

## Are you entitled to claim?

If you are claiming help with the cost of glasses or contact lenses, it is your responsibility to check that you are entitled to help before you declare that you do not have to pay.

Routine checks are carried out by the Business Services Organisation. If you claim free treatment that you are not entitled to, you could face penalty charges of up to £150, in addition to the original treatment charge. It is therefore in your best interest to claim correctly.

## Who is entitled?

You are entitled to free or reduced cost treatment if you:

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are named or included in an award of Universal Credit and in the last assessment period the Take Home Pay was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• £435* or less, or</li><li>• £935* or less if there is a child element or a limited capability for work</li></ul>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are named or included in an award of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit</p>
	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are named on a valid HC2 Certificate</p>
	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are named on a valid HC3 Certificate (offering partial assistance with charges)</p>
	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are under 16 years of age</p>
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are named or included in an award of Income Support, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> are aged 16, 17 or 18 and in full time education</p>
	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> have been prescribed complex lenses</p>

Not all benefits entitle you to free treatment. You are not entitled to claim help with health costs if you only receive, or are included in, an award of:

<p><input type="checkbox"/> Contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Incapacity Benefit</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Carers Allowance</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Pension Credit Saving Credit</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Personal Independence Payment (PIP)</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Disability Living Allowance</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Housing Benefit</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Universal Credit and the Take Home Pay is above the relevant threshold set out above</p>	

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