

Methadone changes – LPC Comms

The Department of Health (DH) released on Friday 4th May, preliminary information concerning stage 2 of the Drug Tariff Simplification process, due to be implemented in July 2012. Stage 2 includes a package of measures; namely changes to the reimbursement rules for liquid methadone prescribed on FP10MDA & FP10 prescriptions, as well as the introduction of a payment system to reflect the increased cost of dispensing in split packs.

The new arrangements for methadone payments due to come into effect on 1st July 2012 have been developed using analysis completed from national NHSBSA prescription data and was based on steady state prescribing (i.e. not taking into account any future policy changes to the prescribing practice of addict dispensing).

A working group of the PSNC performed this analysis and comprised of: one independent representative, one representative from a regional multiple chain, and one representative from a large national multiple; all with significant interest in methadone dispensing.

Some endorsement claims made for methadone prescriptions are not eligible for extra payment currently as either the instructions to supply “daily dose containers” have not been written correctly or contractors have incorrectly endorsed their prescriptions. It is possible that pharmacists have been submitting prescriptions expecting to be paid additionally for daily dose containers, but have not, in fact, been receiving payment. The Department of Health (DH) wants to simplify payments for oral methadone and ensure that they accurately reflect the workload involved. The revised payment system will ensure correct payment for **all** methadone prescriptions (including a new payment for methadone prescribed on an FP10 form) and PSNC’s analysis has indicated that these new arrangements will be cost neutral **overall** to pharmacy. To ensure that overall funding is not adversely affected, we will be monitoring total items and spend from Methadone prescriptions on FP10MDA forms for Q1 and Q2 of 2012-2013. If it appears that the overall comparison of Q1 to Q2 results indicate a significant reduction in fee spend, we will submit this information to DH for consideration.

For further queries contact the PSNC information on 0844 381 4181 or email info@psnc.org.uk.

Summary of the new arrangements (effective 1st July 2012)

- Payment will be based on each occasion the pharmacist provides methadone to the patient i.e. for each instalment collected rather than on the number of “daily doses” supplied.
 - For each interaction with the patient or “pick-up” for oral methadone when prescribed on an FP10MDA form, contractors will receive: a professional fee, CD fee, the container allowance and any relevant volume-related fees.

- Contractors will also receive an additional fee of £4.05 for **every** prescription (FP10MDA and FP10) for methadone oral liquid.

- This fee is paid automatically; therefore no endorsement is required to claim it.
 - The £4.05 form level fee is to help support the contractor with the costs of the additional workload involved in ensuring the patient is able to measure their medicine appropriately, including interaction with the patient or prescriber to understand whether dispensing in daily bottles is appropriate, preparing the daily dose bottles or providing an appropriate measuring device.
 - Where the instructions “daily dose containers” is not included on the prescription, the pharmacist remains able to exercise their discretion to dispense in daily dose bottles where it does not contradict a preference indicated by the prescriber. Pharmacists will have to consider for themselves as part of their professional obligations, whether the patient requires daily dose containers in order to be able to administer the correct daily amounts. Where there are concerns regarding the appropriateness of instalment frequency, the pharmacist should discuss these with the prescriber directly. The extra fee is applicable for prescriptions for methadone oral liquid **only** and will be available on FP10 and FP10MDA prescriptions. Instalment prescriptions for any other item, e.g. Buprenorphine, will not be eligible for this fee and payment of fees will be per interaction or “pick-up” only.
- A safeguarding payment will be made available for contractors who find that the new arrangements has led to a reduction to the number of professional fees with an impact on the Establishment Payment threshold.
 - Contractors will need to claim via an appropriate form available on the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) website. The declaration will need to include that there is no reason apart from the change in payment for dispensing of liquid methadone that has led to a decrease in fees (e.g. it would not be appropriate to claim if the reduction in professional fees is due to a new pharmacy having opened nearby or the pharmacy is dispensing fewer prescriptions for liquid methadone).
 - Where the claim is made, the contractor will be paid the Establishment Payment if appropriate based on the volume of prescription items for the same month of the previous year but at the current value.

Below is a table illustrating the changes at a prescription level. These scenarios were calculated based on the following: dispensing fee, controlled drug fee, container allowance and the current practice payment fee (totalling £2.94) being paid for every pick-up/daily supply where indicated

For ease, the new arrangements for split pack dispensing (applicable to any methadone supplied outside of the new listed pack sizes) have not been taken into account.

Product	Prescription form	No. of pickups from the pharmacy -per 14 day Rx	No of Pick-ups a week	Daily dose containers indicated?	Before	After
Methadone oral solution	FP10MDA	2	1	No Yes	£5.88 £41.16	£9.93
		4	2	No Yes	£11.76 £41.16	£15.81
		6	3	No Yes	£17.64 £41.16	£21.69
		10	5	No Yes	£29.40 £41.16	£33.45
		12	6	No Yes	£35.28 £41.16	£39.33
		14	7	N/A	£41.16	£45.21
	FP10	N/A	1 (3 day's supply to cover a weekend)	N/A	£2.94	£6.97

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What has PSNC done to check that these new payments for methadone are fair to contractors?

A. We would like to reassure contractors that PSNC carried out detailed analysis during the agreement of these new arrangements. This included using the NHSBSA's prescription data from a wide range of methadone-dispensing contractors (from large methadone volume dispensing to small) across the country.

The mixture of businesses in the sample indicated that some contractors will receive less fees from these new arrangements and some will make gains. This change is not intended to be a cut to pharmacy but is designed to ensure fairer and equal distribution of fees relating to methadone dispensing across all contractors, irrespective of the prescribing practices and our calculations indicated that the total fee spend for methadone would actually increase overall.

Q. Why was it felt necessary to move from an item to a form level fee for methadone liquid?

A. The PSNC Information Team has noted that concern has been raised about the change in payments leading to a move away from dispensing in individual bottles and towards bulk supply instead.

The new form level fee is not designed to “reward” contractors who bulk supply but is to reflect the inequality of payment related to workload. Currently, payment for methadone is dependent on how a prescription has been written and not based on actual workload involved. The contractor who supplies in one bottle a week will still have the same level of patient interaction, CD register entries, and stock issues as one who dispenses in daily dose bottles, but the difference in payment is significant (currently £35.28 for a 14 day prescription). Pharmacists retain a professional obligation to ensure that a patient is able to administer the amount prescribed, so as to make safe and effective use of their medicines, and in some cases, a daily dose container will be appropriate.

The increase in fees is not just for contractors supplying in single bottles or on an FP10, but also for those contractors who may be under the impression they are being paid for supplying in single dose bottles but in fact may not be.

Q. Will PSNC be monitoring the impact of these changes to methadone payments?

A. PSNC are committed to assessing and analysing the potential impact for contractors and would like to collate examples of how these new changes will affect pharmacies.

We would be grateful if contractors are able to assist us with this process by sending us exact details of all of their methadone scripts over a two-week period to aid us with our ongoing monitoring. Please include: the precise wording on the prescription, the number of pick-ups, and the duration period of the prescription. An excel spreadsheet which you can use to assist with collating the data has can be found in the LPC members only area of the PSNC website.

PSNC will be monitoring the impact of all simplification measures and will review arrangements where required.