

CEL 21 (2008)

30 April 2008

Dear Colleague

HEALTHY START SCHEME: GENERAL UPDATE

Changes to Healthy Start from 6 April 2008

1. Staff dealing directly with pregnant women and families with young children may find it helpful to know that as of 6 April 2008:
 - The value of all Healthy Start vouchers increased from £2.80 to £3.00 per week.
 - The allowable income threshold for families qualifying through Child Tax Credit increased from £14,495 to £15,575.
 - Families getting Working Tax Credit run-on only (i.e. the Working Tax Credit a person receives in the 4 weeks immediately after they stop working for 16 hours or more a week) will be able to apply for the scheme.

Healthy Start Vitamins - General

2. There is a legal responsibility to provide vitamins to Healthy Start beneficiaries and these must contain vitamins appropriate to the beneficiary who receives them. Contracting for bespoke Healthy Start vitamin products meeting the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition recommendations on vitamin supplementation and avoiding ingredients that have a potential to be allergenic offered the best way to meet those legal responsibilities. **Use of these vitamin supplements should be encouraged to make sure mothers and children get two important vitamins that they may not be getting in adequate quantities – even from a healthy balanced diet. These are vitamins A and D for children and vitamin D and folic acid for women.**

Entitlement to vitamins

3. Women in receipt of Healthy Start vouchers are entitled to free vitamins during pregnancy and up until their baby is one year old. Children over 6 months old getting Healthy Start vouchers are legally entitled to free vitamin supplements until their fourth birthday. Although infants under 6 months old are not legally entitled to the supplements, **if a health professional has reason to think that the vitamin status of a baby under 6 months on Healthy Start is poor, then the Healthy Start vitamin drops can**

Addresses

For action

Chief Executives

For information

Nurse Directors
Public Health Directors
Health Promotion Managers
Finance Directors

Enquires to:

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be given to the baby and the cost of the drops supplied will be reimbursed through the Healthy Start scheme. The vitamin claims box on alternate Healthy Start voucher letters is also included on the voucher letters for babies under six months for this reason.

Ordering Vitamins

4. Orders for both the vitamin drops (supplier code CVD1012) and the vitamin tablets (supplier code WVT2812) should continue to be placed with:

The TPS Healthcare Group Ltd
Wardpark North
27-35 Napier Place
CUMBERNAULD
G88 0LL

Telephone: 01236 784620
Fax: 01236 738 376

The minimum order quantity is 12 bottles for both the children's drops and the women's tablets and the prices are:

Women's x 12 = £11.33
Children's x 12 = £21.03

A 3% early payment discount is offered for payment within 14 days of receipt of invoices by Boards.

Distribution of Healthy Start vitamins

5. The local distribution of Healthy Start vitamins has presented a number of challenges and the Scottish Government has been working with Boards to try to find solutions. We are funding a pilot project within NHS Tayside and Fife which aims to test distributing the vitamins via the community pharmacy route.

6. Whilst the community pharmacy route is likely to be a key mechanism in the distribution of Healthy Start vitamins, it may not be the only way forward and Boards should not await the outcome of the pilot before commencing the distribution of vitamins to beneficiaries. We ask all Boards to ensure that adequate arrangements are in place to make the vitamins available to Healthy Start women and families, and that all relevant staff know what these arrangements are. Examples of arrangements put in place by Boards so far include:

Ayrshire & Arran

The community stores side of the hospital pharmacy service supplies clinics and health centres throughout the area by means of a dedicated "Pharmacy Van" which visits each of these locations on a regular basis. The Board aims to get supplies of the tablets and drops to a designated number of clinics/health centres (roughly 2/3 per area) in each local authority area/Community Health Partnership (these are coterminous). Each of these clinics is the major "base" for a number of Health Visitors and Midwives attached to that area. The tablets for pregnant women will be distributed through the consultant/midwife run clinics which take place in each area. The drops for children will be organised through health visitors at clinics or through personal contact. Each CHP has been given responsibility for deciding what

further “local” distribution might be required to meet the needs of its resident population taking into account deprivation levels, public health issues, accessibility, storage etc.

Greater Glasgow & Clyde

The vitamins are ordered into a central community services pharmacy department with the hospital service in Greater Glasgow and an acute hospital pharmacy department in Clyde. They have existing distribution systems to health centres and clinics. Local distribution is then via health visitors in the best way that they find practical, however opportunities for this are limited in some areas.

Lanarkshire

In the first instance, the Board has selected one or two main health centre(s) within each of its 9 localities where eligible families will be able to pick up their vitamins. Thereafter the Board intends to deliver the vitamins to an additional number of health centres once locality staff advise where the most suitable venues are.

Issuing vitamins to beneficiaries

7. Staff within Boards who are responsible for issuing vitamins to beneficiaries should continue to ask clients to show a recent voucher letter when collecting their vitamins. If they have vitamins to claim, the letter will have 2 boxes at the bottom of it – one advising the beneficiaries to ask for their supplements, and another to be signed and dated by the person issuing the vitamins to the beneficiaries.

Reimbursement of Boards for expenditure on vitamins

8. **Under Healthy Start, the Scottish Government only has statutory powers to reimburse Boards for vitamins issued free of charge to beneficiaries.** This also applies to England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Boards can, if they wish, issue vitamins free of charge to other women and children not supported by Healthy Start. However the Scottish Government is unable to reimburse Boards for this through Healthy Start.

Claims for reimbursement

9. Boards should claim back the costs of the **vitamins issued free to beneficiaries** on the quarterly WF6 form.

Sale of vitamins to non-beneficiaries

10. Boards are permitted to sell vitamins to non-beneficiaries at the following prices excluding VAT:

Children’s vitamin drops: £1.93 bottle
Women’s vitamin tablets: £1.03 per bottle.

The Scottish Government encourages Boards to sell the vitamins to non-beneficiaries to stimulate take up generally.

Vitamin Vouchers

11. The Department of Health, who have overall policy responsibility for Healthy Start, have indicated that this option has been put on hold for the moment.

Registered Retailers

12. The latest available statistics indicate that the 40,832 Healthy Start beneficiaries in Scotland can use their vouchers at 3,722 individual retail outlets. This represents 1,974 businesses and includes 16 co-operatives/box schemes, 183 independent pharmacies, 98 milk roundsmen, 1214 other independent retailers, 5 market traders and the rest largely made up of multiple retailers (including supermarkets, multiple pharmacies etc). Each Board has been provided with a spreadsheet which they can interrogate to obtain data at local level. The Scottish Government has asked the Department of Health to provide an updated list of registered Healthy Start retailers in Scotland at six-monthly intervals which will be forwarded to Boards.

13. The Department of Health issue periodic reminders to retailers of the importance of adhering to the rules of the scheme. These letters refer to, for example, the types of food that Healthy Start vouchers should be exchanged for and that multiple vouchers from beneficiaries must be accepted. Cases of alleged improper use of the scheme by retailers should be referred to the Healthy Start Reimbursement Unit (HSRU) on 08707 201 668 or by email to enquiries@hsru.co.uk. The HSRU are expected to take this up with the retailers involved. Serious cases can lead to registration being withdrawn and retailers fined.

Healthy Start Issuing Unit

14. The Healthy Start voucher administration contract has been awarded to Vertex Data Administration with effect from April 2008. Discussions will take place between the Department of Health and the contractor on the type of management information that can be provided. It is hoped that it may be possible to provide data at Health Board level on e.g. numbers of beneficiaries, applications, and proportions of vouchers actually used etc. The Scottish Government will be happy to share such management information with Boards. However, due to the very strict rules governing the use of data provided by the benefits/tax credits system, as well as the general law on data protection, **nothing will be provided that could potentially identify individual beneficiaries.**

Healthy Start helpline for the public

15. Clients can telephone the Healthy Start helpline on **0845 607 6823** or email helpdesk@tiu.org.uk if they have any questions about the scheme or their Healthy Start vouchers. This is the only official Healthy Start helpline. General parent information helplines offered by commercial and retail organisations cannot provide detailed advice about Healthy Start.

Downloading or ordering Healthy Start resources

16. Boards are reminded that Healthy Start resources can be downloaded or ordered from www.healthystart.nhs.uk/en/materialforclients/index.asp . Telephone orders can be made on 08701 555 455 quoting the name and reference number of the required document

Communication channels

17. In order to facilitate clear communication channels, it would be helpful if each Board could nominate a lead policy contact for Healthy Start issues.

18. The Scottish Government would like to thank Boards for the very positive contribution they have made to the delivery of Healthy Start in Scotland so far and looks forward to continuing this constructive working relationship in the future.

Action

19. Boards are asked to bring this letter to the attention of **all staff** involved in delivering Healthy Start including staff in GP surgeries.

Yours sincerely



PAM WHITTLE

Director of Public Health and Wellbeing