Starting university is an exciting chapter — but if you have ongoing specialist medical needs, the prospect of moving away from your usual doctors and consultants can be stressful. You might be wondering: **Can my consultant care be transferred when I move to university?** How does shared care between your home town and university NHS services work? What about registering with a new GP, managing prescriptions, and avoiding unnecessary charges? This post breaks down exactly what you need to know in plain English, with a focus on timelines like *Freshers Week* and the ever-tricky *November prescription costs*.

1. Specialist Care Transfer & Shared Care: What's the Deal?

Your consultant is the hospital specialist who manages your condition—usually you see them at a hospital linked to your home GP. When moving to university, you usually have two options:

- **Option 1: Transfer your specialist care to a hospital near your university.** This means your new local hospital consultant will take over. This can be useful if you want shorter travel times, but it requires contacting hospitals and often your current consultant.
- **Option 2: Continue seeing your home consultant but share your care with your university GP.** This is called *shared care*. Your university GP manages some regular prescriptions and reviews, but your hospital consultant stays the same. It usually involves good communication between your GP and hospital teams.

Both options work, but shared care is a popular route for students because of continuity and ease of specialist access when needed. However, it depends on your condition and your consultant's willingness to coordinate with a new GP.

How to start the transfer or shared care process?

1. **Talk to your current consultant or hospital team well before moving (try to start at least 8 weeks ahead).** Ask if they can arrange shared care with your university GP or if you'll need full transfer.
2. **Register with a GP near your university as early as possible, ideally during *Freshers Week*.** This can take a couple of weeks for paperwork and NHS system updates, so get started asap.
3. **Your university GP will then liaise with your hospital team about shared care or transfer paperwork.**
4. **Keep following up—journal notes or emails can help.** Sometimes NHS teams are slow or unclear, and a gentle nudge goes a long way.

Pro tip: Use social media tools like Facebook student community groups or Twitter to see if others with similar conditions have tips on local GP practices or hospital contacts.

2. GP Registration During Freshers Week: Your First Priority

Your GP is essential for managing day-to-day care and prescriptions. When moving to university, **registering with a local GP in week one or two of Freshers Week** is vital because:

- **GPs manage shared care prescriptions and local referrals.**
- **Waiting lists for new patients can get long quickly.** If you delay, you might miss critical reviews or medication refills.
- **Some health advice or minor illnesses can be sorted quickly without a hospital visit.**

Quick tips:

1. Find the GP surgery closest to your accommodation or campus. Use NHS.uk's "Find GP" tool.
2. Call their reception or check online for registration forms.
3. Complete and send/fax back as early as possible.
4. Tell them about your specialist condition and say you need shared care or repeat prescriptions.

During Freshers Week, look for on-campus GP registration drives

Many universities arrange pop-up clinics or GP sign-up events early in term—these are gold dust for fast registration and can connect you with student health advisers.

3. Pharmacy-First Care for Common Conditions

If you face minor ailments like colds, coughs, or hay fever, pharmacies near your university can often help you quickly without needing a GP appointment. NHS England promotes " *pharmacy-first*" advice for common conditions.

- Speak to your local pharmacist—they can recommend treatments, supply some medicines, and advise when to see a GP or hospital.
- Many community pharmacies near university campuses have extended opening hours during term.
- This helps you avoid waiting lists and frees GP resources for complex needs.

Remember, this doesn't replace your specialist care or GP for ongoing conditions, but it's handy for typical student illnesses.

4. Prescription Charges, Exemptions & Avoiding Overpaying

Prescription charges can get expensive if you're on multiple medicines. Here's a breakdown to keep your costs down:

Prescription Cost (England) Amount Notes Single prescription charge £9.65 (as of 2024) Every item usually charges this amount, no matter if one medicine or several on one script. 12-month Prepayment Certificate (PPC) £108.10 Unlimited prescriptions for fixed year price. Breaks even if you have 12+ prescriptions/year. 3-month PPC £30.25 Good if you expect 3 or more prescriptions in 3 months.

If you're on regular medications, a PPC almost always saves you money. But only buy if you will need multiple prescriptions over the length of the certificate.

Am I eligible for free prescriptions or exemptions?

Some students qualify for prescription charge exemptions. Key exemptions are:

- **Under 16 years or 16-18 in full-time education.**
- **Under 19 and in full-time education.**
- **Pregnant or have had a baby in last 12 months (maternity exemption certificate).**
- **Receivers of certain benefits or on low income (NHS Low Income Scheme).**
- **Specific medical conditions listed by NHS (e.g. epilepsy, diabetes type 1, cancer treatment).**

You can apply for a free medical exemption certificate or join the **NHS Low Income Scheme** (LIS) if you're struggling financially. LIS uses your household income to decide if you qualify for full or partial help with health costs.

5. NHS Low Income Scheme & Prepayment Certificate Maths

Here's a quick checklist to decide if LIS or a PPC suits you best:

1. Estimate how many prescriptions you will get in the next 3 or 12 months.
2. Calculate total cost if paying each at £9.65.
3. Compare to cost of 3-month or 12-month PPC certificates.
4. If your income is low (student loans don't always count), apply for the NHS Low Income Scheme to get reduced or free charges.

Applying for LIS is done via form HC1, which you can get online or at your local Jobcentre Plus, library, or GP surgery. Once approved, you get an exemption certificate to show at the pharmacy.

Remember: Never pay more than needed. If in doubt, talk to your GP or student health adviser, or post your questions in student Facebook or Twitter groups—they're often full of savvy tips.

Summary: Your 5-Minute Checklist for Specialist Care and Prescriptions at University

1. **Before you move:** Contact your consultant about shared care transfer.
2. **Week 1 of Freshers:** Register with a university GP.
3. **Use pharmacists for minor illnesses.**
4. **Sort out prescription payment—consider a PPC or NHS Low Income Scheme.**
5. **Keep communication notes and follow up on your care plans.**

Don't let NHS processes overwhelm you. With early planning and smart use of services, you'll stay on top of your health well through university life!

Have you moved to uni recently and handled a specialist care transfer? Or stuck figuring out prescriptions? Share your experience on Facebook education.clickdo.co.uk groups or tag me on Twitter—I love turning your experiences into new checklists and guides!