The Healthy Start Vitamins Charging (England) Regulations 2014 came into effect on 5 January 2015. This means that a body providing services or facilities for the care of pregnant women, women who are breastfeeding and young children (Section 3(1)(d) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012) may make a charge for Healthy Start vitamins.

That charge –

• Must comprise or include the cost price (i.e. £1.38 for children’s drops and 74p for women’s tablets)
• May include an additional handling charge up to 50%
• Must be rounded up to the nearest 5p

The maximum charge if sold by an NHS organisation in England is £2.10 for children’s drops and £1.15 for women’s tablets.

Scotland have their own regulations that permit the sale (http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/for-health-professionals/vitamins/vitamins-in-scotland) and in Wales the Sale of Goods for Mothers and Children (Designation and Charging) Regulations 1976 still apply (http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/for-health-professionals/vitamins/vitamins-in-wales).

DH with NHSBSA has made arrangements so that community pharmacists can sell Healthy Start vitamins if they choose to do so. Pharmaceutical wholesalers can purchase both Healthy Start vitamin products from NHS SC and in turn supply community pharmacists. The community pharmacist determines the price that they sell them in their pharmacy, DH cannot insist they are sold at a particular price.

DH cannot insist that community pharmacies issue Healthy Start vitamins, free of charge, in exchange for the Healthy Start vitamins coupon. Local arrangements may be commissioned by Local Authorities or Clinical Commissioning Groups for community pharmacists to exchange the Healthy Start vitamin coupons.