



Guidance for locums - claiming a CET grant in England and Wales

Purpose

Continuing Education and Training (CET) is an essential part of providing GOS and primary eye care, which FODO members strongly support. The CET grant is an essential part of the NHS funding for this service and should always be claimed.

If grants are not claimed, the NHS may deem that the funding is not necessary, further contributing to the underfunding of GOS. FODO supports all contractors claiming the grant on behalf of all eligible optometrists and OMPs.

As FODO members provide the majority of NHS primary eye care, they are the most frequent engagers of self-employed optometrists ('locums') to ensure services can continue to meet patients' needs during unforeseen staff absences or there are difficulties in recruiting employed optometrists and OMPs. Most FODO members will happily process and pass on the CET grant for locums they have engaged during the relevant claims period (although they may charge a small handling fee to cover the cost).

Each year most locums receive the CET grant to which they are entitled in this way without problem.

In a small number of cases where this does not happen, FODO is happy to intervene with FODO members to find a contractor who will process the CET grant on a locum's behalf.

This guidance is to help ensure locums in England and Wales receive grant funding to which they are entitled.

Does claiming a CET grant change my status as a locum?

No. It is a grant towards the costs incurred in arranging CET.

Processing a CET claim for a locum can sometimes be a worry for contractors but this is unfounded. Processing a CET claim for a self-employed practitioner who has been engaged to provide GOS during the relevant period

- is not an indicator that the practitioner is employed by the contractor
- does not imply any tax liability for the contractor
- can most easily be made clear by the engager invoicing the locum for processing the grant (even the handling fee is zero).

As a self-employed individual you will however have to declare this income in your tax return.

What is the NHS CET grant for?

The grant represents an NHS contribution to the costs involved in meeting GOC CET requirements in relation to GOS. The assumption is that the NHS contribution meets about 2/3 of the cost reflecting the proportion of NHS to privately funded sight tests.

The grant is payable in respect of optometrists or OMPs, who provide GOS, to part-fund the cost of meeting CET requirements as part of ongoing NHS service provision.

The grant can be claimed each year in respect of CET completed by optometrists and OMPs in the qualifying period.

How is the CET Grant paid?

As CET forms part of the underlying cost of providing GOS, CET grants are made from the GOS budget.

The mechanism for all GOS payments is via NHS contractors and this applies to CET grant funding in the same way as any other payments. The grant however is intended to part-reimburse the loss of chair time for whoever funds the CET.

So as a locum, who has self-funded your CET to provide GOS, the grant funding should flow to you. We would encourage you always to claim the CET grant to which you are entitled and will help you do so whether you are a FODO member or not.

Which GOS contractor should I approach when making a CET claim?

You should approach a GOS contractor you have provided GOS for during the relevant period and ideally the contractor for whom you have provided most GOS during the period.

Where this is not possible, for example the practice has closed, and you need to approach a contractor you have only recently or infrequently provided GOS for, you can reassure them of your eligibility by showing evidence of your CET activity plus written confirmation from another contractor that you have provided GOS sight tests for them during the relevant period. This may be necessary to reassure the contractor that you are eligible to make the claim and that they will not be committing fraud by processing it for you.

You should also check any service level agreements/contracts you have with GOS contractors as this might help you approach the most suitable contractor to claim a CET grant.

I am struggling to find a GOS contractor who will submit this on my behalf?

It is FODO policy that all grants should be claimed.

Whether or not you are a FODO member, please contact us for help by emailing membership@fodo.com or calling us on 020 7298 5151.

Please provide us with details of which GOS contractors in England or Wales you have provided services for in the period you are claiming a grant for if you wish to do so.