



Dear Colleague

**GENERAL OPHTHALMIC SERVICES (GOS) – COVID-19 RECOVERY:**

**CONTINUED ADHERENCE TO INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL MEASURES BY COMMUNITY OPTOMETRY; FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR MOBILE PRACTICES; LINK TO SHOW WEBSITE; CHARGING OF ADDITIONAL FEES OR OFFERING OF INDUCEMENTS TO GOS PATIENTS; APPROPRIATE USE OF THE 'LOOK UP' FUNCTION WITHIN eOPHTHALMIC; 2021 GOS MANDATORY TRAINING MODULE;**

**Summary**

1. This letter advises on the following:
  - Continued adherence to infection prevention and control measures by community optometry.
  - Financial support model for mobile practices;
  - Link to SHOW website;
  - Charging of additional fees or offering of inducements to GOS patients;
  - Appropriate use of the 'look up' function within eOphthalmic;
  - 2021 GOS mandatory training module.

**Action**

2. NHS Boards are asked to urgently copy and issue the Memorandum to this letter to all optometrists, ophthalmic medical practitioners, body corporates and practices on their ophthalmic lists.

Yours sincerely,

**Tom Ferris  
Deputy Director**

17 December 2020

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**Addresses**

For action  
Chief Executives, NHS Boards

For information  
Chief Executive,  
NHS National Services  
Scotland

NHS Board Optometric  
Advisers

NHS Education for Scotland

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**Enquiries to:**

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[nss.psdgospayments-covid19@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.psdgospayments-covid19@nhs.scot) (for any practice-specific queries about the financial support measures)

[eyecare@gov.scot](mailto:eyecare@gov.scot) (for any other queries)

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**MEMORANDUM TO NHS:  
PCA(O)2020(21)**

**Summary**

1. This Memorandum advises on the following:

- Continued adherence to infection prevention and control (IPC) measures by community optometry.
- Financial support model for mobile practices;
- Link to SHOW website;
- Charging of additional fees or offering of inducements to General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) patients;
- Appropriate use of the 'look up' function within eOphthalmic;
- 2021 GOS Mandatory Training Module.

**Infection prevention and control and patient safety**

2. As activity levels continue to rise within community optometry, practice staff are reminded that they must continue to adhere to all relevant IPC guidance and arrangements as outlined in the declaration submitted to Health Boards prior to practices re-opening to provide face-to-face care. Full details of the declaration process, and associated documentation, are detailed in [PCA\(O\)2020\(10\)](#).
3. Practitioners and all practice staff are reminded to scrupulously follow the advice set out in the NHS Education for Scotland (NES) document, '[Resuming General Ophthalmic Services Following COVID-19 Shutdown](#)'. This is a live document and should be referred to on a regular basis.
4. For the benefit of patients and the public, the Scottish Government expects all optical practices to comply with the General Optical Council's Standards for Optical Businesses (<https://standards.optical.org/areas/businesses/>). Of particular note is the requirement to ensure that at all times, patients can expect to be safe in your care.

**Financial support model for mobile practices**

5. Activity within mobile practices has increased since the resumption of routine eye care within day centres and residential centres on 7 September 2020. However, it is noted that the provision of routine eye care to patients within care homes is particularly challenging at present, and it is likely to be some time before overall activity recovers to pre-COVID-19 levels. As such, the provision of ongoing

financial support will be made to mobile practices, where required, until activity has sufficiently recovered.

6. Mobile practices will move to a new remuneration model **on and after Friday 1 January 2020**, as follows:

- **GOS eye examinations:** mobile practices will be paid the relevant GOS fee for each primary and supplementary eye examination, including domiciliary visiting fees, undertaken and claimed via eOphthalmic. Where the total value of primary and supplementary eye examination claims and domiciliary visiting fees submitted within the monthly payment schedule for a practice is less than the GOS(S)1 element of the monthly average financial support payment, a 'top-up' payment will be made to make up the shortfall. The assessment as to whether a 'top-up' is necessary will be made on a month-to-month basis.
- **GOS(S)3 and GOS(S)4 vouchers:** payment of the 100% monthly average attributable to GOS(S)3 and GOS(S)4 vouchers, calculated from the 2019/20 financial year, will cease. Practices will be paid for actual activity only which has been submitted via the eOphthalmic claims process.

7. As a condition of eligibility to receive a GOS(S)1 'top-up' payment, mobile practices **must provide GOS eye examinations to patients and electronically submit all GOS(S)1 forms via eOphthalmic**. A mobile practice which does not provide, in the Scottish Government's view, an acceptable reason for failing to comply with these conditions may have its top-up payments stopped.

8. By implementing this model of financial support, practices will "flex" in and out of support, as patient demand dictates. For example, should a practice exceed its GOS(S)1 monthly average from the 2019/20 financial year in one particular month, the payment will be based solely on submitted GOS(S)1 activity. However, if the activity level falls below the GOS(S)1 element of the monthly average financial support payment from the 2019/20 financial year in a subsequent month, the practice will receive a top-up payment equal to the shortfall.

9. The Scottish Government will continue to review the financial support provided to mobile practices, taking into account compliance with, and activity data arising from, the requirement to submit all GOS(S)1 forms in accordance with [PCA\(O\)2020\(12\)](#).

**Link to SHOW website**

10. The Scottish Government would like to take this opportunity to remind practitioners that all PCAs are published online on SHOW (Scotland's Health on the Web). Access can be obtained via the undernoted hyperlink:

[SHOW - SGHSC - Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorates](#)

## **Charging of additional fees or offering of inducements to GOS patients**

11. The Scottish Government has become aware that some contractors are advising patients that they must participate in a practice membership scheme and/or undertake additional tests and procedures as a condition of the contractor providing GOS to that patient. In terms of paragraph 13(5) of Schedule 1 of the National Health Service (General Ophthalmic Services) (Scotland) Regulations 2006, contractors are not to require payment of fees or similar from patients for the provision of general ophthalmic services (other than those fees/charges as detailed in regulations or the Statement).
12. It is also prohibited under regulation 15(3) of the National Health Service (General Ophthalmic Services) (Scotland) Regulations 2006 for an optometrist or ophthalmic medical practitioner to give, promise or offer, or cause to be given, promised or offered, any incentives, gifts or rewards to patients in the provision of GOS.

## **Appropriate use of the 'look up' function within eOphthalmic**

13. Practices are advised to utilise the 'look up' function within eOphthalmic to establish entitlement to a primary eye examination **prior** to recalling patients to avoid the scheduling of unnecessary appointments.
14. However, there are instances where the patient history returned by the 'look up' suggests incorrectly that a patient is not entitled to a primary eye examination. This can very occasionally occur where a previous eye examination claim has been submitted with incorrect patient details, and thus the history held in respect of both patients within eOphthalmic becomes inaccurate.
15. Should a practice encounter an instance where they suspect that this may have happened, they should contact the Practitioner Services Ophthalmic Customer Services Helpdesk on 0131 275 6200 or via email at [nss.psdophthalmic@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.psdophthalmic@nhs.scot) and seek assistance. If in the professional opinion of the optometrist an eye examination is required there should be no circumstances when this cannot be undertaken, even if that means a supplementary eye examination is conducted.

## **2021 GOS Mandatory Training Module**

16. The 2021 GOS mandatory training module "Developing Personal Leadership in Optometric Practice" provided by NES is now available to access on Turas. This is an online module and carries 1 CET point.
17. All optometrists and ophthalmic medical practitioners providing GOS in Scotland must complete the online module, which can be accessed at: <https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/26227/optometry/gos-mandatory-training>.

## **Enquiries**

18. Any queries about this Memorandum should be emailed to the Scottish Government at: [eyecare@gov.scot](mailto:eyecare@gov.scot)

**Dentistry and Optometry Division  
Directorate of Primary Care  
Scottish Government**