

Alette Addison
Deputy Director -Pharmacy and Eye Care Services
Department of Health & Social Care
3rd Floor, 39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

23rd October 2025

Re: General Ophthalmic Services fees 2025/26

Dear Alette,

Thank you for your letter regarding the General Ophthalmic Service fees 2025/26. We are disappointed to see that, after a long wait and despite additional analytical input and review, the impossible position on NHS optical voucher growth remains unchanged.

Long-term trend data clearly shows that around 1 in 3 patients who are eligible for an NHS funded sight test are, based on defined eligibility criteria, also issued with an NHS optical voucher. Despite this, the modelling put forward by NHS England still suggests that the rate of growth for optical vouchers will be greater than that for NHS funded sight tests. Even allowing for minor variations and disruption to data from the Covid period, the NHS modelling cannot be accurate. As this directly impacts on sight test fees through the effect on NHS affordability criteria, we must again point out that the basis on which the NHS sight test fee increase is being determined is fundamentally flawed. It would be very helpful if we could have confidential sight of your statistician's report to try and understand the assumptions that are being made.

If the position of NHS England, based upon ONS population data, is that the high growth scenario for NHS sight testing is 1.27% per year, then it is mathematically impossible for NHS optical voucher activity to increase at a rate greater than this. As you are aware, NHS optical vouchers are only available to a subset of the wider population, i.e. essentially those who are under age 19 in full time education and those on means tested benefits. In contrast, there are many patients who are eligible for an NHS sight test but are not eligible for an optical voucher. These are the reasons for our view that errors still have not been rectified and that, whatever increase NHS England and the DHSC finally advise Ministers to offer will be based on a fundamental misinterpretation

of the NHS sight testing service. The primary eye care profession will undoubtedly spot that NHS England's calculations do not make sense.

I hope this gives you a sense of our frustration and the risk the DHSC is running in advising Ministers again to underfund based upon miscalculated risk.

Yours sincerely

Paul Carroll
OFNC Chair