

To: • Paul Carroll, Chair OFNC
Via email

cc. • Peter Hampson, Secretary, OFNC
Via email

NHS England
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London
SE1 8UG

11 August 2025

Dear Paul,

General Ophthalmic Fee 2025/2026

Thank you for your letter of 1 August 2025. We recognise and share your frustrations about the timeliness of high quality data to inform our discussions and are taking steps to address this with the necessary internal stakeholders. Thank you for your constructive dialogue throughout this process.

We have reviewed your calculations in Annex A of your letter which propose that an uplift in sight test fees (GOS 1) to £24.53 is affordable, whilst creating a £1m pressure on the budget. However, this analysis assumes a 1% activity growth across all areas. This diverges from NHS England's assumptions on growth in both our low and high scenario. As previously set out our low growth scenario is based on 0.97% growth in GOS1 and 1.27% growth in all other areas, excluding the trainer grant.

The anticipated costs of the trainer grant have been based on the actual number of pre-registration trainees for 25/26 plus 80 students from universities in the Devolved Administrations and factors in historic claims that have not yet been submitted. All of which is higher than the number obtained by increasing trainer grant claims by 1%. This full cost has therefore been factored into the analysis we have previously provided and outlined in our letter of 29th July 2025.

The activity growth assumption of 1.27% used by NHS England is based on ONS population data and is used in other areas of primary care to set growth assumptions. We have no evidence to suggest that this benchmark is inappropriate to use in determining GOS fees.

In determining the high and low growth scenarios it has been recognised that the historic trend for GOS 1 is c.1% growth but that the NHS voucher values for glasses and lenses (GOS 3) historic growth is c.3%. These growth rates have been included as the high and low growth scenarios to more accurately forecast the range of costs and assess affordability.

The methodology of uplifting by 1% to all categories other than GOS 1 and then applying the remaining budget to GOS 1 as a rate uplift also means that it excludes help with the cost of a private sight tests (GOS 5) from the rate uplift applied to sight tests. Therefore GOS 5 would become disproportionate to GOS 1 under your analysis. The NHS England analysis includes the same percentage uplift for GOS 5 as is applied to GOS 1.

The total envelope was originally calculated, using activity data made available via NHSBSA, as £633m providing an available additional financial envelope for 2025/26 of c£17.6m. Whilst actual ledger payments have identified a slightly lower total envelope of £631.8m this still provides an available additional financial envelope of c£17.6m. The table below shows the pressure of each uplift option against the available total envelope of c£17.6m. Applying an uplift to sight tests of 2.39%, remains the only affordable option.

	High Growth Scenario £ pressure	Low Growth Scenario £ pressure
Increase sight test to £25 - no uplifts to other fees	+15.9m	+10.8m
Increase sight test by £1 - no uplifts to other fees	+9.3m	+4.2m
Apply 2.39% uplift to sight tests - no uplifts to other fees	+3.3m	-1.7m

We recognise that this will be disappointing to the profession, but we are also conscious of the need to advise ministers on next steps. We will therefore be taking immediate steps to write to DHSC confirming an uplift of 2.39% to sight tests only for 25/26. OFNC views will be reflected in this correspondence and the minister will make a final decision taking OFNC's feedback into consideration. We remain willing to consider redistribution of other spend lines to help increase sight test fees.

We are very happy to arrange a further discussion talk through this letter in more detail, and to discuss the 10-year Health Plan and to start discussions on 26/27 fees.

Yours sincerely,



Ali Sparke

Director for Dentistry, Community Pharmacy and Optometry