

**General Ophthalmic Services Memorandum**

January 2014

**To all Optometrists,  
Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners  
and Dispensing Opticians  
providing General Ophthalmic Services**

**GENERAL OPHTHALMIC SERVICES (Amendment) REGULATIONS  
(Northern Ireland) 2014****HEALTH AND CARE NUMBER**

This guidance gives information on the requirement for the Health and Care Number (HCN) in relation to the provision of General Ophthalmic Services within Northern Ireland. Please ensure that ALL staff, both professional and support staff, in your practice have read and understood this guidance. Please note that this guidance is NOT a substitute for Regulations and as a contractor you are obliged to ensure that you have a working knowledge of the GOS Regulations.

From **MONDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> FEBRUARY 2014** it will be a statutory requirement for all patients to provide their **Health and Care Number (HCN)** when they are accessing General Ophthalmic Services from your practice. The HCN is a unique identifier for every patient registered with a General Medical Practitioner in Northern Ireland. It is a unique ten digit number and can be found at the top of all medical cards issued in Northern Ireland since 2004.

**1. Why is the Health and Care Number an essential requirement?**

The HCN is required for the purposes of ensuring that all patients accessing General Ophthalmic Services in Northern Ireland are eligible to do so. Every patient who is eligible for General Ophthalmic Services must produce their HCN prior to accessing the services in your practice. Claims for General Ophthalmic Services made after Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014 may not be paid without the correct HCN. This condition applies whether the claim has been made electronically **or** manually.

## **2. What happens if the patient does not have a current medical card?**

If a patient presents to your practice without a current Health and Care Number (HCN) you must advise them that they cannot access General Ophthalmic Services until they provide you with their HCN. The patient can request a medical card from the Business Services Organisation (see contact details below) and if there is a genuine urgency a new medical card will be sent from BSO within a few days. The contact details are found at the end of this guidance.

If the patient has a prescription for medication their HCN will be printed on this.

If your patient presents with an older medical card (pre 2004) the number on the medical card could be one of several health care identifiers previously used, for example, the CHI number. These numbers are **NOT** an acceptable alternative and you must ask your patient to obtain their HCN. The health service numbers on old medical cards are no longer used by the BSO or other HSC organisations.

Please note that the time period for submission of claim forms as detailed in MOS 265 still applies i.e. six months from the date of test for sight test claims and three months from the date of supply for vouchers and repair/replacement claims.

## **3. When should I advise my patients of this requirement?**

You are advised to inform your patients of this essential requirement before they attend for a GOS Sight Test or other GOS related service (GOS V dispensing or GOS Repair Replacement). You should advise them either in person when they call to your practice or telephone to arrange their appointment. You are also advised to ensure that this information is included in any reminder letters which you may send your patients in order that they are made aware of the requirement for them to bring their Health and Care Number to your practice the next time they are accessing General Ophthalmic Services from your practice. It may be helpful to place a notice about this change in your practice reception area to alert patients to this new requirement.

## **4. Provision of Mobile Eye Services and the Health and Care Number.**

As with patients who attend a community practice, all registered providers of mobile eye services should put in place measures to ensure that patients and their carers (or care home managers) are aware of the necessity to provide you as their eyecare provider with the correct Health and Care Number. MOS 287 states in detail the requirements for notification process and the provision of mobile eye services in relation to the information which must be provided.

**5. How does the incoming electronic claiming for GOS affect this requirement?**

The new electronic claiming project currently being implemented by the BSO will also employ the Health and Care Number (HCN) as a means of identifying the patient who presents for General Ophthalmic Services at your practice. The secure web portal which the BSO will provide to make the application for sight testing and other claims will have a real time look-up facility for the purposes of identifying patients who present to your practice. This look-up facility will check the name and date of birth as given to you by the patient and find their HCN. If the patient gives an inaccurate name or date of birth and they cannot be located on the HCN database a claim for General Ophthalmic Service will not be accepted at that time.

**Relevant Contact Details:**

Should you have any queries in relation to this guidance please do not hesitate to contact a HSCB Optometric Adviser or BSO ophthalmic staff.

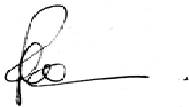
<b>Ophthalmic Services</b>	<b>To apply for a new medical card patients should contact:-</b>
Business Services Organisation 2 Franklin Street Belfast BT2 8DQ  Tel: 028 9053 5527/8/9/6 Fax: 028 9053 5634	Business Services Organisation FPS Medical Services 2 Franklin Street Belfast BT2 8DQ  Tel: 028 90324431 (switchboard) ask for FPS medical services

**Health and Social Care Board**

Miss Fiona North	Optometric Adviser	HSCB, Tower Hill. Armagh BT61 9DR	028 37414570	<a href="mailto:fiona.north@hscni.net">fiona.north@hscni.net</a>
Miss Janice McCrudden	Optometric Adviser	HSCB, County Hall.182 Galgorm Rd Ballymena. BT42 1QB	028 25311028	<a href="mailto:janice.mccrudden@hscni.net">janice.mccrudden@hscni.net</a>
Mrs Margaret McMullan	Optometric Adviser	HSCB, 12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast. BT2 8BS	028 90553708	<a href="mailto:margaret.mcmullan@hscni.net">margaret.mcmullan@hscni.net</a>

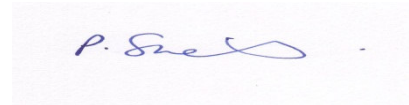
**Thank you for your co-operation in the implementation of this Regulatory requirement.**

**Yours faithfully**




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**Mr Raymond Curran**  
Assistant Director, Head of Optometry  
Health and Social Care Board




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**Ms Paula Sheils**  
Assistant Director-FPS  
Business Services Organisation

