



*Supporting the Health & Personal  
Social Services in Northern Ireland*

**Family Practitioner Services**

**MEMORANDUM**

**General Ophthalmic Services**

**Introduction of Employment & Support Allowance (ESA)**

On 27<sup>th</sup> October 2008, the Department of Works and Pensions introduced the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for new claimants who have limited capacity to work.

ESA is an integrated contributory and income-related allowance and is paid on the grounds of incapacity. It will apply initially only to new claims made for benefit due to ill health or disability. Anyone continuing on a qualifying benefit which was awarded prior to 27 October 2008 will not be affected.

Only patients in receipt of income related ESA are entitled to receive GOS sight tests and optical vouchers.

As you may be aware the Review of Public Administration is currently ongoing across public service in Northern Ireland. The Central Services Agency will cease to exist as of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 and all staff and functions will transfer to a new organization currently called the Regional Business Services Organization.

Therefore revised GOS forms will come into circulation once we have clarity on the name of this new organization.

Practitioners needing to make claims for patients receiving the new Employment Support Allowance should tick the Income Support box until the new forms become available.

To all Optometrists  
Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners  
And Dispensing Opticians  
Providing General Ophthalmic Services

2 December 2008