

Optometry Bulletin No: 12

One year on from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and, as we enter Spring-time, we are generating our own data points in the mental maps we have, both personal and professional, for the incoming weeks and months; in this we are influenced by what we read and listen to and guided by public health and other experts.

Our professional map for the road ahead has been outlined in previous Bulletins, initiated by the reinstatement of core primary care services last summer. As primary care Optometrists you have, individually and collectively, played a pivotal role in helping patients access the care that they needed, and you have supported the immediate COVID-19 response through services which you have provided in support for secondary care. We need to continue to contribute to the rebuilding of ophthalmic services, innovating and implementing new services which utilise the skills and capability of primary care optometrists.



Alongside other information in relation to Optometry services this Bulletin highlights some important areas in the rebuilding of HSC ophthalmic services in which primary care optometrists will play a crucial part. The HSCB thanks you for dedication and support thus far and trust that your engagement and involvement will continue as the rebuild progresses. Please take time to read this update and share with colleagues in your practice.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Reimbursement of PPE costs incurred in provision of HSC funded eyecare services

Contractors and individual Optometrists should continue to enforce robust IPC measures within their practices and during the provision of eye care services. The advice in relation to PPE and when it should be worn remains unchanged..

All contractor practices will have received an email in relation to the process for reimbursement of PPE which has been utilised in the provision of HSC funded care in Quarter 3 and 4 of the financial year to end March 2021. Please ensure that you read this communication carefully and complete the necessary documentation by the deadline stated. Please contact ophthalmic.services@hscni.net should you have any queries in relation to the claims process.

A Reminder: Important Ophthalmic Services information

- **COVID-19 Operational Guidance for Optometry Practices**

As noted in [Bulletin No 11](#) the operational guidance for Ophthalmic Contractors has been updated, please continue to refer to this as required. You can access the operational guidance at the following link: [click here to read](#)

- **COVID-19 Vaccination Programme**

It is hoped by now that Optometry Contractor practice staff have been able to access the vaccine programme and that staff who wished to be vaccinated have received their first vaccine. Contractors must ensure that **only their staff** access the vaccine via the programme made available through the Health and Social Care Trusts. Information on the Vaccination Programme is hosted on the Optometry COVID-19 webpage: <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3120.htm>

- **Process for claiming 'Remote Consultations'**

Contractors are reminded of the claim process for remote consultations. The eForm to claim the fee for a remote consultation is hosted on the HSC Optometry Portal under the link titled "**Optometry eForms**" (section B on the page). As noted in previous HSCB Optometry Bulletins and from many ophthalmic/optical online discussion platforms, remote consultations continue to offer significant potential to change and transform how care can be provided during, and hopefully after, the pandemic. Over the past year evidence has been gathered by some hospitals e.g. Moorfields, London, as to the benefits of the use of remote consultations for patients. Patients who have accessed the service in Moorfields have provided overwhelmingly positive feedback and the learning from the use of video consultations by the ophthalmology service will help inform future innovations in digital health care for eye care.

- **Acute Eyecare Pathway**

- Eye Casualty Referrals:** All Optometrists should please continue to use the Optometry-Eye Casualty Referral form for all Eye Casualty referrals whether to the RVH or Altnagelvin. The form can be accessed at the following webpage: [Optometry Referral Information](#)
- NIPEARS Eligibility:** Practices are reminded that there is no longer a requirement to provide a GOS sight test rather than NIPEARS for a patient presenting with an acute problem who is due and eligible for a GOS test. All patients who present with an acute problem **and** meet the eligibility/inclusion criteria for NIPEARS may be provided with an NIPEARS assessment regardless of when their GOS sight test is due.

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- iii. **NIPEARS accreditation/MECS Training:** It is hoped that further MECS training will be held later in the spring. If you wish to undertake the training whether both MECS 1 & 2 or if you have already completed MECS 1 (distance learning) and need to undertake MECS 2(OSCES) please email ophthalmicservices@hscni.net

- **2020 CET Grants**

The CET grant application period is now open. The closing date is **19th March 2021**. **No late applications can be accepted.** MOS 334 detailing the application process, application form and BACS form for payment details for new applicants was issued to all HSC email accounts and individual email addresses that BSO holds. These documents may be accessed at: [MOS 334 CET Grant Application](#).

- **2021-22 GOC Registration**

This is a gentle reminder of the need for Optometrists, Dispensing Opticians and optical businesses to action their GOC registration renewal before the stated deadline – 15th March 2021; non-renewal will result in removal from the GOC Register.

- **Training and CET points available**

We are now in the final year of the current GOC CET cycle and some registrants may still have training to undertake to meet the GOC CET requirements. Please check that you have no points pending on the 'My CET' area of the GOC website and review your training plan to ensure you are on schedule with your CET requirements, as this is the final year of the cycle.

Please note the following sessions have been approved for CET points and are open for booking, simply click on the web-link to register for the event(s). Two of the sessions have been approved as mandatory training sessions for our Optometry enhanced services - PEARS and Level II Enhanced Service, so if you have not yet completed your enhanced service training for 2021 these are good opportunities to do so.

1. **Monday 22nd March at 12noon. Approved 1 CET and IP point**

NOTE THE DATE CHANGE FROM PREVIOUSLY ADVERTISED

“Question and answer discussion on common casualty conditions” - Dr Deirdre Burns, Specialist Optometrist BHSCT.

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Please note that this event has been approved for **PEARS Mandatory Training** for 2021 but is open to all practitioners.

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3545961696184601359>

This session will cover the conditions uveitis, dry eye and conjunctivitis. Please feel free to send in one question beforehand via the following survey monkey link to be addressed in the discussion session <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/LBBNP6X>

2. Tuesday 20th April at 6:00pm. Approved 1 CET point

“Glaucoma Referrals: Who, Why and When – How to ensure they are appropriate” – Ms M Lagan, Consultant Ophthalmologist BHSCT.

Please note that this event has been approved for **LES 2 Mandatory Training** for 2021 but is open to all practitioners.

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/233106772701510928>

3. Tuesday 11th May 2021 at 7.00pm. Approved 1 CET point

***“Cataracts – How optometry can aid management” - Ms Bita Manzouri
Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Barking, Havering and Redbridge University
Hospitals NHS Trust***

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7523630827460765707>

To be eligible for the CET points you must stay on for the whole of the session, answer the questions during the session and ensure you are logged on individually to a device if there are a number of people attending the same session at your location. These should be interesting and enjoyable sessions and we look forward to “seeing” you.

Helping to Rebuild Services: Upcoming plans

- **Contact Lens Service**

Like many other services the optometry-delivered contact lens service within the Trusts has experienced delays in allocation of new and review appointments. Belfast Trust has approached the HSCB with a view to implementing a pilot service (for a defined period of time) which enables patients to access a review appointment for their contact lens care in primary care. Where possible, it is hoped that patients who use hospital provided contact lenses, will attend their own personal/regular optometrist for this review. Patients in need of and suitable for the review appointment will be identified by the Belfast Trust and a process for managed communications between the Trust and the optometry practice will be put in place to support the pilot service.

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Early planning has commenced and Contractors will be informed of any further developments in due course. This pilot service offers an opportunity for primary care optometrists to gain exposure to the review of patients with more complex contact lens types and to increase their skill and confidence in this area.

- **Cataract Care Pathway**

[Previous communications](#) have noted the intention to implement a primary care Optometry Post-Operative Cataract review and assessment service, it is hoped that this service will be implemented early in 2021-22 and significant planning is underway to ensure that the service will be effective, safe and transformative for the overall cataract care pathway.

Please note:

1. If you have completed the WOPEC cataract training **since October 2019** the HSCB will not be aware of this. Please inform the HSCB by emailing ophthalmicservices@hscni.net and including a copy of your certificate of completion. All Optometrists who are in this position should action this asap. *N.B Optometrists who had completed the training prior to this date do not need to contact the HSCB.*
2. If you have not yet undertaken the WOPEC training and are interested in accessing it, please email ophthalmic.services@hscni.net.
3. You are encouraged to review any previous training you have undertaken and consider accessing the new [DOCET series](#) on cataract to optimise your knowledge in this clinical area.
4. Contractors should ensure that they keep regular check on their HSCNI email accounts for further information in relation to this proposed service development.

****** Ophthalmic Advice and Support ******

If you have a query you can receive advice from the following HSC Staff:

- Janice McCrudden: janice.mccrudden@hscni.net
- Fiona North: fiona.north@hscni.net
- Margaret McMullan: margaret.mcullan@hscni.net
- Scott Drummond: scott.drummond@hscni.net
- General email: ophthalmic.services@hscni.net



COVID-19 Pandemic Online Resources:

- **HSC Optometry COVID-19 information:**
Current page: <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3120.htm>
Archive page: <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3225.htm>
- **COVID-19 Public Health Agency:** <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/>
- **General Optical Council:**
https://www.optical.org/en/news_publications/Publications/joint-statement-and-guidance-on-coronavirus-covid19.cfm
- **College of Optometrists:** <https://www.college-optometrists.org/the-college/media-hub/news-listing/coronavirus-2019-advice-for-optometrists.html>
- **Association of Optometrists:** <https://www.aop.org.uk/coronavirus-updates>
- **Health and Safety Executive** [Coronavirus: latest information and advice - HSE news](#)