

## OPHTHALMIC SERVICES

**COVID-19 UPDATE: No: 6**

**18 May 2020**

The Health and Social Care Board thank all Contractors and their staff for your continued efforts and support as we collectively try to navigate the challenges which COVID-19 pandemic has generated for the profession, patients and the wider Health and Social Care system. In the incoming days and weeks work will progress to determine the short, medium and long term implications for care provision; primary care Optometry services are fundamental in the planning for the 'new normal' as it will evolve.

Please ensure that you continue to check the Optometry COVID-19 webpage for all relevant information and updates. Please also share the following link with your staff and colleagues who may not be working currently to ensure they are kept abreast of all information relevant to ophthalmic services:

<http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3120.htm>

In the coming days HSC Board Ophthalmic Services will convene a short-term multi-stakeholder (including Optometry NI) group to work through how primary eyecare services can be re-engaged as the covid-19 landscape evolves. This group will seek to align government and PHA advice and guidance, and the available evidence base, with the practical and significant challenges that service provision in a physical and socially-distancing environment will present.

### **COVID -19 Pandemic: Case Definition Change**

The four Chief Medical Officers in the UK have issued a change in case definition for COVID-19. From today the general case definition for COVID -19 is:

**A new and continuous cough OR fever OR a loss of/change in smell or taste.**

Please read the guidance carefully at the following link under the following link:

<http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/3120.htm> **\*\* Latest CMO Letters \*\***

Practitioners should consider this guidance carefully both in relation to themselves, their families and their staff, and in relation to communications with patients in regards consideration of provision of face to face consultations.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic: The Importance of Communication**

As advised in previous Bulletins, **ALL contractors** are asked to ensure they have appropriate and adequate communication processes in place within their practice. It is vital that patients and members of the public who contact your practice can access timely responses and advice during normal working hours, with appropriate advice in respect of emergencies which occur out of normal working hours.

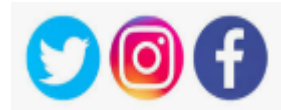
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In Bulletin No 5 you were advised of the Optometry Services video kindly recorded by Rachel Scott and the HSCB communications team. This week the HSCB generated a video to help raise public awareness about the importance of attendance for patients who have a **Macular Services** Appointment. Please see below the link to the video. You are encouraged to share this video via your social media accounts and channels to optimise the reach of this important public and ophthalmic health message to your patients and the wider public.



It remains important that time-critical referrals to the macular services continue, in line with extant referral advice and guidance. These should be made electronically where possible, with any images/scans and symptomology to assist appropriate triage.

The HSCB would like to thank Dorothy White, Ophthalmic Nurse Practitioner in the Macular Service (BHSC) for recording this video. Please [click on the image opposite](#), or the links below, to view the video. (*Facebook® post*)



[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=2614121565468875&id=1503080643239645](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2614121565468875&id=1503080643239645)

<https://twitter.com/hscboard/status/1260661484754960388?s=21> (*Twitter handle @HSCBoard*)

### Hold the Date : Optometry ECHO - Open to All

HSCB is planning to hold an ECHO event on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 7.00 – 8.00pm HSCB is hoping to hold an ECHO event on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 7.00 – 8.00pm with a presentation from Eye Casualty on managing remote consultations and an overview from Raymond Curran, Head of Ophthalmic Services, on current and future provision of services during COVID-19. There will be the opportunity for practitioners to submit questions during the event.

Confirmation and further details of this event will be sent out shortly.

### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

It is hoped at this stage all Contractors will have accessed their HSC funded PPE. The Health and Social Care Board hope that this will assist contractors and individual optometrists and staff practitioners in providing safe essential /urgent care. Please ensure that you use and dispose of the PPE appropriately as advised (information to assist is here: <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3120.htm> items 27 & 28)

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The HSCB would like to thank Optometry Northern Ireland (ONI) and their support network for assisting in the distribution of the PPE, their help was greatly appreciated.

### Financial Support Scheme (FSS) Monitoring

The Business Services Organisation (BSO) have released **the applications for the FSS for May 2020** to all Ophthalmic Contractors today, Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May, with a return deadline of **9pm on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May**. If you wish to avail of the FSS for May 2020 please ensure that you complete and submit the application before the deadline. HSCB will not be in a position to contact Contractors who have not applied by the deadline.

### A Weekly Survey Reminder.....

All contractors that have applied for the FSS are required to complete weekly FSS assurance monitoring. Please ensure that you complete weekly returns via the Survey Monkey by **5pm on the Monday of the following week**.

Please read carefully the FAQs which have been drafted to help contractors complete the weekly monitoring return, in particular the questions in relation to the recording and reporting of staff who are normally employed by each Optometry contractor practice

FAQs: <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3120.htm> (*item 25*)

### Urgent Eyecare Provision: important information.

#### 1. Urgent Eyecare Claims for April 2020

Claims for services from 25<sup>th</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> April should have been recorded on the monthly activity spreadsheet and the spreadsheet submitted to BSO by now. This is a reminder for any practice that has provided Urgent Care in April and has not yet submitted the spreadsheet; it should be submitted directly by emailing it to BSO ([gareth.drake@hscni.net](mailto:gareth.drake@hscni.net)).

The final deadline for submission of this spreadsheet is **10<sup>th</sup> July 2020**, after which the claims will not be processed and paid; there will be **no exceptions** to this.

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### 2. Urgent Eyecare Claims for May and ongoing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Urgent Care claims for services provided from 1<sup>st</sup> May should be submitted, as the patients attend, using the new E-form as advised in recent communication ([click here](#)). The link to the E-form for claims, and further guidance may be accessed at:

<http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/Urgent%20Eyecare%20Service%20-%20Important%20Update%20on%20Claim%20Process.pdf>

If you have any difficulty accessing the claim form please contact BSO Ophthalmic Services.

**The closing date for submission of the E-form is 5pm on 19<sup>th</sup> day of the month to ensure payment in that month.** All claims for Urgent Care must be submitted **within 3 months** of the date service otherwise they cannot be paid.

### 3. Processing and Assurance of Urgent Care Claims

All urgent care claims, as is usual with GOS and other Enhanced Service claims, will be subject to verification checks and monitoring. Any Urgent Care claim submitted without the patient's HCN, or where it is determined not to be an Urgent Care service, will be held back. The total Urgent Care payment will be made as an adjustment each month and recorded as a single total amount.

It will not be listed by individual patient and contractors are therefore advised to keep a record of the Urgent Care claims submitted so that they may check the payment. If it appears that a claim has not been remunerated contractors should contact BSO Ophthalmic Services who will have a record as to why a payment may have been withheld.

Practices are advised that claims **should NOT be submitted via OCS, as NIPEARS claims, during the COVID 19 pandemic period.** Also the Enhanced Services patient declaration form (**LES**PR) does not require to be completed for Urgent Care services. However the information on the E form declaration in regards data protection and the use of the information should be brought to the patient's attention.

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### Essential Eyecare Provision

#### Essential Eyecare claims

Claims for essential GOS sight tests, vouchers or repair/replacements for eligible patients should be submitted via OCS as normal. The GOS patient declaration form (OCSPR) should be completed as usual with the exception of the patient signature. "COVID 19" should be recorded in place of the patient signature.

If you have any queries about the claim process during the COVID -19 period please contact either BSO Ophthalmic Services or email one of the HSCB clinical advisers who will be happy to help.

If you have any difficulty accessing the urgent care claim form please contact BSO Ophthalmic Services on 028 9536 0333 (Option 1, Optometry).

### \*\*\*\* Ophthalmic Advice and Support \*\*\*\*

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



Janice McCrudden: [janice.mccrudden@hscni.net](mailto:janice.mccrudden@hscni.net)

Fiona North: [fiona.north@hscni.net](mailto:fiona.north@hscni.net)

Margaret McMullan: [margaret.mcullan@hscni.net](mailto:margaret.mcullan@hscni.net)

Scott Drummond: [scott.drummond@hscni.net](mailto:scott.drummond@hscni.net)

COVID-19 Pandemic Online Resources:

HSC Optometry COVID-19 information:

<http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3120.htm>

COVID-19 Public Health Agency Advice: <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/>

General Optical Council:

[https://www.optical.org/en/news\\_publications/Publications/joint-statement-and-guidance-on-coronavirus-covid19.cfm](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>