

OPHTHALMIC SERVICES

COVID-19 UPDATE: No: 9

16th October 2020

- For all relevant HSC COVID-19 pandemic information please ensure that you check the webpage <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3120.htm>

Important Information about the new NI COVID restrictions

Further to the HSCB communication (issued Wednesday 15th October 2020) the Department of Health has confirmed that the additional government restrictions which came into force today, Friday 16 October 2020, **do not** impact upon how Optometry contractor practices currently operate.

You are however encouraged, where possible, to prioritise patients on the basis of need, reduce footfall and unnecessary travel, and to screen all patients using the questions set out in section 4.2 of the HSC Re-establishment of General Ophthalmic Services/Primary Eyecare Services Operational Guidance document. The current Northern Ireland Operational Guidance is available at the link below or, [click here](http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/PrimaryCare_OPHServices_OperationalGuidance_170620.pdf).
http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/PrimaryCare_OPHServices_OperationalGuidance_170620.pdf

Please also ensure that you read the recent addendum to this guidance which was included in the communication sent on 15th October in relation to the management of the situation where staff have tested positive for COVID-19.

Financial Support Scheme 2

The new Financial Support Scheme (FSS 2) commenced from September 2020. Under the new FSS 2 process:

- **No** application is required to be submitted by contractors
- The weekly activity monitoring survey will **cease** from Monday 19th October but HSCB/DoH reserve the right seek further and additional information in the future, if required.
- A reconciliation process will be carried out by HSCB/BSO over the next few weeks to verify the information contractors have provided over the initial FSS (1) period

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Regional Acute Eye Care Pathway

- **Out of Hours** emergencies: Accessing emergency ophthalmology services out of Eye Casualty hours should be done by contacting the ophthalmologist on call at either hospital location:
 - **RVH** switchboard: Tel: 028 90240503 - ask for the ophthalmologist on call.
 - **Altnagelvin** switchboard: Tel: 02871345171- ask for the ophthalmologist on call.
- **Regional Optometry Eye Casualty Referral and Feedback Form**

Any patient being referred to Eye Casualty whether to the RVH or, Altnagelvin should be given a referral letter to take with them even if clinical information has been given over the phone. You are asked to use the new referral form and should receive feedback on your referral if this is used.

 - Use the following link to download the referral form: [Eye Casualty Referral and Feedback Form](#)
 - Read the Eye Casualty Referral Guidance at the following link: [Acute Eyecare Pathway and Eye Casualty Guidance](#)
 - Find all Optometry referral information at the following link: [Referral Information](#)

If, after contacting either of the Eye Casualty services for advice about referring a patient, you have to wait for an Eye Casualty clinician to ring you back, you may wish to send the patient home until you have received the necessary advice. Please give the patient the referral letter when they leave the practice even if you are not certain that Eye Casualty will be giving them an appointment.

“Second Opinions” and GOS eye examinations

There have been an increasing number of complaints received by HSCB/BSO from patients who have sought a “second opinion” and failed to understand that a GOS voucher could not be issued following the second, private, sight test. Practitioners are reminded that, in line with MOS 303 (access in [MOS Library](#)), any patient who attends a practice expressing concerns about a previous sight test should be encouraged to return to the original practice to resolve the problem. It should be made very clear to the patient that if a sight test is provided as a “second opinion” (following agreement with the patient), that it cannot be provided under GOS. Furthermore as the sight test is being provided in a private capacity the patient should be advised that any prescribed glasses resulting from that private eye examination are also a private transaction. Please read [MOS 303](#) carefully and ensure that patients seeking “second opinions” are advised appropriately.

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HSCNI email, CCG and NIECR

- **Practice HSCNI email accounts**

As outlined in Bulletin No 7 ([click here](#)) contractors that are using the HSC Optometry portal for their claims must check their practice HSCNI email accounts daily. If you require a password reset for this account please contact the IT helpdesk on 028 9536 2400 or, email supportteam@hscni.net

- **eReferral via CCG and the use of NIECR**

As stated in [Bulletin No 7](#), if you are not a user of CCG or NIECR you are strongly advised to arrange to have access to both of these applications. Going forward it is more important than ever that the referral pathway is electronic and that an optometrist utilises the [NIECR](#) to help inform their clinical practice and decision making. Use of NIECR helps in clinical practice by allowing an optometrist to check records of ophthalmic care provided by the HES, current medications etc.... It allows you to see if the patient has already been referred by another optometrist also (if sent via CCG). You can watch some videos highlighting the benefits of NIECR use at the following link ([click here](#) and view the videos from 24/7/2019)

If you have a CCG account (s) and NIECR account and need your password reset please contact the IT helpdesk on 028 9536 2400 or, email supportteam@hscni.net. Please note that HSC Board staff are unable to reset passwords for the various application you use in practice.

Please contact ophthalmic.services@hscni.net to discuss the use of eReferral and NIECR should you not already have access to these applications.

HSCB COVID-19 communications

Please ensure that you continue to check the following communication and information sources:

1. Your contractor practice HSCNI email account on a daily basis
2. 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>

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In particular you are asked to note the following recent communications; this is not an exclusive list:

- Acute Eyecare Pathway and Eye Casualty Guidance (regional): [HERE](#)
- HSS(MD) 70-2020 - 06.10.2020 - COVID-19 - Shielding Guidance for Children and Young People: Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) is available: [HERE](#)
- HSS(MD) 68-2020 - 23.09.2020 - Letter to All Health and Social Care Workers Encouraging Everyone to Obtain the Flu Vaccination: [HERE](#)
- HSS(MD) 67-2020 - 17.09.2020 - Minimising Risks of COVID-19 Outbreaks in Healthcare Settings is available [HERE](#)
- HSC Glaucoma Care Pathway Guidance [HERE](#)
- HSC Rebuilding Ophthalmic Services Letters – Phase 1, 2, 3a and 3b [HERE](#)
- Flu Vaccination Programme: HSC Workers, Optometry Staff – 23.9.2020

Ophthalmic Advice and Support

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

Janice McCrudden: janice.mccrudden@hscni.net

Fiona North: fiona.north@hscni.net

Margaret McMullan: margaret.mcmullan@hscni.net

Scott Drummond: 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

College of Optometrists: <https://www.college-optometrists.org/the-college/media-hub/news-listing/coronavirus-2019-advice-for-optometrists.html>