

Ophthalmic Services**General Ophthalmic Services Memorandum**

26 June 2020

**To all Optometrists and
Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners
providing General Ophthalmic Services**

Dear Practitioner

**Guidance on Resumption of General Ophthalmic Services
and Enhanced Services
from 29th June 2020**

This guidance provides important information to the resumption of provision of HSC funded eyecare, both General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) and Enhanced Services. Please share this with all staff in the practice.

Primary Care Optometry eyecare services are being re-established in phases to manage the risk of COVID-19 as safely as possible for staff and patients.

Phase 1: Resumption of the main elements of primary care optometry eye care provision, including eye examinations and ophthalmic dispensing and the provision of Enhanced Services. It does not include domiciliary eyecare provision due to the higher level of COVID-19 risk. In addition, in order that GOS patients most in need are prioritised, it is anticipated that in Phase 1 GOS eyecare will be available for those patients presenting with ocular symptoms, visual needs or medical needs.

Phase 2: Recommencement of “routine reminder”-generated activity and aerosol generating procedures e.g. use of burr for foreign body removal. Phased resumption of Domiciliary Services, based on available public health advice and guidance.

Phase 3 Full resumption of normal services.

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General Ophthalmic Services (GOS)

From 29th June 2020 “Essential Care” will cease and GOS provision will be resumed under Phase 1 of re-establishing Ophthalmic Services.

GOS Sight Tests

Practices are asked to prioritise patients for GOS sight tests by symptoms and need in order to help manage any backlog and capacity issues in your practice caused by COVID. The GOS Regulations and the usual business rules will apply as normal, in particular the requirements regarding sight test intervals and early retest protocols, see MOS 275.

GOS Vouchers.

Glasses may be prescribed and resulting vouchers issued to eligible patients as usual.

The facility to provide the previous prescription from data held by BSO will cease on 29th June as all practices should be open and available to provide previous prescriptions if requested by a patient or by another Optometrist as usual.

GOS Repairs/Replacements

The facility to provide, and claim for, an adult replacement for a patient who was due a GOS sight test during the COVID 19 emergency period will cease on 29th June other than for very exceptional cases with prior approval e.g. for a shielded or very vulnerable patient who has lost their glasses and is unable to attend the practice because of their vulnerability to COVID-19. This facility will be by prior approval.

Patient signatures and declaration form OCSPR

This must be completed for claims submitted on OCS. It must be completed for each patient and the patient made aware of the wording of the declaration but instead of a signature note “COVID” on the form.

For paper claim forms note “COVID” in place of a patient signature

Patient eligibility - Universal Credit

More people who require eyecare services will now be receiving Universal Credit. These patients, as previously, are not automatically eligible for GOS but must apply for it using an HC1 form and then provide an HC2 or HC3 as evidence of eligibility. See MOS 327.

To view all current MOSs click on the following link: [MOS Library](#).



ENHANCED SERVICES

From 29th June all Enhanced Services will be resumed, under Phase 1.

A: Acute Eyecare Pathway: NIPEARS

From 29th June 2020 the “Urgent Care” service will cease and NIPEARS will resume.

The NIPEARS service specification has been updated to incorporate changes that have been identified through the pandemic period to include:

- Removal of the link between access to an NIPEARS assessment and a GOS sight test.
- Facility to provide a remote consultation within the NIPEARS framework.

The updated NIPEARS service specification can be viewed at:

Click link: <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/NI%20PEARS%20-%20%20Service%20Specification%20Updated%20June%202020.pdf>

Important Note: from 29th June only NIPEARS accredited practitioners in NIPEARS listed practices may provide remote and/or face to face consultations to patients presenting with an acute eye problem. The facility for **non-NIPEARS** accredited practitioners to provide, and claim for, **remote** Urgent Care consultations will **cease** from 29th June 2020.

NIPEARS Provision

- i) **Face to face consultations** - these must be provided in line with the updated NIPEARS service specification and claimed on OCS, or on paper for non-portal user practices, as before. All but one of the eligibility criteria are reinstated in line with the service specification e.g. an NIPEARS consultation, if deemed necessary, must be provided within 48 hours of the patient contacting the practice and one NIPEARS face to face consultation and one follow up may be provided annually except in exceptional circumstances with prior approval.
- ii) **Requirement to provide a GOS sight test**, if the patient is due and eligible, has been removed. A patient presenting with an acute, i.e. new and sudden or very recent onset, eye problem that requires face to face investigation may be provided with an NIPEARS assessment whether or not they are due for a GOS sight test.
- ii) **Remote consultations:** as with face to face consultations one remote consultation for the same condition may be provided per year other than in exceptional circumstances with prior approval.

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Note: There is **no** facility to provide, and claim for, a follow up consultation remotely.

- iii) **Face to face follow up to a remote consultation:** this may be provided with prior approval requested by email to priorapprovals.bso@hscni.net

***Important: Follow the service specification carefully*.**

Additional services provided under NIPEARS

IOP review at secondary care request: occasionally Eye casualty or another ophthalmology sub-speciality may request an IOP check only for a patient. This may be provided and a claim facility has been set up using the Additional Services eForm.

This facility is for **secondary care ophthalmology requests only**. If a GP requests an IOP check this should be provided as part of either NIPEARS if the patient has an acute problem, or a routine sight test, or if the patient is under current ophthalmology care the GP should be directing their concern/request to that service.

Changes to NIPEARS Claim process

The OCS cannot immediately be changed to reflect the changes in service so the claim processes have had to be adapted in the short term, involving use of both OCS and an eForm. Work is ongoing to implement the changes needed on OCS. The claiming processes are as follows:

- **Removal of requirement to provide a GOS sight test** - for **all** patients, on the OCS NIPEARS claim form, tick the option "**GOS sight test not due**" to enable the claim to proceed, whether or not this is the case. For non-portal users the paper claim form has been updated in line with this change. This does not affect the inbuilt verification of eligibility for NIPEARS in regards the date last NIPEARS assessment. The provision of an NIPEARS assessment does not affect the patient's eligibility for GOS, but this **cannot** be provided on the same day as an NIPEARS assessment. These are two separate services provided for different clinical reasons.

The clinical record **must** clearly demonstrate the reason for providing an NIPEARS consultation to the patient.



- **NI PEARS remote consultations** - these cannot yet be claimed using OCS or on the paper form by non-portal users, but instead must be claimed using the

Ophthalmic Additional Services eForm accessed at:

Click on link: <https://fpsebusiness.healthandcareni.net/online-forms/ophthalmic-additional-services-claim-form/>

- **NIPEARS Face-to-Face follow up following a remote consultation** - claim using the Ophthalmic Services eForm. This requires prior approval via the BSO prior approval email priorapprovals.bso@hscni.net and the approval number must be included on the eForm claim.
- **Additional Service:** Claims for “IOP check/review at secondary care request” should be submitted using the **Ophthalmic Additional Services eForm**.

Important Note: The eForm does not allow pre-submission verification of Health & Care numbers and therefore, following submission, if an incorrect HCN has been used or a duplicate claim submitted these will be withdrawn and not paid. Contractors are advised to retain their own record of all claims submitted using the eForm for reconciliation purposes.

Patient declaration form - LESPR

This must be completed for claims submitted on OCS and on the eForm. It must be completed for each patient and the patient made aware of the wording of the declaration but instead of a signature note “COVID” on the form.

For paper claim forms note “COVID” in place of a patient signature.

B: Glaucoma Pathway: Level I Enhanced Service, Level II Enhanced Service and OHT Review and Monitoring

All Glaucoma pathway enhanced services will resume on 29th June 2020 as required.

Claim process:

- **Level 1 and Level II Enhanced Services** – continue as normal using the **paper claim form**
- **OHT Review and Monitoring Service** (only those Contractors providing this service) – continue to use the current **OHT Review eForm**

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Note: Although the Level I claim form is 'visible' on OCS it is not fully functional and therefore **SHOULD NOT** be used.

For all Enhanced Services:

- **Payment dates and reporting**

All claims on OCS must be submitted by **21st day** of the month, as usual, to ensure payment that month.

All claims submitted using the eForm or on paper must be submitted by **16th day** of the month to ensure payment that month.

- **Payment Verification and Monitoring**

All Enhanced Services will be subject to close monitoring of activity and probity post payment processes, as before.

Ophthalmic Advice and Support

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

Optometric advisers: Janice McCrudden: janice.mccrudden@hscni.net

Fiona North: fiona.north@hscni.net

Margaret McMullan: margaret.mcullan@hscni.net

BSO Ophthalmic Services: Tel: 02895 363753 or email gareth.drake@hscni.net

HSCB Business Support: Scott Drummond: scott.drummond@hscni.net

