

December 2019

---

# NHS England- South East (Kent, Surrey, Sussex) Newsletter

News and Information for Optometrists and Opticians

---

Welcome to the latest edition of the newsletter from NHS England & NHS Improvement – Kent, Surrey and Sussex Eye Health Team



- Patients requesting a second opinion /non-tolerance.....1
- Hospital eye care and second pairs.....2
- Process for non-collections .....3
- Change in ownership of practice premises.....3
- Clinical advice .....3
- Update on plans for sight tests in special education schools.....4

## Patients requesting a second opinion

If you are approached by a patient who is asking for a second sight test having been seen elsewhere, it is important that you give the patient the correct advice. **Please note** there is no provision within the general ophthalmic services (GOS) to offer a



second sight test unless there is a clear clinical need as determined by the optometrist.

If the patient is unhappy with their original sight test they should be advised to return to the original optometrist and raise the concern with them. Alternatively, the patient can make a complaint via NHS England Contact Centre. On occasion some patients have been offered a second NHS sight test by another practice having been dissatisfied with the first sight test. In these circumstances, as well as not being eligible for the second NHS funded sight test, the patient would also not be eligible for any GOS vouchers to help with costs.

### **Non-tolerance**

The GOS scheme provides support for patients who, exceptionally, cannot tolerate new spectacles made with a “clinically correct” prescription. In such cases, if a second sight test is necessary, you should annotate the GOS 1 form with the words “re-test/non-tolerance”. You may only issue a second voucher after receiving the prior approval from NHS England by emailing us at [england.southeastoptometry@nhs.net](mailto:england.southeastoptometry@nhs.net) Upon receiving approval, the GOS 3 form should be annotated accordingly (including the date and the name of the NHS England official who gave you the approval).

You should not claim, if patients are unable to tolerate new spectacles as a result of a mistake, a misjudgement by the prescriber, a mistake by the dispenser, intolerance to the chosen lens form or design, or manufacturing errors.

### **Hospital eye care and second pairs**

There has been an increase in the number of requests for a GOS funded second pair of spectacle where the patient is currently under the hospital eye services (HES). With the exception of the circumstances covered by the second pair guidance, the GOS does not provide vouchers towards the cost of spare pairs of spectacles. If the patient is under the HES and needs a second pair, it is the responsibility of the HES to issue that voucher. Therefore, if a HES patient comes to your practice to ask for this, please tell them that they should ask the HES for a voucher towards the cost. If the patient is eligible for a GOS sight test outside hospital, such a sight test will be a



GOS sight test. If the patient is not eligible they should be issued with a HES1 form by the hospital, which the sight test provider should submit directly to the hospital for payment of the optometrist's fees.

### **Process for non-collections**

From Making Accurate Claims guidance - It is reasonable for you to submit your GOS 3 claim in respect of uncollected appliances within the standard three-month timescale except in unusual circumstances. You should record the steps you took to notify the patient before the three-month deadline, together with dates. In such cases, you should claim for the spectacles or contact lenses at the retail price or the appropriate voucher value, whichever is the lower, and annotate the form with the words "spectacles/contact lenses uncollected". A claim may be made in respect of a patient who dies before collecting the spectacles or contact lenses. You should annotate the relevant form with the words "patient deceased", adding the date of death if known to you.

### **Change in ownership of practice premises**

The GOS contract does not allow automatic transfer from one owner to another owner. If a practice is sold to another person/company, a new contract application must be submitted to NHS England and the existing contract at the premises must be terminated. NHS England will then process the application and carry out an inspection visit to the premises for the new application. This usually done within 3 months.

Applications for a new contract should be submitted to NHS England at: [england.southeastoptometry@nhs.net](mailto:england.southeastoptometry@nhs.net) NHS England will then forward all necessary contract documentation for completion.

### **Clinical advice**

If you have a query about patient eligibility or require clinical advice relating to GOS, please email the team at [england.southeastoptometry@nhs.net](mailto:england.southeastoptometry@nhs.net) and we will get back to you as soon as possible. Please remember to omit any patient identifiable information.



The clinical advisers for the local area are Dr Susan Blakeney, Gordon Ilett, Irfan Ahmed and Thurka Sivapalan, any emails for their attention should be sent to the usual generic mailbox and this will be shared with relevant adviser.

### **Update on NHS England / NHS Improvement's plans for sight tests in special education schools**

NHS England is currently working on a programme of work intended to transform eye care services for children with learning disabilities and autism within a special school environment. This group of children experience a high prevalence of serious sight problems and are 28 x more likely to have serious sight issues in comparison with the general population. According to studies in special schools in Bradford, Wales and Glasgow, and more recently SeeAbility research based on 6 years of activity (during which time they have delivered over 3,500 sight tests, supporting nearly 1500 children), around half of the children tested had a problem with their vision, and over 30% of them required spectacles.

However, despite their greater need, the research also highlights that 44% of these children have never received a sight test or any other kind of eyecare service. Those who have been able to access services are usually attending busy hospital outpatient clinics in the absence of suitable community-based alternatives; a situation which is clearly not ideal for the child, parents or carers.

There are currently a small number of eye care services operating in special schools, but this is patchy, and inconsistent in terms of the delivery model. Therefore, based on the premise that every child is entitled to an NHS sight test, which NHS England is responsible for, we are seeking to improve access by providing a national service across England which is flexible enough to complement existing services, whilst also being able to establish one from scratch where no existing service is in place. Delivering the service on school premises also reduces the number of children missing school for hospital appointments, not to mention the stress and anxiety they frequently cause.

Working closely with SeeAbility and experts from across the optical learning disability and special educational needs and disability (SEND) profession, this new programme aims to provide a comprehensive eyecare service that goes beyond the provision of



sight tests alone. For example, children who require spectacles will each be given a spare pair and will be able to have them dispensed on the school premises, avoiding the need to redeem optical vouchers in hospitals or optical practices. Additionally, every child will receive a report written in plain English for parents and teachers that explains what the child can see, with advice and guidance on the strategies that can be adopted in the classroom and at home to improve the child's level of engagement with their immediate environment. These reports will also feed into the child's Education, Health and Care Plans.

We are conscious that very few primary care clinicians will have had much exposure to children with learning disabilities and autism, so we have undertaken a joint venture with Health Education England to develop a non-clinical skills training programme. This will ensure that practitioners are supported with the appropriate skills and knowledge before the new service starts. We are also collaborating with The College of Optometrists to develop a practical skills 'refresher' training programme, intended to update or enhance clinical skills.

Parents are almost unanimous in their support for a service in special schools, while teachers also testify to how their pupils have become more engaged in the classroom since receiving their spectacles. As headteacher Tina Harvey, of Perseid School in Morden says:

"The difference it has made to our children is absolutely profound. Especially for the children who had previously never had an eye test but were found to need glasses. When they are fitted with glasses you realise the additional impact of the visual impairment element, so when that is corrected, you see a completely different potential. They are happier, more able to learn, feel less frustrated and have higher self-esteem."

If you are interested in becoming an early adopter of this new service, or would like to find out more about this work, please contact Richard Everitt, Programme Manager: Optical Services Commissioning, NHS England and NHS Improvement at [Richard.everitt@nhs.net](mailto:Richard.everitt@nhs.net), or via mobile on: 07702 411472

**We'd like your feedback.....**

- Did you find this newsletter useful?



- Is there any information we could provide that would help you?

Please send any comments or suggestions to [england.southeastoptometry@nhs.net](mailto:england.southeastoptometry@nhs.net)

Best wishes from **The Eye Care and Eye Health Contracting Team**

