Welcome to the fourth edition of the Eye Health Team newsletter from the NHS England – South (South East) Ophthalmic Contracting Team.

We aim to bring you information, contractual reminders and the latest national and regional news about NHS eye health. The role of the local office eye health team is to:

- Ensure quality, accessible and timely NHS eye health services.
- Ensure general ophthalmic services are implemented through national contracting mechanisms and enablers and frameworks, to provide the best possible service to patients.
- Support the Local Optometry Networks (which represent local community providers, clinical commissioning groups, local optometry committees, hospital providers, GPs and voluntary organisations).

Patient Safety Alerts

If you are not receiving these – please contact us immediately!
As of 1 April 2016, patient safety is now part of NHS Improvement. Patient Safety Alerts are shared rapidly with all healthcare providers via the Central Alerting System (CAS), a web-based cascading system for issuing alerts, important public health messages and other safety critical information and guidance to NHS contractors.

Patient safety alerts are a crucial part of our work to rapidly alert the healthcare system to risks and provide guidance on preventing potential incidents that may lead to harm or death. These incidents are identified using our reporting system to spot emerging patterns at a national level, so that appropriate guidance can be developed and issued to protect patients from harm.

You will find all new Patient Safety Alerts issued post 1 April 2016 on the NHS Improvement website.

GOS4 Approvals

A reminder that all GOS4 vouchers issued for patients over 16 must have prior approval via Primary Care Support England (PCSE). If you require approval for a GOS4 you can obtain this by either emailing the details to pcse.optical-leeds@nhs.net or by contacting the PCSE contact centre on 0333 0142 884. Please note that emails that contain patient identifiable information must only be emailed to and from a NHS.net email address.

General enquiries and eligibility queries

Advice on clinical matters or eligibility from our optometric advisers and probity team can be sought on your behalf. Enquiries should be emailed in to england.southeastoptometry@nhs.net; please include your contractor name, contract number and all relevant clinical details (do not include patient identifiable information unless emailing via secure nhs.net account)

The contracting team can also be contacted by telephone but we will often ask you to email your enquiry in for further advice.

Please do not give out our telephone number to members of the public – we’ve had a few incidences recently where patients have called us directly with an enquiry and we have been unable to help the patient without liaising with the contractor. Any patient or public enquiries should be directed to the NHS England customer contact centre – see attached contact sheet.

Electrical testing reminder

As part of general health and safety regulations, the contactor is responsible for ensuring that the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 are adhered to. Checking of all portable sight testing equipment and general appliances used in the practice or for mobile services must be carried out by a competent person annually. Fixed installations must be checked by a competent person every 5 years. Records of all health and safety checks undertaken must be kept for inspection at contract assurance visits.
**Complaints annual reporting reminder**

In accordance with Part 7 clause 115 of the General Ophthalmic Services contract, contractors must inform NHS England annually, by 30th June of the number of complaints received during the previous financial year. We will send a reporting template and reminder out nearer the time, but in the meantime, it will be easier to report if contractors ensure accurate records are being kept throughout the year.

**GOC list and Performer list registration**

We are urging all optometrists who miss registration or are removed from the GOC list for whatever reason (e.g. when a payment has not be made) to be aware of the implications to ensure they do not put their registration at risk. Maintaining GOC registration is a legal requirement for optometrists, students of optometry and dispensing optics.

Completing the revalidation process is currently subject to delay. We are aware of delays in processing many applications to re-join the National Performers Lists by Primary Care Support England, operated by Capita.

We have had examples of individual contractors affected contacting regional teams directly about not being able to provide GOS work while their application is being processed.

**Additional Services –**

**Domiciliary notifications**

If you wish to provide a domiciliary sight test, you must notify us in advance of patients you intend to visit. You do this by sending a form to Primary Care Support England (PCSE) – see attached contact sheet. If you intend to see one or two patients at a single dwelling, you must notify PCSE at least 48 hours (excluding weekends and public holidays) before the visit. If you intend to see three or more patients at the same address, you must give at least three weeks’ notice.

If you need a form, please contact us to request a template form to be sent out to you.

Visit notifications should be sent by email (only if you have an nhs.net email account) to pcse.enquiries@nhs.net, otherwise FAX to: 0113 277 6912

Notification may not be made more than eight weeks in advance. All notifications must identify the individual patients, the address where the sight test will take place, and the date and approximate time.

The notification form should only contain the names of the patients who have requested a sight test (or whose main carer has requested a sight test if the patient is
incapable of requesting it themselves). Reminders to patients do not count as notifications.

Changes to notifications may be made at least 48 hours in advance of any visit by notifying PCSE.

You may make up to three further changes (additions or substitutions) at the time of the notified visit, but only if it would not have been possible to give 48 hours’ notice, for example in respect of a new resident or a person who has only just developed an eye or vision problem.

Eligibility for NHS Sight Test – Additional Services

Patients have the right to choose their eye care provider. Consequently no provider has an automatic right to an exclusive contract with a care home. To be eligible for a domiciliary sight test, patients must be eligible for a NHS sight test AND:

- If the sight test is conducted at the patient’s normal place of residence – the patient must be unable to leave their home unaccompanied because of physical, mental illness or disability. A medical condition (specific illness or disability) must be noted on the GOS form and on your records– being ‘housebound’ is not a substantial reason. Please note that only the patient himself/herself is eligible for the sight test, other members in the household – spouse or carer for example are not entitled to a domiciliary GOS sight test.

- If the sight test is conducted at a day centre – (not the patient’s normal place of residence) – the patient must have difficulty in obtaining sight testing services from practice premises because of physical or mental illness or disability or because of difficulties in communicating their health needs unaided. Day centres must be approved by NHS England prior to visiting; you should contact us to check whether the particular day centre that you have been asked to visit complies with the definition of a day centre for the purpose of domiciliary sight-testing under the GOS. Only the standard GOS fee is payable for sight tests conducted in day centres – the domiciliary visiting fee is not payable.

PCSE will verify all notifications on receipt.

Continuing Education and Training Allowance ‘CET’ Claims

A reminder that claims for payment of CET training allowance MUST BE MADE BY 31 October 2016 for training undertaken from 1 January to 31 December 2015. A claim form for contractors to apply, on behalf of their ophthalmic performers can be found here: CET Claim form 2016

Optometrists should send the completed CET application claim form (recorded delivery recommended) to:
Ophthalmic Services, Primary Care Support England, PO Box 350, Darlington DL1 9QN

Application forms received later than 31 October 2016 will be rejected and will not be processed for payment.

More information on CET can be found at https://www.optical.org/en/Education/CET/index.cfm

Local Eye Health Networks

NHS England hosts and supports Local Eye Health Networks (LEHNs) to provide clinical input to decision making and commissioning of primary care services. This affords an opportunity for eye health professionals to work together with patients and the voluntary sector, providing leadership in identifying local priorities and re-designing services and pathways to meet patient and population needs.

There are two LEHNs working across the South East area, one for Surrey and Sussex and one for Kent and Medway. They meet quarterly.

Update from the Surrey and Sussex LEHN

Sarah Canning was appointed as the new LEHN Chair for Surrey & Sussex earlier this year and would like to introduce herself to all stakeholders involved with eye care in the area.

Sarah’s background in optometry has spanned both community practice (independent and multiple) and more recently hospital roles. Sarah is currently Principal Optometrist for East Sussex Healthcare Trust providing clinical services across 2 acute and 3 community hospitals and managing a team of 15 optometrists. She is also a co-opted committee member for East Sussex LOC.

Sarah picked up the reigns from Richard Broughton, who, as LEHN Chair over the last two years, led the conception of the Eye Health Needs Assessment (EHNA) for Surrey & Sussex. This document provides evidence based research and data analysis to inform current priorities for improving the eye health of our local population and made clear recommendations of the need to address:
• Variation in service quality and provision across eye pathways, with particular reference to AMD, glaucoma, cataract & children’s vision screening.

• Proposals to adopt community extended pathways using best practice & national guidelines.

• Access to sight tests for hard to reach groups & patients with learning disabilities or dementia.

• Securing safe and reliable electronic referral systems across primary and secondary care.

• On-going support & training for optometrists.

• Access and support in visual rehabilitation for those patients with sight loss

Sarah continues the work of established LEHN work streams that have already produced reports and proposals for delivering several of these priorities and is working with the chairs of these sub groups with the aim of adopting them in discussion with relevant CCGs and Health & Well Being boards.

Update from Kent and Medway LEHN

The last meeting was held on 13th October – update to follow in next newsletter.

National Update from NHS England

Dr Susan Blakeney, optometric adviser for NHS England – South (South East) will be attending the annual National Optometric Advisers Association (NOAA) on 3rd November. Items for discussion on the agenda include Capita issues, OCCS Customer Care, Information Governance and NHS England and NOAA working together.

NHS.net mail

If you do not already have an NHSmail account we would like to invite all contractors to apply for one. NHS.net provides full information governance protection for any sensitive information.

It is becoming increasingly important that every optical practice has its own secure nhs.net email account to communicate safely and effectively with us and other health professionals such as CCGs, GPs and hospitals in situations such as urgent referrals. Additionally we regularly email out communications to contractors such as newsletters and urgent alerts. As CCGs are redesigning the enhanced services offered through optical practices, having nhs.net mail will be a requirement of inclusion in the schemes.
To apply for an nhs.net account, go to the NHS Digital website and follow the guidance under “Help for Pharmacists, Optometrists and Dentists wanting to use NHSmail”.

Send your completed application form to: ophthalmology.emailadmin@nhs.net

You will receive an email back with details of your new account and how to activate it.

As a secure email system, NHSmail must be operated and used in accordance with a set of clear policies and procedures.

Whilst it is not an ophthalmic contractual requirement; we recommend that all NHS mail users complete the information governance toolkit prior to applying for an account. If you are registering as part of a practice, only one person per practice needs to do this. This is an accreditation that is required for access to any NHS national service to ensure that these services remain secure. Please see: http://www.igt.hscic.gov.uk

All training and guidance materials for NHSmail are on the support pages: http://support.nhs.net/servicestatus

We hope you find these newsletter helpful – previous editions of this newsletter and a useful contact list are available on our website https://www.england.nhs.uk/south/info-professional/eye-health/

Best wishes from,

The Eye Care and Eye Health Contracting Team