Welcome to 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.

Eligibility for NHS Sight Tests and GOS Vouchers

A common enquiry we receive is around eligibility for help with healthcare costs and what evidence contractors should be asking for prior to issuing GOS vouchers. Contractors undertake GOS sight test and issue GOS vouchers on the basis that they have taken reasonable steps to verify a patient’s eligibility every time a GOS claim is made for a sight test or a voucher.

NHS Business Services Authority carries out random eligibility checks on patients who claim GOS and patients who are not found to be eligible, will receive a penalty charge.

It is a regulatory and contractual requirement that contractors ask patients for written evidence of eligibility for help with healthcare costs. If a patient fails to produce satisfactory evidence of eligibility, contractors must record this fact on the GOS claim form by inserting a cross in the Evidence Not Seen roundel. In such cases, contractors should still perform the sight test, and issue a voucher if applicable.
Patients aged under 16 or over 60 should be asked to provide evidence of eligibility e.g. driving licence, bus pass (where age is not evident by observation). For patients aged 15 at the date of their last sight test, their standard recall period is 2 years, as they will be over 16 when next tested.

Patients aged 16, 17 or 18 in full-time education should be asked to bring a letter of confirmation from their school or college. A student card is not sufficient evidence.

Patients diagnosed with ocular hypertension or at risk of glaucoma should be asked for a copy of the letter from their consultant ophthalmologist. Patients aged 40 or over who are the parent/brother/sister/child of a person who has or had glaucoma are unlikely to be able to provide evidence of eligibility, therefore the GOS sight test form must be marked as Evidence Not Seen. NB GOS is not a glaucoma/OHT/cataract and AMD monitoring service, such enhanced services are commissioned by CCGs.

Pension credit claimants must provide evidence of entitlement to the ‘Guaranteed’ type of credit.

Universal credit claimants should be asked to provide evidence. Please tick the box marked ‘job seekers allowance’ until GOS forms have been amended.

Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit (and their family, including dependents up to their 20th birthday) may be entitled to help with NHS health costs, but are not automatically entitled. If they are entitled, the NHS Business Services Authority will automatically send an NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate to each of the named claimants (joint claims). Patients should be asked to show their NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate every time they apply for a GOS funded sight test or receive a GOS voucher, dependents must be named on the award notice to be eligible.

Patients that hold a valid HC2 or HC3 certificate must provide the certificate on the day of the sight test. The certificate number must be recorded on the GOS form and contractors are not permitted to provide the sight test unless the certificate is provided. Similarly, in respect of a GOS 3 form, a valid HC2 or HC3 certificate must also be seen on the day that the patient orders his/her spectacles/contact lenses.
If a patient undergoing a private sight test is prescribed a complex lens, then the test should be treated as having been performed under the GOS and a GOS 1 or 6 is completed and submitted for payment. Conversely, a GOS patient currently wearing complex lenses, who undergoes a sight test and is found to no longer need a complex lens, may still receive GOS, but for this sight test only.

Further information can be obtained from the NHS Business Services Authority website www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk. Information regarding help with health costs for patients is available in form HC11 http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Documents/HealthCosts/HC11_April_2015.pdf

General eligibility queries and guidance on all aspects of GOS are covered in the document ‘Making Accurate Claims’ which can be found on the FODO website.

Please refer to published guidance before contacting NHS England with individual eligibility queries.

We ask that contractors do not give out NHS England’s contracting team telephone number to members of the public, if patients would like to contact us they should be directed to the NHS England Contact Centre – see attached useful contact sheet.

**Hospital Eye Services (HES) Vouchers**

HES vouchers presented by patients who had their sight tested by the Hospital Eye Service (by a doctor or optometrist) are paid by the HES.

Where a patient is referred by the HES for a NHS sight test, that and any associated voucher will continue to be reimbursed under GOS by NHS England. To ensure prompt payments are made, HES voucher claims should be submitted to the finance department at the NHS hospital trust responsible for the hospital or clinic that issued the voucher.

**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.
LPNs are now well established and are working closely with Strategic Clinical Networks, Academic Health Science Networks and Clinical Senates, as well as commissioners, providers and patients, to deliver the aim 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.

The Chairs of the two LEHNs working across the South East area recently met to provide strategy updates.

**Update from the Surrey and Sussex LEHN**

The LEHN is currently working with LOCs, LOCSU and CCGs to promote, give clinical support and training for Minor Eye Conditions (MECs) pathways. They are involving local professional networks and GPs to achieve a collaborative approach to MECs.

Future short and medium plans are to devise a strategy for reducing variation in eye care pathways, make recommendations for developing safe and secure electronic referrals and improved communications between primary and secondary care. To continue work on glaucoma repeat measures, referral refinement and stable monitoring and AMD pathways.

Long term plans are to map the current Eye Clinic Liaison Officers (ECLOs) in Surrey and Sussex and to report on need for ECLOs to successfully integrate into eye health pathways, understanding CCG, provider and patient perspectives.

Please contact Chair Sarah Canning Sarah.canning2@nhs.net for further information

**Update from Kent and Medway LEHN**

Further to the previous Kent and Medway Local Eye Health Network Strategic Plan with associated recommendations for implementation across Kent and Medway, a 2017/18 plan is being drafted. It is designed to ensure that quality eye care services are maintained with inequalities and variation reduced across the county. The plan supports the lowering of levels of avoidable sight loss with a cost-effective inclusive approach.

Future plans include looking at care of people with learning difficulties in collaboration with the charity SeeAbility and a mobile service for homeless people.
National Update from NHS England

NHS England announced in December that it will provide funding for further testing of the Argus II, also known as the Bionic Eye. Ten patients will undergo surgery to tackle Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP), an inherited disease that causes blindness. The procedures will take place at Manchester Eye Hospital (MREH) and Moorfields Eye Hospital from 2017. NHS England will fund this through its Commissioning through Evaluation (CtE) scheme, designed to gather vital evidence for treatments that show significant promise for the future. NHS England will assess how the Bionic Eye helps patients function with everyday tasks. More information can be found on our website: https://www.england.nhs.uk/2016/12/bionic-eye-surgery/

Capita issues - The position with respect to Primary Care Support Services, provided by Capita, is improving and services are recovering. NHS England is holding weekly meetings with Capita and has agreed a recovery plan to resolve the delays experienced by many contractors with ophthalmic payments, CET payments and Performer List applications. The backlog is now being addressed and Capita is catching up after the significant ‘teething problems’.

Capita is working to deliver these plans and we are tracking progress through a weekly Service Management Board. We now have greater confidence in the management and leadership changes that Capita has made to provide the capability and capacity to drive the service recovery.

Capita has recently emailed out an update bulletin covering various topics:

- New tailored submission headers
- GOS payment reconciliation
- Changes to GOS 3 and 4 form processing
- National performers list
- Contacting PCSE
- Improvements to the Customer Support Centre
- Managing urgent queries
- Moving telephone contact from the Preston office
If you did not receive the bulletin by email – please contact Capita’s Customer Service on 0333 014 2884 and PCSE.enquiries@nhs.net or visit the PCSE Website

**Information Governance** - The NHS IG Toolkit is an online system which allows organisations to assess themselves or be assessed against information governance policies and standards, more information can be found at: [https://www.igt.hscic.gov.uk/](https://www.igt.hscic.gov.uk/)

Whilst this is not currently a requirement under a GOS contract or for individual performers, we recommend contractors have robust IG in place, 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.

Furthermore completing the IG toolkit is a requirement of obtaining a secure NHSmail account, practices that make an application for an NHSmail account will be asked to complete the toolkit. Having an NHSmail account is often a requirement for participating in locally commissioned enhanced services that clinical commissioning groups manage. For more information, contact the LOCSU

South East Commissioning Support Unit (SECSU) are also on-hand to provide IG toolkit submission support for optometrists in the form of advice and guidance on developing policies, serious incidents and interpretation of the IG toolkit requirements.

Please contact the South East CSU Service Desk on Tel: 03000 42 42 42 secsu.ictservicedesk@nhs.net and request that a query is logged for the training advice queue.

**NHS.net email**

There has been some delay in setting up new accounts due to national changes, however please continue to send in your applications, we are sorting through the backlog as soon as possible. If you do not already have an NHS.net email account we would like to invite all contractors to apply for one. NHS.net mail provides full information governance protection for any sensitive information such as patient information being sent by email.
To apply for an NHS.net email account, go to the [NHS Digital website](https://www.digital.nhs.uk) and follow the link “Registering for optometrists and dentists”.

Send your completed application form to: [ophthalmology.emailadmin@nhs.net](mailto:ophthalmology.emailadmin@nhs.net)

You will receive an email back with details of your new account and how to activate it (subject to delay at present).

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

We hope you find this newsletter helpful – previous editions of newsletters and a useful contact list are available on the [NHS England website](https://www.england.nhs.uk)

Best wishes from

**The Eye Care and Eye Health Contracting Team**

Classification: (OFFICIAL)