

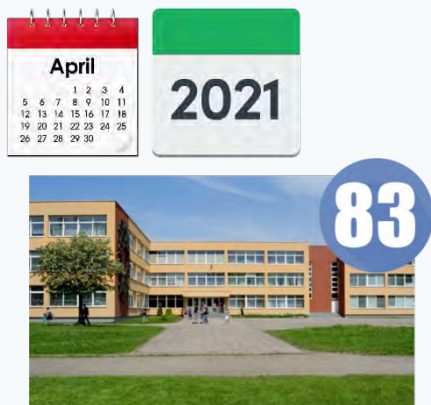
Sight testing and providing glasses for children and young people in special schools across England



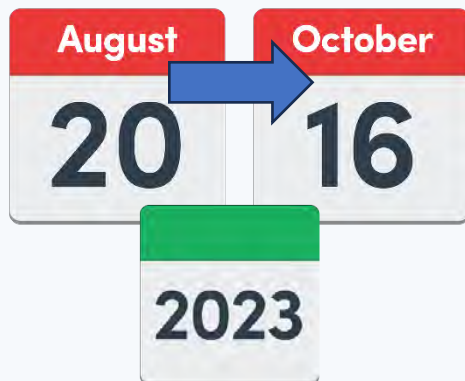
Introduction



NHS England has done lots of work to find out the best way to offer in-school sight testing



From **April 2021** an in-school sight testing programme was tried out in **eighty-three** special schools in England.



Between **20 August** and **16 October 2023**



NHS England asked these groups for their feedback about the **nine proposals** for the new sight testing service:



- patients
- eye care professionals



- parents and carers



- schools



- NHS staff



- the voluntary sector



In this Easy Read document, we explain:



- The **nine proposals** or ways the service could change



- The different feedback we received between **20 August** and **16 October 2023**



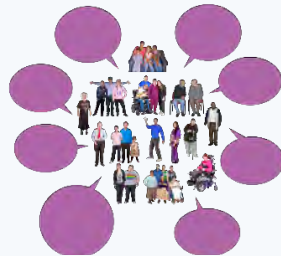
- What NHS England learned from the feedback



- What NHS England is planning to do next.



The **nine proposals** explain how a sight testing service could be at every special school in England.



There were **one hundred and twenty-four** replies.

124



Thank you to everyone who took part.



NHS
England

The feedback has given NHS England lots of ideas on how to improve the sight testing service in the future.



We list the **nine proposals** over the next three pages.



What's inside this document?



Category 1 **Create and set up eye care** **teams and providers**



Proposal 1 **Creating eye care** **teams**

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Proposal 2 **Equipment**

[Page 19](#)



Proposal 3 **Professional** **requirements and** **training**

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Category 2

Parent or carer consent for sight testing and selecting glasses

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Consent for sight testing**

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Proposal 8 **Cost of glasses** **and part payment** **by parents or**

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Support for patients, parents **and special schools**

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Proposal 9 **An eye health** **outcome report**

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How did NHS England get feedback?



An easy read document about the nine proposals was available.



Everyone was asked to give feedback by:

- Filling in an online form
- Emailing england.specialschooleyecare.service@nhs.net





Five online meetings took place.



The meetings took place in **September 2023** and **October 2023** so that people could:



- Get more information and ask questions about the sight testing service



- Give feedback on how the new sight testing service could work.



What kind of feedback did we get?



You told us that:



- The NHS should check the quality of the sight testing service
- Working with the local community should be an important part of the service.
- Everyone who has an interest in the service should get updates.



You asked us:

Will the proposals apply to all age groups?



What kind of support would children or young people get when they leave school or further education?



Could the proposals lead to extra paperwork or costs?



Will there be extra support to set up in-school sight testing services in all special schools?



What supporting information would be on offer when the sight testing service starts?

1



Proposal 1

Creating eye care teams



NHS England suggests that new eye care teams must show they have enough professionals to offer an in-school sight testing service.



The new contract will not say which professionals must be on the eye care teams, but they must offer a full service.



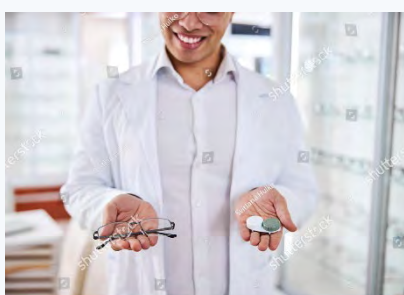
New eye care teams must explain how they have the expertise and experience to carry out in-school sight testing services at special schools.



What you said about creating eye care teams



Eye care teams should include professionals with the skills to offer a fair and equal service for children and young people at special schools.



The best eye care teams should:

- Offer **specialist dispensing opticians** - experts providing eye care for people with additional needs
- Work with **orthoptists** - experts in eye movement.





The **dispensing optician** should be part of the eye care team.



There could also be a guide for NHS staff who plan, set up and check sight testing services.



Eye care teams should try to keep the same team members so the children and young people who use the service get to know them.



After one year, NHS England could carry out checks on the eye care teams.



There could be a database of official team members.



The eye care team members should have the right skills or qualifications.



NHS England should provide details of the professionals in the new eye care teams.



What NHS England said about creating eye care teams



Eye care teams should have the right skills, so not every eye care team will be the same.



If the eye care teams keep the same team members, this would benefit children, young people, and their schools.



Eye care staff should have the right skills to meet the different needs of the children and young people they work with.



This will be part of the new contract.



The new eye care teams would work closely with NHS staff to offer a good service.



Proposal 2 Equipment



The eye care teams should have all the equipment needed for sight tests.



Eye care teams thought the equipment list in the current programme was too detailed.

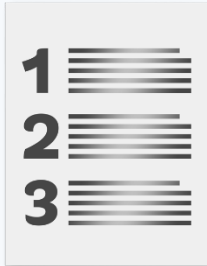


The new contract will say the eye care team only needs equipment to ensure their sight tests follow legal and clinical standards.

2



What you said about equipment



The new sight testing contract **should not** have a detailed equipment list.



A guide would include a list of recommended equipment for specialist assessments.



THE COLLEGE OF
OPTOMETRISTS



abdo

The list should meet the standards set by:

- The College of Optometrists
- Association of British Dispensing Opticians



There should be a guide for NHS staff who plan, set up and check sight testing services, which should include:



- A list of recommended equipment



- Specialist equipment for children and young people with different abilities.



The new service will include sight tests for **non-verbal patients** – patients who do not use words to communicate.



This service might not be available on the High Street.



New eye care teams might need **training** or support to use specialist equipment.



A lot of extra equipment is needed to carry out some specialist sight tests.



If the contract included a budget for specialist equipment, more organisations might want to provide eye care teams.



The school should not have to provide or store the equipment.



What NHS England said about equipment



All eye care teams should have the right equipment.



As a reasonable adjustment, this would make sure that children and young people at special schools get the best possible sight tests.



NHS England has worked with professional organisations on advice for eye care teams about:



- Using the right equipment to offer the best possible sight tests



- The contract for the new sight testing service.

3



Proposal 3

Professional requirements and training



The eye care team will need to show:



- They know how to support and work with children and young people at special schools



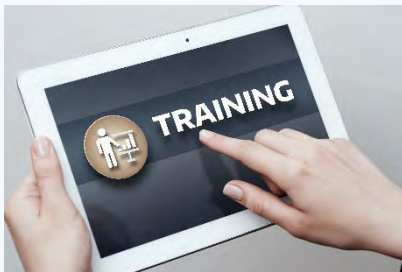
- They have completed Oliver McGowan training in learning disability and autism.



What you said about professional requirements and training



The new sight test contracts **should not** include a list of professional requirements, experience and training for eye care staff.



It would be better if eye care teams looked at their team's skills to work out the training the team needs.



There should be a guide for NHS staff who plan, set up and check sight testing services.



The eye care teams must have the skills to carry out sight tests for children and young people with learning disabilities and autism.



These skills are not included in the **General Optical Council** registration.



All eye care staff should have the right professional qualifications.



Eye care staff should:

- Have training about children's health



- Have experience of working with children before



- Know how to test and treat children and young people.



The eye care teams must complete safeguarding training.



If the contract lists training courses for eye care teams, these courses could become difficult to book.



Some eye care teams who worked at the 83 special schools said the training was too detailed.



Some eye care teams said they would not have been ready to work at special schools if they did not have the training.



The new eye care teams should have:



- Information about training



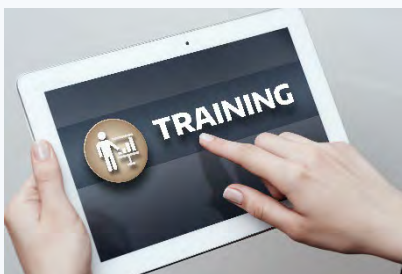
- Information to help understand the needs of children and young people.



There should be specialist training for the eye care team, such as **Oliver McGowan mandatory training**.



Eye care teams should get training so they always offer a good service.



It might not be easy to find the best type of training for all eye care teams.



What NHS England said about professional requirements and training



NHS England agrees that eye care teams should have experience supporting children and young people at special schools.



NHS England agrees that eye care teams should complete the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training in learning disability and autism.



The new contracts will include the **training requirements** that eye care teams must complete.



Parent or carer consent for sight testing and choosing glasses



Proposal 4 Consent for sight testing



A recent safeguarding review said:

"The rights of children should be respected in the same way as the rights of their parents or carers."



So, any new sight testing service should include the rights of children, young people, and their parents or carers.



In the new in-school sight testing service, it is important that children, young people, and their parents or carers can decide together if they have a sight test.



The **About My Child's Eyes** consent forms, used by the 83 special schools, were too long.



Some parents and carers asked for support to complete the forms over the phone.



Proposal 4

What you said

If children and young people and their parents or carers give consent **before** they use the sight test service:



- Parents or carers might have to complete a form before a child or young person gets an sight test
- The most vulnerable children or young people are at risk of missing out on sight tests



- Parents or carers who do not speak English as a first language might find it difficult to complete the form



- It might be difficult to get parents or carers to complete consent forms, which means some children and young people would miss out on sight tests



- Parents or carers could take a long time to complete consent forms.



- Children or young people are less likely to have too many sight tests



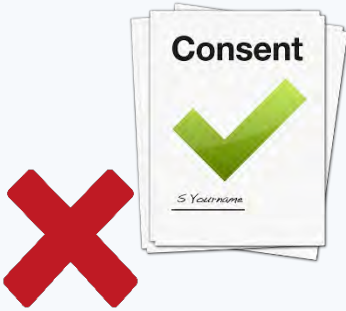
- Parents or carers might need to give a detailed medical history of the child or young person.



Children and young people would need consent before having test that need eye drops.



If consent is not needed more children and young people could use the sight testing service.



If parents or carers do not give consent, their child or young person could miss out on the sight testing service.



There should be different ways to give consent, for example:



- By speaking to someone



- By telephone



- By text message



- By email



- By signing a form.



Some people asked if the child or young person could get a sight test if their parent or carer did not give consent.



What NHS England said about consent



NHS England got a lot of different views on Proposal 4 and is getting legal advice for our final response.



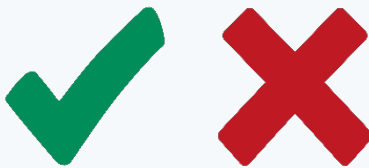
NHS England must follow the law on consent and safeguard this vulnerable group of patients.



Respect for children and young people's views is a key principle of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.



The NHS Constitution for England says:



- People have the right to accept or refuse treatment



- People should only have an examination or treatment when they give consent.



Consent must be given without any pressure from health professionals, other staff, friends, or family.



Informed consent means someone has all the information about their treatment, so they know what would happen if the treatment did not go ahead.



Understand

For consent to happen, the person must be able to understand the information and make an **informed decision**.



A health professional decides if the child or young person can give consent.



OR

A parent or carer would need to give consent instead.



They should follow the Mental Capacity Act 2005 if the young person is over 16 years old.



The eye care teams should support the school community to understand the benefits of sight testing.



After getting legal advice NHS England has decided that parents and carers must agree for a child or young person to use this service.



NHS England will create an easier and faster way to give consent.

5



Proposal 5

Choosing glasses



The sight testing programme includes a choice of glasses from the eye care team working at the special schools.



This means the child or young person and their parents or carers will get a smaller choice of glasses at the special school.



There is more choice of glasses at High Street opticians.



Not all glasses are suitable for all prescriptions, so the choices of some children or young people may be more limited choice at the special school.



Feedback from the sight testing programme suggests that some parents, children and young people did not think they had a good choice of glasses.



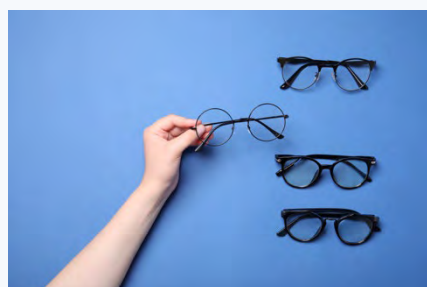
Some children or young people have less choice of glasses because of their eyesight needs.



Eye care teams should offer some glasses at different prices to match the needs of children and young people and their parents or carers.



Parents or carers should get invited to appointments where glasses are chosen, so that they get the right advice and information.



NHS England knows that eye care teams will not be able to offer the same choice as High Street opticians.



Sometimes, a child or young person and their parent or carer cannot choose glasses offered by the eye care team.

They could use the **NHS Optical Voucher** at a High Street optician with a bigger choice of glasses.



Proposal 5

What you said about choosing glasses



Most people said choosing glasses and fitting the glasses at school would be easier or less likely to cause stress for the child or young person.



As there is more choice on the high street, people asked if high street opticians could:



- Provide glasses for all types of prescriptions



- Offer good care after the sight test if the glasses need a repair or the child or young person needs advice or support to wear the glasses



- Offer a place that meets the needs of the child or young person getting their new glasses fitted.



For example, could parents or carers get a list of opticians who support people with additional needs?



It should be easy for the child or young person to report issues and choose the right glasses.



There should be a bigger choice of glasses from the eye care team at the special school covered by each NHS Optical Vouchers



Then children and young people would not need to visit the High Street.



There has been **less choice** since **NHS Optical Vouchers** started being used in special schools, leading to more children and young people wearing cheaper glasses.



Will there be a repair service and a way to replace broken glasses?



Would this be available during the school holidays?



If glasses were chosen on the High Street, would children and young people get the same service?



People were worried about the cost of replacing and repairing specialist glasses because children and young people might damage their glasses more often.



If the glasses cost a lot, they might be replaced with cheaper glasses that do not meet the child or young person's needs.



A **top-up voucher** would help parents or carers to buy better-quality glasses.



Children and young people need a **spare pair** in case they break their glasses.



It could take time to get glasses repaired or replaced when they are needed for school.



Going to high street opticians is a chance for children and young people to have a new experience outside school.



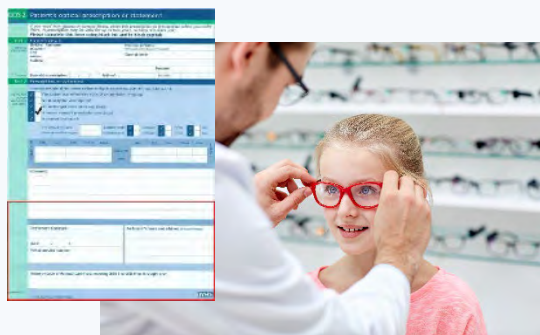
This experience could support older children in learning new skills as they grow up and become adults.



Proposal 5 – What NHS England said about choosing glasses



NHS England agrees children and young people should have a **bigger choice** of glasses that they like and that improve their eyesight.



New eye care teams should offer more choices at different prices that match the value of **NHS Optical Vouchers**.



NHS England knows that experiences can be different on the High Street.



We expect children and young people to be able to choose their glasses at school.



If there is a limited choice, children and young people should be able to take the **NHS Optical Voucher** to another optician and choose their glasses.



NHS England will work with the Department of Health and Social Care:



- So that **NHS Optical Vouchers** can be used with the eye care team **or** on the High Street.



- So there is guidance about:



- choice of glasses
- a second pair of glasses
- a repair and replacement service.



NHS England will work with NHS staff to make sure there is a clear policy about using NHS Optical Vouchers on the High Street.

6



Proposal 6

Working with the school community



For a successful in-school sight testing service, these people need to work closely together:

- eye care teams
- school staff
- local community.



Then, the service will run well and work well for children, young people and their parents or carers.



Eye care teams must explain how they support special schools and the needs of the local community.



Proposal 6 - What you said about working with the school community



The new sight testing service should work closely with special schools when children and young people have complex needs.



This means the eye care teams might need to make more visits to complete a full sight test.



Eye care staff who are good at communicating can offer better care.



Organisations such as health care providers should be part of the school community.



The Hospital Eye Service should be contacted to find out if a child or young person has used their service.



Eye care teams should visit schools before the sight tests start to build a good relationship with the school community.



Proposal 6 – What NHS England said about working with the school community



A successful sight testing service needs contractors, schools, parents, children, and young people to work closely together.



The new contract will make sure eye care teams offer extra support to work closely with the school community.



NHS England will work closely with:

- schools
- organisations interested in offering a sight testing service.



This will allow NHS England to find out how much the school wants a sight testing service.



The extra support will mean NHS England can:



- Tell more schools about the in-school sight testing service



- Find out how many schools want a sight testing service.



New eye care teams should:



- Promote the new sight testing service



- Tell more people about the eye health problems of children and young people.



NHS England will explain in the new contracts how eye care teams should work closely with:



- Special schools



- Eye health networks



- Hospitals or community health services



- Other groups interested in the service.



The standard NHS support offer



Proposal 7 Stopping over treatment



The current programme was not always able to check if children or young people needed a sight test or if they had a recent sight test.



High Street opticians always check if someone has had a sight test within the last 12 months.



There is a standard for how often sight testing should take place:



A child or young person who is under 16 years old:

Should have a sight test **every twelve months**



A child who is under 7 years old and has a vision disorder:

Should have a sight test **every six months**



A child or young person who is between **7 years old** and under **16** and **has a vision disorder** or **is becoming very short-sighted:**



Should have a sight test **every 6 months.**



A young person or adult who is **16 years and over** and **under 70 years:**



Should have a sight test **every 2 years**



When a child or young person has a new sight test earlier than the suggested number of months or years in this section, the optometrist must record why the sight test was carried out.



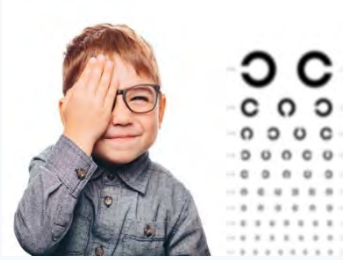
When checks on sight tests are carried out this should stop children or young people having too many sight tests.



We are working out the best way to make sure children or young people getting hospital care start getting eye care services at special schools.



Proposal 7 - What you said about over-treatment



Over-treatment is when a child or young person gets a sight test at school **and** on the High Street.



Some people think this could be a good thing.



Do there need to be checks on over-treatment?



Are many children and young people being over-treated?



Children and young people should not have too many sight tests as this could be stressful.



An annual sight test might be right for some children and young people.



Some children and young people might need sight tests less than once a year.

A questionnaire titled "Questions" with two speech bubble icons containing question marks. The first question is "1. What do you think about it?". Below the question are three checkboxes: "Good", "Bad", and "Not sure". The "Not sure" checkbox is checked with a blue mark. A hand is holding a pen over the checkboxes.

Parents are asked to return a questionnaire about previous treatment.



Parents or carers can change to in-school sight testing if they prefer to.



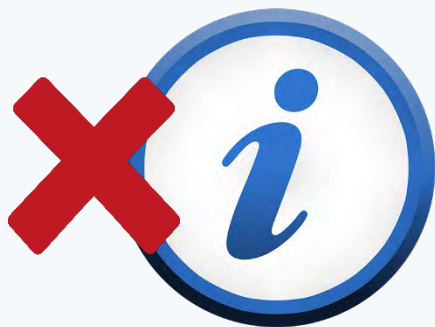
About one-third of special schools in the UK already have a service led by an eye care professional.



Any sight testing service already in place should be linked to new services.



The new sight testing service expects parents or carers to provide information about previous sight tests.



Sometimes, information from parents and carers is not correct.



This information can take a lot of time to update.



The new sight testing service should include better record keeping, leading to less over-treatment.



Proposal 7 – What NHS England said about over-treatment



NHS England agrees that the new sight testing service should not rely on information from parents or carers.



Everyone will need to complete a new national claim form.



Then new eye care teams can check if the child or young person had a sight test in the last year.



NHS England expects the eye care teams to make sure children and young people have sight tests when they are due.



If a medical professional suggests a child or young person needs a sight test sooner, they could add this to the national claim form.



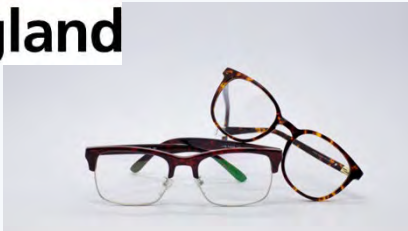
NHS England will work with eye care professionals to work out how often children and young people should get a sight test.



8

Proposal 8 Cost of glasses and part payments

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England



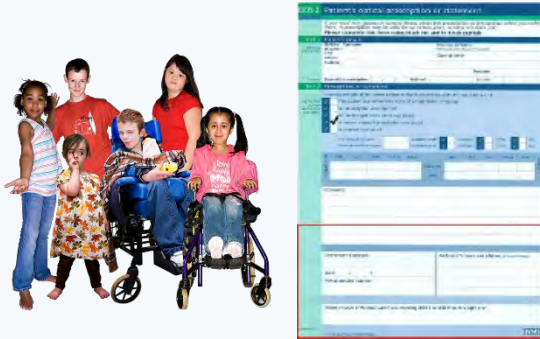
The programme used to offer two frames to children and young people, which were paid for by NHS England.



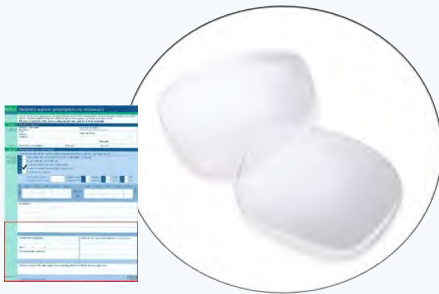
Forty-one per cent of all parents said their children received two new glasses.



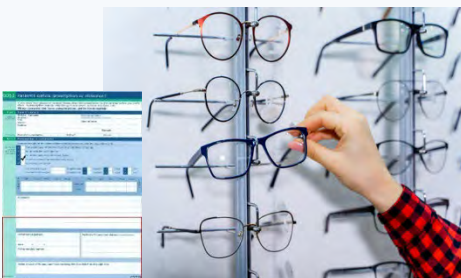
Since **April 2023**, the programme has given the same help towards the cost of frames and lenses as **NHS optical vouchers**.



In other settings, children under 16 years old can get **NHS optical vouchers** if they need glasses after a sight test.



The value of the vouchers depends on the type of lenses that the child or young person needs.



All eye care teams should offer glasses and lenses of the same value or less than the voucher.



Children, young people, and their parents or carers could choose glasses that cost more than the voucher.



Then, the parents or carers would be asked to pay the rest.



This means the new in-school sight testing service would be similar to sight testing available to **all children**.



The service would include repairing and replacing lost glasses.



The eye care team can order a second pair of glasses - only if the child or young person needs them.



The eye care team will let children and young people over 16 years old know if they can have a repair, a replacement or an extra pair of glasses.



This is the same as the in-school sight testing service or on the High Street.



NHS England understands that some children, young people, and their parents or carers may worry about getting extra glasses.



Proposal 8

What you said about the cost of glasses and part payments



There was a lot of support for this proposal.



Could parents afford to pay for the glasses, repairs and replacement glasses?



Could extra funding help to support children and young people?



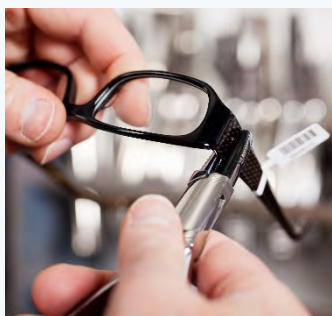
Could parents or carers pay too much for glasses that a child or young person likes?



Children and young people might need an **extra** pair of glasses.



Every child or young person should get two pairs of glasses as this worked well in the sight testing service for the 83 special schools.



Will a repair service be available during school holidays when sight testing clinics do not take place?



Some people were worried that parents and carers might have to pay for new glasses at the school.

This could be difficult for some parents.



It could be difficult for schools to manage payments.



There should be a full range of glasses for all voucher values and all ages.



Specialist glasses for children and young people can cost a lot.



This could mean parents or carers buy cheaper glasses to keep the costs of repairs and new glasses down.



If parents choose to pay for specialist glasses, the costs could be high if the glasses get broken a lot.



Parents of children or young people who often break their glasses should get some financial support.



NHS England needs to:

- Check that eye care teams do not only offer expensive glasses at school



- Publish a guide on extra payments, repairs, and new glasses.



High Street opticians might not meet the support needs of disabled children and young people.



Children and young people need to get the right sight testing service.

It does not matter where they get the service.



Proposal 8

What NHS England said

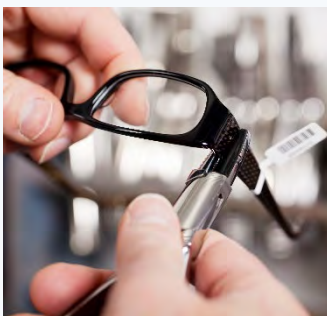


NHS England agrees that the sight testing service should be the same for all children and young people.



We understand why people want:

- A bigger choice of affordable and suitable glasses
- A repairs and replacement service during school holidays.





The new sight testing service at special schools brings it to children and young people who might find it difficult to have a sight test on the High Street.



The new contract should make sure that young people over 16 years get the same treatment with:



- payments
- replacements
- second glasses.

 A screenshot of the NHS GOS 3 Optical Voucher form. The form is titled "NHS GOS 3 Optical Voucher" and contains various fields for patient information, including name, date of birth, and address. It also includes a section for the optician to fill in, with a red box highlighting the bottom portion of the form.

Every child or young person who needs lenses to correct their eyesight should get a **GOS 3 optical voucher** to help with the cost.



The **GOS 3 optical voucher** can be used:

- with the eye care team at the special school
- on the High Street.



Some children and young people might qualify for a voucher for an extra pair of glasses.



The new sight testing contract will include a good choice of glasses from the sight testing service.

The choice of glasses will often be checked, and new glasses will be added.



Support for patients, parents and special schools



Proposal 9 An eye health outcome report

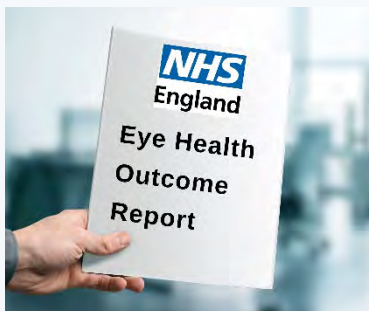


Eye health reports should be part of the new sight testing service to help make changes at home and school.



The changes could include reasonable adjustments such as:

- changes to seating
- changes to lighting.



The eye health report should be part of the new sight testing service.

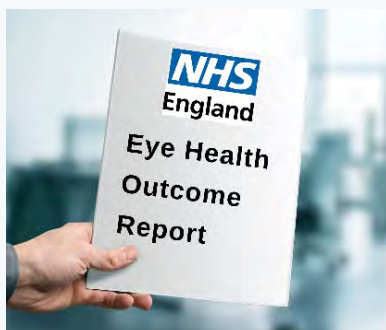


Should the eye health report be included in the child or young person's **Education Health and Care Plan or EHCP?**



Proposal 9

What you said

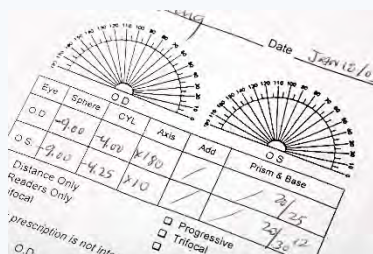


There was strong support for an **eye health outcome report**, which would be an important part of the service.



The report should include information about:

- The sight test



- the prescription



- Other issues such as reasonable adjustments, seating, and lighting.



The **eye health outcome report** could take a long time to complete.



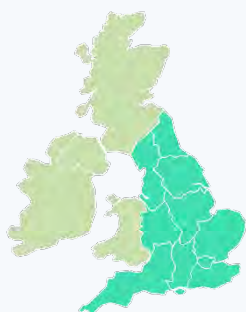
Some people might not read the **eye health outcome reports** if they are too long.



There should be checks on the time it takes to write an **eye health outcome report**.



The cost of writing the **eye health outcome report** should be included in the contract.



The **eye health outcome report** should be the same for everyone in England.



The **eye health outcome report** should be shared with:

- parents
- schools
- health care staff



The **eye health outcome report** should be included in the **Education Care and Health Programme**.



Proposal 9

What NHS England said



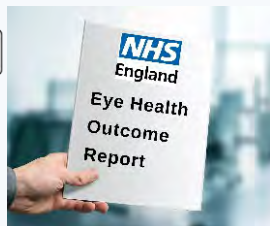
Eye health outcome reports worked well for the **eighty-three** special schools.



This report has helped to make changes to the child or young person's learning needs, which could include:



- reasonable adjustments
- seating
- lighting.



NHS England will get feedback from children, young people, parents and eye care professionals about updating the content of the eye health outcome report.



The new sight testing contract will include an **eye health outcome report**.



Sight testing services in their area around England could use the national report or write a local **eye health outcome report**.



Contact

If you have any questions about this Easy Read report, please email england.dentaloptoms@nhs.net

