

**Directorate for Primary Care**

Dentistry, Optometry and Community Hearing  
Division



**Scottish Government**  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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**Community Eyecare:**

- **Proposed change to submission period for GOS(S)1 eye examination payment claims**
- **GOS(S)4 NHS optical voucher approval arrangements**
- **Revised NHS Waiting Times Guidance**
- **Recorded webinar regarding undergraduate optometry degree changes**
- **Monitoring of patients using hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine**
- **Patient signposting during festive period**

**Summary**

1. This letter advises on:

- A proposed change to the period within which a General Ophthalmic Services eye examination claim must be submitted to Practitioner and Counter Fraud Services for payment;
- A reminder regarding the current approval arrangements relating to certain GOS(S)4 repair and replacement NHS optical vouchers;
- Publication of the revised NHS Waiting Times Guidance;
- A recorded webinar which is now available providing further information on the changes being made to the undergraduate optometry degree model in Scotland;
- A reminder regarding monitoring of patients using hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine;
- A reminder about the importance of appropriate patient signposting being in place for practices that will be closed over the festive period.

**Action**

2. NHS Boards are asked to immediately copy and issue the Memorandum to this letter to all:
- optometrists, ophthalmic medical practitioners and body corporates on their Ophthalmic Lists;
  - community optometry practices in their NHS Board area.

Yours sincerely,

**Tom Ferris**

**Deputy Director,  
Dentistry, Optometry and Community Hearing Division**

21 December 2023

**Addresses**

For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards

For information

Chief Executive,  
NHS National Services  
Scotland

NHS Board Optometric  
Advisers

**Enquiries to:**

[eyecare@gov.scot](mailto:eyecare@gov.scot)

**MEMORANDUM TO NHS:  
PCA(O)2023(06)**

**Summary**

1. This Memorandum advises on the following:

- A proposed change to the period within which a General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) eye examination claim must be submitted to Practitioner and Counter Fraud Services (P&CFS) for payment;
- A reminder regarding the current approval arrangements relating to certain GOS(S)4 repair and replacement NHS optical vouchers;
- Publication of the revised NHS Waiting Times Guidance;
- A recorded webinar which is now available providing further information on the changes being made to the undergraduate optometry degree model in Scotland;
- A reminder regarding monitoring of patients using hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine;
- A reminder about the importance of appropriate patient signposting being in place for practices that will be closed over the festive period.

**Proposed change to period within which GOS eye examination claims can be submitted for payment**

2. Scottish Ministers propose to lay legislation before the Scottish Parliament amending [paragraph 13\(1\) of Schedule 1 of the National Health Service \(General Ophthalmic Services\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2006](#), to change the time period within which a GOS eye examination claim must be submitted by or on behalf of a contractor to P&CFS for payment.
3. The proposed change is that, with effect from 1 April 2024 onwards, **all** GOS(S)1 claims must be submitted to P&CFS within three months after the date of the relevant GOS eye examination (including eye examinations carried out before 1 April 2024). Currently such claims must be submitted within six months after the date of the relevant GOS eye examination.
4. Contractors are therefore strongly advised to ensure the timeous submission of all GOS(S)1 claims to P&CFS, to avoid a late claim being rejected.

## **Approval arrangements for certain GOS(S)4 repair and replacement NHS optical vouchers**

5. During the COVID-19 pandemic, as set out in the first bullet under paragraph 12 of [PCA\(O\)2020\(07\)](#), all elements of the system for GOS(S)4 repair and replacement NHS optical vouchers relating to a patient aged 16 or over were suspended.
6. Instead, practitioners involved in the care of the relevant patient were required to use their clinical judgement (instead of seeking prior Health Board approval) to determine the necessity for the GOS(S)4 voucher in line with existing eligibility criteria. Practitioners are advised that these arrangements remain in place until further notice.

## **Revised NHS Waiting Times Guidance**

7. The Scottish Government has issued a letter, [DL\(2023\)32](#), to all Health Boards in Scotland providing more detail on the updated policies in the latest [Waiting Times Guidance](#). This supports Health Boards with the national waiting times standards which they are required to follow and implement.
8. Practitioners are encouraged to read letter DL(2023)32, and in particular note the following summarised change on page 4 which may impact them in terms of communications they receive in future from Health Boards regarding patients they have referred:

<b>Previous Guidance (2012 version)</b>	<b>Revised Guidance (2023 version)</b>
Variation in terms of recipients of communications for example patient &/or referring clinician.	GPs and other referring clinicians to be copied into patient communications so all parties are aware and GPs can come back to advise.

9. Health Boards are required to submit an implementation plan to the Scottish Government by 30 April 2024 providing details of when the Health Board will implement changes to align to the revised Waiting Times Guidance. As such, the time period within which Health Boards implement any required changes may vary by Health Board, and practitioners are therefore asked to note this for now.

## **Recorded webinar on undergraduate optometry degree changes in Scotland**

10. The Scottish Government's Chief Optometric Adviser, Dr Janet Pooley, [wrote to the optometry sector](#) on 29 September 2023 providing an update on changes to the undergraduate optometry degree model in Scotland.

11. A recorded webinar – [“Advancing Optometry Education in Scotland”](#) - is now available providing further detailed information on these changes. The webinar includes input from Optometry Scotland, Scottish Government, NHS Education for Scotland, Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of the Highlands and Islands.
12. Further information on this work will continue to be made available to the community optometry sector at key points during the development and implementation stages. The [eyes.scot website](#) is the main hub for key resources and information relating to this work.

### **Monitoring of patients using hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine**

13. Guidance supporting the monitoring of hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine users has been clearly outlined by the [Royal College of Ophthalmologists](#). As most recently set out in [PCA\(O\)2019\(01\)](#), practitioners are reminded that this monitoring service is not part of GOS.
14. As would be routinely conducted for any medication that a patient may be taking, examinations appropriate to identifying adverse effects of these drugs on the eye should still be undertaken.

### **Patient signposting during festive period**

15. Community optometry practices that will be closed over the festive holiday period (and on any other public holidays) are reminded about the importance of having appropriate messaging in place (e.g. on the practice’s door, windows, telephone messaging system and website) for patients contacting the practice with an emergency eye problem. This messaging should normally be to visit NHS Inform or phone NHS24 on 111.

### **Enquiries**

16. Any queries about this Memorandum should be emailed to the Scottish Government at: [eyecare@gov.scot](mailto:eyecare@gov.scot).

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