



## optometrystotland

### Supporting information on Scottish Government PCA(O)2020(14)

4<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Colleagues,

With us now in the busiest phase since the start of the pandemic, seeing pent up demand and now opening for all routine eyecare, we hope that you are well and managing the new ways of working which will be in place for the foreseeable future.

As mentioned in our previous newsletter, at the peak of the pandemic, 143 practices sampled by the OS team managed over 74,000 patient episodes over a five week period. A huge response and one for which the eyecare community should be very proud.

We continue to undertake great work and now look forward to evaluating how our skilled and talented Community Eyecare teams can continue to provide service excellence in support of secondary care colleagues and the wider NHS.

We have identified to the Scottish Government the three phases we anticipate over the next 12 months: surge, regression and recovery.

**Surge Phase** – this is the current phase where pent up demand for services has resulted in temporary but significant uplifts in patient volumes and practice activity.

**Regression Phase** – we anticipate that the end of the UK Government’s Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), combined with the anticipated economic downturn and rising unemployment, along with the generally poor health of the high street, may result in significant reductions in activity and income.

**Recovery Phase** – this will be a steady climb out of recession. It is difficult to predict its duration as it will likely be triggered either by widespread suppression of the virus or the production of a successful vaccine. Either way, we do not anticipate a sharp ‘V’ recovery.

#### **Financial support measures**

We welcome the ongoing support from the Scottish Government, provided in anticipation of ongoing challenges and in recognition of the excellent work being carried out by Community Eyecare practices.

Changes to financial support for practice premises (not mobile practices) came into effect on 1 September 2020 and are set out in [PCA\(O\)2020\(14\)](#):

- GOS(S)1 eye examinations: Practices with reduced GOS(S)1 eye examination activity submitted via eOphthalmic in a particular month compared to their monthly average in 2019/20 will receive a 'top up' payment equivalent to the difference. In recognition that some practices may be undertaking higher levels of GOS eye examinations at the current time (e.g. due to extended opening hours, or additional testing rooms), practices exceeding their monthly average GOS(S)1 activity in 2019/20 in a particular month will be paid based on actual activity claimed.
- GOS(S)3 and GOS(S)4 optical vouchers: Payment of the 100% monthly average attributable to GOS(S)3 and GOS(S)4 vouchers, calculated from the 2019/20 financial year, will cease. Practices will be paid for actual activity only which have been submitted via the eOphthalmic claims process. Our understanding is that the previous financial support arrangements for these claims were provided in order to support practices whilst routine services remained suspended, despite optical vouchers being a patient benefit and not an NHS service. The Scottish Government has made this change in recognition that routine services have now resumed in practice premises and that financial support should only be provided for the provision of NHS services.
- Domiciliary visiting fees: Payment of the 100% monthly average attributable to domiciliary visiting fees, calculated from the 2019/20 financial year, will cease. Practices will be paid for actual activity only which has been submitted via the eOphthalmic claims process. Our understanding is that these changes have been introduced following the resumption of eye care services provided in patients' own homes, and on the basis that these fees are to support actual expenses incurred in undertaking a domiciliary visit.

### **Waiting list initiative**

We are still in discussions with Scottish Government colleagues regarding recent announcements on funding being made available to community optometrists supporting shared care of patients with the Hospital Eye Service.

How these services will be delivered will vary amongst Health Boards, and some may opt to employ optometrists in a hospital setting where none of this resource will be deployed in community practices.

We hope to provide some clarity around this in due course.

### **Supply of PPE**

The Scottish Government is continuing to supply free PPE to Optometric practices. The method currently being used is known as the 'Push' model. This model delivers a predetermined amount of PPE to practices based on pre-Covid activity automatically, with the next consignments commencing 7<sup>th</sup> September. The next method will be known as the 'Pull' model, where deliveries are based on amounts manually ordered by the practice. This will allow for more efficient supply.

For the foreseeable future 'Push' supplies will continue.

As a reminder, this PPE is for the provision of NHS services **only**. This does not include the fitting and supply of contact lenses or the fitting and supply of spectacles or spectacles lenses and non-NHS-supplied, privately sourced PPE must be used.

### **Community Eyecare Services**

Optometry Scotland appreciates the ongoing support from the Scottish Government throughout the current Surge phase, and hopefully beyond, as the anticipated economic downturn puts practices and jobs at risk. Ongoing support will be dependent on how well Community Eyecare continues to deliver the same excellent service levels provided during the peak months of the pandemic. We therefore encourage all practices and practice owners to ensure that they are providing face-to-face services and normal working hours, allowing patients to access services as they would expect.

### **Next steps**

We welcome any questions on the new phasing and its implications via:  
[tellos@optometryscotland.org.uk](mailto:tellos@optometryscotland.org.uk)

As we work towards securing ongoing support for the next phase, we are grateful to the Community Eyecare teams for the support and feedback and thankful to all who have represented our profession so well throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

With best regards,

Optometry Scotland Executive