

## **Summary**

1. This Memorandum advises on the following:
  - Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) guidance, including the use of gloves and aprons in the medium risk pathway;
  - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) funding;
  - Staff wellbeing;
  - Workforce Specialist Service for optometrists, ophthalmic medical practitioners (OMP) and dispensing opticians;
  - £500 non-consolidated payment – claims for locums and sessional paid staff;
  - Patient / patient representative signatures;
  - Patient exemption checking.

## **IPC guidance**

2. Community optometry practices and practitioners in Scotland are reminded that they must continue to scrupulously follow the IPC and PPE guidance set out in the following Health Protection Scotland (HPS) documents:
  - [COVID-19 guidance](#) for primary care (community optometry is covered in section 12);
  - [IPC Addendum guidance](#) for community health and care settings.
3. This must include adherence to strict IPC procedures, allowing sufficient time to decontaminate equipment and surfaces between patients, and the safe use and disposal of PPE.
4. As previously outlined in [PCA\(O\)2021\(4\)](#), services provided by the community optometry sector are considered to fall within the 'Medium Risk' pathway outlined in the HPS guidance because confirmed or suspected COVID-19 symptomatic patients should be identified during the pre-appointment screening process.
5. Community optometry practices and practitioners are reminded that, in the medium risk pathway, the current HPS guidance is that use of gloves and aprons should be risk assessed and only worn when exposure to blood and body fluids is anticipated.
6. Further IPC and PPE guidance for the community optometry sector is available in the [NHS Education for Scotland COVID-19 guidance](#) on Turas, and on the [College of Optometrists website](#).

## **PPE funding**

7. The Scottish Government has confirmed that PPE for the provision of NHS services will continue to be provided at no cost to community optometry practices until 31 March 2022.

## **Staff wellbeing**

8. The National Wellbeing Hub - [www.nationalwellbeinghub.scot](http://www.nationalwellbeinghub.scot) - provides online support for everyone working in health and social care services (including community optometry practices), unpaid carers, volunteers, and their families. It also provides a range of evidence-based resources, including access to digital programmes designed to help with mental health, and Coaching for Wellbeing. The Hub also acts as a pathway to a range of psychological support and treatment services.
9. The National Wellbeing Helpline (0800 111 4191) is also available to everyone working in health and social care services, including community optometry practices. It is a compassionate listening service based within NHS 24's Mental Health Hub which you can access 24/7. Calls are responded to by trained Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners (PWPs) who can provide a range of support, including the resources available through the National Wellbeing Hub. If needed, and only with your consent, PWPs can also refer you on to your local staff support services for further support. Callers can choose to be referred to support services outwith their NHS Board, if they prefer, as reciprocal arrangements have been put in place between Boards.
10. Coaching for Wellbeing support is offered through a bespoke digital platform in partnership with NHS Education for Scotland. More than 4,000 hours of coaching have been allocated to date to over 1,000 members of staff from across health and social care. More information on Coaching for Wellbeing, including instructions on how to apply, can be found online at: <https://www.knowyoumore.com/wellbeingcoaching>.

## **Workforce Specialist Service for Optometrists, OMPs and Dispensing Opticians**

11. The Workforce Specialist Service is a confidential support service available for regulated staff (including optometrists, OMPs and dispensing opticians) who, as a result of their professional role, may experience difficulty accessing confidential assessment and treatment for mental health. The service is provided by health professionals who specialise in confidentially supporting regulated professionals with mental health issues including anxiety, depression or an addiction problem, in particular where these might affect their work. More information is available online at: <https://www.nationalwellbeinghub.scot/the-workforce-specialist-service-wss>.

## **£500 non-consolidated payment – claims for locums and sessional paid staff**

12. Circular [PCA\(O\)2021\(03\)](#) noted that in due course the Scottish Government would provide a separate claim form for locums and sessional paid staff who could not have a claim made on their behalf by a single appropriate service provider. The claim form is now available online at:  
[https://nhsnss.service-now.com/nhs\\_500\\_portal](https://nhsnss.service-now.com/nhs_500_portal).
13. The deadline for claims being submitted is **midnight 1 August 2021**. Claims will be paid by 29 August 2021. Queries regarding the payment of claims should be sent to: [nss.psd-500bonus-optometry@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.psd-500bonus-optometry@nhs.scot).

### **Patient / patient representative signatures**

14. Practitioners are reminded that, as set out in paragraphs 19 to 20 of [PCA\(O\)2020\(12\)](#) and paragraphs 11 to 12 of [PCA\(O\)2020\(16\)](#), the requirement for patient or patient representative signatures on the GOS(S)1 'cheque book' and GOS(S)3, GOS(S)4, HES(S)1, HES(S)3 and HES(S)4 forms remains suspended in Scotland until further notice. Practices and practitioners should therefore follow the guidance set out in those circulars. The Scottish Government will review this position in consultation with relevant stakeholders later in the year.
15. Practices should not therefore require additional supplies of GOS(S)1 'cheque books' at the current time.

### **Patient exemption checking**

16. Practices are reminded that whilst the requirement to capture patient signatures on the GOS(S)1 'cheque book', GOS(S)3, GOS(S)4, HES(S)1, HES(S)3 and HES(S)4 forms is suspended, the requirement to check a patient's entitlement to an NHS eye examination or optical voucher still remains. This is particularly relevant for optical vouchers, and practices should ensure that patients have the ability to review the list of categories of exemption on the form and indicate which applies to them.
17. Paragraph 20 of [PCA\(O\)2020\(12\)](#) details the arrangements for the completion of claims via paper and electronic means whilst the requirement for signatures is suspended. In order to further support the exemption checking process undertaken by NHS Scotland Counter Fraud Services, **practices are requested to read the declaration on the relevant claim form to the patient prior to completing the claim on their behalf**. In doing so, practices are assisting to reduce the number of inappropriate and fraudulent claims.

### **Enquiries**

18. Any queries about this Memorandum not relating to the £500 non-consolidated payment claims process for locums and sessional paid staff should be emailed to the Scottish Government at: [eyecare@gov.scot](mailto:eyecare@gov.scot).

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