

COMMUNITY EYECARE UPDATE

A newsletter brought to you by the Scottish Government's Community Eyecare Team

ISSUE 1

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Welcome to the first edition of this newsletter, which aims to keep relevant stakeholders updated with key work and developments relating to Community Eyecare in Scotland.

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Community Glaucoma Service (CGS)



The CGS, which is in the process of being rolled out across Scotland, supports lower risk glaucoma and treated ocular hypertension patients to be discharged from hospital and registered with accredited community optometrists. When fully rolled out nationally, the CGS will have the capacity to manage an estimated 20,000 eligible patients discharged from hospital. This will help free up capacity in the hospital eye service and reduce waiting list pressures.

The CGS is currently live in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, NHS Lanarkshire and NHS Dumfries and Galloway, and will be rolled out in further Health Boards in due course. The Scottish Government issued [PCA\(O\)2024\(03\)](#) on 24 June 2024 covering a range of CGS related matters.

Supported by Scottish Government funding, NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) launched a fully digitised claims process on Thursday 25 July 2024 for [CGS registration and assessment claims](#). NSS also has lead responsibility for clinical governance for the CGS, and has recently published [new guidance](#) for: Health Boards to support the risk stratification and safe discharge of patients into the service; optometrists regarding the data captured as part of CGS assessments.

Undergraduate optometry degree changes

A new five-year Master's (MOptom) Optometry degree course will launch soon in Scotland. The MOptom course will support students to graduate as an Independent Prescriber optometrist and provide high quality, supervised clinical placements in the final year (managed and quality assured by NHS Education for Scotland) across more than one clinical setting, including more opportunities in rural and island locations.

After huge amounts of work, we are delighted that the GOC has approved Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU)'s course which will launch in Academic Year 2024/25. We are hopeful that the University of Highlands and Islands will follow in Academic Year 2025/26. As Optometry is now a controlled subject, student intake numbers on the new course will be determined annually by the Scottish Funding Council. The Scottish Government will consult with the optometry sector in due

course regarding the proposed financial support provided to supervisors of student optometrists in their 5th year which is referred to as the Foundation Training Year.

Arrangements under regulation 19 of General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) legislation

[Regulation 19 of the NHS \(GOS\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2006](#) provides for Health Boards to enter into arrangements (after consultation with the relevant area optical committee and with the approval of Scottish Ministers) with an optometrist or ophthalmic medical practitioner to provide GOS to patients in a particular district in order to meet the needs of local residents. This usually applies in rural areas.

The Scottish Government is currently developing a policy framework which, when launched, will enable eligible providers of GOS under these arrangements to be able to claim for eligible expenses incurred in the course of such provision.

Eyes website

The [eyes.nhs.scot website](#) is Scotland's national website for eyecare services and eye health information.

The website was updated in June 2024 with [Eyecare Guidelines](#) content migrated over from the [communityeyecare.scot.nhs.uk](#) website, which is no longer operational. We are very grateful to the College of Optometrists for permission to adapt their Clinical Management Guidelines for use in Scotland. NSS now manage the guidance which is aimed at supporting the differential diagnosis, treatment and advice to patients with ocular presentations.

Microsoft 365 licences and NHS email accounts for community optometry

The Scottish Government wrote to Health Boards in June setting out a number of actions to ensure that all community optometrists and community optometry practices providing NHS services in Scotland are provided with an NHS email account. All Health Boards have responded agreeing to undertake the actions required.

All community optometrists are asked to engage with and respond timeously to any contact they may receive from Health Boards regarding this work, and to ensure they access and use their NHS email account regularly. This is to prevent their account becoming inactive.

Domiciliary eyecare review



The Scottish Government's Optometric Adviser, Colette Dunsmore, is leading a national review of domiciliary eyecare services provided in Scotland. The review will focus on possible reform within the service to ensure more patients are able to access the service across Scotland and the service is of a high quality.

If you have any feedback on this newsletter or would otherwise like to get in touch with the Community Eyecare Team, please email us at eyecare@gov.scot.