

COVID-19: NHS General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) – Provider Update (London)

Dear Colleagues

Further to guidance you have recently received from the professional bodies, NHS England & NHS Improvement (NHSEI) London Region are conscious you have not received specific information related to your GOS Contract.

We are all working in unprecedented circumstances with a need to collaborate with many stakeholders. NHSEI would like to thank you for your patience at this difficult time and it is important you, your practice teams and patients are kept safe and informed during this period.

In the context of the recent governmental directives with regards the provision of essential services, we would like address some key concerns and queries as follows:

GOS Contractual Obligations

1. You do need to notify NHS England & Improvement, London Region of practice closures, reduced service provision and changes in opening hours during this period.
Please contact our Optometry team mail box: England.lon-optom@nhs.net and provide the following details:

Contractor name (include name of directors if corporate body)

Practice name and full address

ODS code (this can be found on the ODS portal

(<https://odsportal.hscic.gov.uk/Organisation/Search>))

Effective date of closure or change in opening hours

Whether you have provision for in-house glazing

Arrangements made for patients awaiting collection of glasses/lenses, communications to patients, provision of contact details, cancellation of appointments etc.

Signposting – practice answerphone, poster

2. You will not be breaching your contractual obligations by taking the necessary measures as above.
3. You will need to update the NHS website. For more information on the NHS website, please contact - nhswebsite.servicedesk@nhs.net or visit <https://www.nhs.uk/about-the-nhs->

Here are some examples of arrangements that can be made by practices due to closure or provision of restricted services:

- Arrangements for delivery or postage to patients who have glasses outstanding (further guidance expected on the signing of GOS forms).
- Deliver/post contact lenses directly to patient rather arranging for collection if deemed clinically safe to do so.
- Transferring computer system to home/alternative location and putting the phones on divert so patients can still talk to practice team if necessary – though ensuring that Data Protection and Information Governance is not compromised.
- Offering an emergency spectacle solution which may be possible for those that have glazing facilities.

- Establishing an urgent care service providing telephone triage for patients, advice, support and signposting as appropriate.
- Working with collaboratively with other providers and stakeholders to offer urgent care solutions.

We are currently scoping the provision of services in both primary and secondary care and will provide a further update on urgent care in particular. Providers interested in participating in any urgent care solutions are invited to send their expression of interest to our team mailbox: England.lon-optom@nhs.net. Please send details of any higher level qualifications or particular expertise you may have, which clinical conditions you are happy to deal with and equipment you have eg fundus camera, video or photo slitlamp, OCT, field machine, goldmann tonometer. You will be aware that hospital services are under mounting pressure to provide critical care and therefore the need to reduce the burden on secondary care.

Please note that further national guidance is expected in a fast moving situation and this local update is subject to change.

Below you will find some general updates, but in the meantime thank you for your commitment and efforts in trying to maintain services during this difficult period and we are grateful for your patience and understanding.

Applications for new contracts

We will continue to process new applications for GOS contracts for those already in the system and any new applications, however it will not be possible to undertake site visits and we are looking at alternative means of ensuring the required standards are in place e.g. evidence submitted by the provider to NHS England & Improvement. A site visit may be required once we are in the recovery phase.

Routine contract compliance visits and Post Payment Verification (PPV) visits

These are currently postponed until further notice.

Notification of domiciliary visits

Providers are not required to submit notifications of changes to domiciliary visits (subject to any changes in national guidance), however documentation must be retained for future verification.

Providers of Minor Eye Care Services (MECS)

Practices who are unable to continue providing MECS should notify their local commissioning Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

Information Sources:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/primary-care/>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/20200305-COVID-19-PRIMARY-CARE-SOP-OPTICAL-PUBLICATION-V1.1.pdf>

<https://mailchi.mp/9e13566caa03/march-2019-locsu-news-1516305?e=8bcace83b8>

<https://www.college-optometrists.org/the-college/media-hub/news-listing/coronavirus-2019-advice-for-optometrists.html#FAQ>

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/coronavirus/>

https://www.optical.org/en/news_publications/Publications/joint-statement-and-guidance-on-coronavirus-covid19.cfm

<https://www.aop.org.uk/advice-and-support/clinical/clinical-governance/novel-coronavirus-covid-19-advice/common-questions-about-coronavirus>

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>