

OFNC

Association of British Dispensing Opticians
Association of Optometrists
British Medical Association
Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians

Optometric Fees Negotiating Committee

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Secretary: Tony Stafford

OFNC STATEMENT: NHS ENGLAND LETTER ON RESUMING GOS WORK

17 June 2020

Today NHS England has finally issued new [guidance and an updated standard operating procedure](#) (SOP), confirming that the sector can once again provide the full range of GOS services with immediate effect, subject to appropriate infection prevention and control (IPC) measures.

The OFNC welcomes the return of routine NHS sight testing in England in line with the new SOP. This should enable the sector to gradually meet the pent-up demand for eye healthcare, as well as continuing to provide essential and urgent care and to keep pressure off GPs, A&E and hospital eye services.

The return to routine GOS work in England will have its challenges. In particular, providing care in a way that manages infection risks during the pandemic will at least halve practice capacity, as recognised by NHS England. The impact on practices' income will be even greater. The OFNC has told NHS England that a premature end to COVID-19 funding will significantly increase the risk of practice closures and adversely affect, patients, the wider NHS and public health. That is why the OFNC [wrote](#) to DHSC Ministers on Friday 12 June urging them to put in place further transitional funding arrangements for primary eye care beyond the end of June.

Although NHS England's new guidance states current funding arrangements will cease at the end of June, it also commits to work with the OFNC on the financial support that practices will need from 1 July to manage the transition, prioritise remote consultations, and to help cover the extra costs of PPE and other infection control measures.

NHS England has also acknowledged to the OFNC the additional challenges and costs that domiciliary providers will face. These include operationalising three weeks' notice requirements, additional IPC measures and the increased challenges of working with care homes during the pandemic.

We welcome the commitment to working constructively with the OFNC on all these issues and are pleased that Ministers and NHS England have responded to the OFNC's concerns. Discussions on future funding will continue this week and we will provide more information as soon as we can.

In the meantime, optical practices in England can now reopen their doors safely and as soon as practically possible, and will once again be able to provide excellent eye healthcare to all patients who need it.

ENDS