

Covid-19 FAQs for Contractors

Will there be any financial support for practices?

This is being discussed by NHS England and the Optical Fees Negotiating Committee (OFNC) and an announcement is expected imminently. We acknowledge it is frustrating to have to wait when Wales and Scotland have both announced support.

Can I still conduct domiciliary visits?

National guidance is awaited as to whether routine NHS sight tests should be suspended. An updated SOP and guidance is expected imminently and this will be shared as soon as it is available. Wales has suspended all domiciliary visits and routine sight tests and Scotland has suspended all routine community eyecare. The sector bodies across the UK, including the OFNC who are in discussions with NHS England, issued guidance on 23rd March 2020 that optical practices should be delivering essential and urgent eye care services only. When considering visits you should follow current government guidance and not visit vulnerable groups and you should check for Covid-19 symptoms by phone before attending.

Can I post out spectacles?

The GOC have relaxed their rules and The College have issued guidance on this:

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

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

There is, in any case, no restriction on posting spectacles to those who are not in restricted categories such as children or registered sight-impaired / severely sight-impaired.

What about CL if the specification has expired?

Again, the College has guidance based on the GOC relaxation of rules – College link above towards the bottom of the FAQs.

Do I need to notify the NHS England GM optometry team if I change practice hours or close during this crisis?

Yes, you do. NHS England will log any temporary changes to practice hours in order to monitor GOS availability across the Greater Manchester footprint, and notifications should be sent to england.gmtop@nhs.net using this form:



GOS Template
Notification Form for

Are optometrists going to be provided with masks and protective equipment ?

Please refer to the recently produced NHS England Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for primary care optical settings:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/coronavirus-standard-operating-procedures-for-primary-care-settings/>

If my practice is closed, where do I signpost patients if they have an urgent problem?

This depends on whether your area has a MEC service or not. If not, they should be signposted to Eye Casualty (if they accept walk-ins) or to A&E.

For areas with a MEC service the patient should be signposted to a nearby MECS practice that is remaining open.

I am involved in MECS (or other extended services – what do I do if I close or reduce hours?

You must inform whoever your contract is with – for most services and most areas this is Primary Eyecare and you should let them know at COVID@primaryeyecare.co.uk