

## *Redemption of optical vouchers submitted by internet suppliers of glasses*

Questions have been raised about which PCT is responsible for the redemption of optical vouchers submitted following sale of glasses over the internet. For vouchers submitted by suppliers with fixed premises the practice is for the voucher to be submitted to the PCT where the supplier is based.

However, for redemption of vouchers submitted by internet suppliers this arrangement cannot be applied consistently as the supplier may not be based in England. Therefore, the Department of Health's view is that vouchers submitted by internet suppliers of optical appliances should be redeemed by the PCT where the patient lives. The delivery will have taken place when the patient receives the optical appliance and therefore responsibility for redeeming the voucher reasonably falls to the PCT for the area where the patient lives. This provides a consistent approach to redemption of optical vouchers redeemed following a sale over the internet. PCTs are asked to act in accordance with this guidance.

### *Legal position on sale of glasses*

Sales of optical appliances must comply with the requirements of the Section 27 of the Opticians Act, and where applicable the exemptions in the Sale and Supply of Optical Appliances Order 1984, for the voucher to be redeemed.

- Essentially the Act requires that the sale be supervised by an optician or a medical practitioner except some sales of low power spectacles.

Sales to patients who are registered as blind or partially sighted or are under 16 must always be under supervision.

However, some exemptions to the general requirement are created by the Sale of Optical Appliances Order 1984. Under this Order, where the sale is not under supervision by an optician or medical practitioner, the seller is required to verify, using a focimeter; that the spectacle lenses meet the requirements of British Standards in respect of power and quality; that any adjustments in power necessary to account for differences in distance from the eye to the prescription lens and final lens supplied are allowed for; and that the lenses are properly centred in front of the pupils.

If the seller is unable to state that they have achieved these requirements the supply could contravene the Sale of Optical Appliances Order and it would therefore be inappropriate to make a payment.

PCTs may want to ask suppliers submitting vouchers how they have complied with their legal duties if they have any concerns.

**August 2006**