

# Eye Care Board Briefing

A quarterly top line information sheet for PCT board members produced by NHS Primary Care Contracting in conjunction with the Department of Health.



Primary Care Contracting

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## Introduction

A sister publication to the NHS Dental Services Board Bulletin, this update sets out to summarise the latest developments in the NHS eye care services reform programme and to signpost related issues currently coming to the fore.

## About the new GOS contracts regulations

To support PCTs in commissioning community-based eye care services, the Government is launching four new sets of regulations, three of which come into force from 1 August 2008. These are as follows:

- General Ophthalmic Services Contracts Regulations 2008
- National Health Services (Performers Lists) Amendment and Transitional Provisions Regulations 2008
- Primary Ophthalmic Services Regulations 2008
- Primary Ophthalmic Services Transitional Provision Regulations 2008\*

\*Transitional Regulations come into force earlier to allow PCTs time to work with the new regulations, with the objective of completing implementation by 1 August 2008. Transitional Provisions are, strictly speaking, not in force until 3 June but we are encouraging PCTs to get on with things.

## New Regulations and determination on redemption of optical vouchers

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In addition, the Government will be issuing new regulations and a determination on the redemption of optical vouchers which will also come into effect on 1 August 2008.

- Optical Charges and Payments Amendment (No2) Regulations 2008
- NHS (Redemption of Optical Vouchers) Determination 2008

### Key points:

- Ophthalmic Lists and Supplementary Lists are being replaced by contracts and ophthalmic performers' lists
- The present term 'contract' is actually a misnomer – it is in fact a statutory arrangement
- GOS has been provided pursuant to regulations not under contract
- From 1 August 2008, the provider will have to have an actual contract document signed by both parties

### Elements that remain unchanged from the previous system are:

- Who is entitled to an NHS sight test
- Patients being able to choose their GOS contractor
- Contractors being able to have a GOS contract must meet national criteria and must satisfy local decision making on service quality, such as the inspection of equipment and premises
- Centrally negotiated sight test fee
- Sight tests remain a demand-led, not a locally-commissioned, service
- Who may conduct a sight test

## Background to the new legislation

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The new GOS regulations are being brought under provisions made in Part 4, Chapter 2 of the Health Act 2006 which sought to:

- Remove restrictions on contracting for NHS-funded sight tests
- Create a more coherent commissioning framework for eye care services over and above the sight test
- Strengthen controls on redemption of optical vouchers

They have been brought in to address a number of strictures within the current system which no longer reflect the reality of service provision today, ie: currently PCTs may only contract with optometrists, ophthalmic medical practitioners (OMPs) and corporate bodies registered with the General Optical Council for the provision of NHS funded sight tests.

Under the new contractual arrangements, PCTs will be able to contract directly with businesses who are providing the services, although only qualified clinicians will be able to undertake clinical work.

## Benefits to PCTs

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PCTs will have much more flexibility and scope under the incoming system in that commissioners will have powers to:

- Contract with a wider range of service providers
- Commission enhanced services over and above the sight test from these (or other) providers
- Create a more coherent and flexible framework for eye care service provision

Another advantage is that PCTs will have increased controls over the redemption of optical vouchers. There will be a new requirement that a supplier must produce relevant records to the PCT within 14 days of a request being made in respect of (a) any specific voucher or (b) all vouchers, which the supplier is seeking to redeem or has redeemed in the two years prior to the request being made to see records. PCTs will also be able to issue notices that no further payments will be made to a supplier who is judged unsuitable with

appeal and review rights for suppliers. In effect, this is a “blacklist” power. PCTs will also be able to apply for a national “stop notice” in the same way that they can apply for a national disqualification of a contractor. Detailed guidance on the new optical voucher regulations and determination will be issued when the regulations are laid.

**Please note:** while the new GOS contract will resemble the new medical and dental provider/performer models, there is a significant difference in that there will be three levels of contractual engagement with eye care service providers:

- Mandatory
- Additional
- Enhanced

## Communicating change to PCT commissioners

NHS PCC has been working closely with the DH Eye Care policy team to deliver a structured programme of support and communications

### Step by step guide to commissioning community eye care services

This commissioning toolkit has been designed to provide PCTs with practical advice in relation to commissioning eye care services over and above the sight test i.e. enhanced services. Using examples of commissioning pathways, it explains how PCTs and practice based commissioners can use the different stages of the commissioning cycle to test the potential benefits of applying new pathways and the factors to take into account in implementing such schemes. It also links to a series of case studies describing how PCTs have already developed such services.

### National learning events

During May 2008, six regional learning events took place with the objective of clarifying the implications of the new GOS regulations and recommending a structured programme of implementation. The agenda also covered the role of the optometric advisor in the changes. All the presentations are available on the PCC website at: <http://www.pcc.nhs.uk/events/> under the *Available documents* of the *Event archive* section.

It is anticipated that a second series of national eye care learning events may take place later in the year, featuring peer-to-peer presentations on PCTs’ experience of implementing the new contractual arrangements, hints and tips, lessons learned and examples of good practice. Further information will be posted on the NHS PCC website in due course.

### Online access to regulations and model documentation

The following information and various associated documentation can be found on the PCC website at <http://www.pcc.nhs.uk/298>

- The four sets of regulations and accompanying guidance
- Model contracts for mandatory and additional services
- Model patient display notices and (for mobile contractors) model patient information leaflets
- Model application forms for both contractors and performers
- Model transitional documentation for contractors and performers

Please see: [www.pcc.nhs.uk/298](http://www.pcc.nhs.uk/298)

Further assistance is available via the PCC website in the form of an eye care helpdesk: [www.primarycarecontracting.nhs.uk/eyecare-helpdesk](http://www.primarycarecontracting.nhs.uk/eyecare-helpdesk)

Or via an NHS PCC email enquiry service: [goscontracthelpdesk@pcc.nhs.uk](mailto:goscontracthelpdesk@pcc.nhs.uk)

## Eye Care in England – other issues and upcoming developments

### UK Vision Strategy

The UK Vision Strategy was launched in London on the 18th April. The strategy is a VISION 2020 UK initiative led by RNIB to develop a unified plan for action on all issues relating to vision, across the four countries of the UK. The UK Vision Strategy has brought together people with sight loss, users of eyecare services, eye health and social care professionals and statutory and voluntary organisations for the very first time to set the direction for eye health and sight loss

services across the UK. The Department of Health will be setting up a national group to help to identify and promote best practice and will be seeking to identify partners to lead best practice in health and social care.

For further information  
[www.vision2020uk.org.uk](http://www.vision2020uk.org.uk).

### **NICE appraisal on the use of Lucentis**

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) is currently appraising Lucentis (ranibizumab) for the treatment of age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Final guidance on the use of this drug is due out in July and it is anticipated that NICE recommendations will mean that a larger group of people will be qualified to receive this sight-saving drug, which is administered via intra-ocular injections, than fall within existing NICE guidelines for photodynamic therapy. This, in turn may result in an upturn in referrals to secondary care ophthalmology departments. The first draft of the guidance stated that people would only be allowed treatment with Lucentis for AMD in their better seeing eye. However, the revised draft guidance removes this restriction and sets out wider, but still specific, criteria which must be met for a patient to be recommended for treatment with Lucentis. The draft guidance also refers to a scheme under which in cases where if more than 14 injections are required for each eye, then the manufacturer of the drug will pay drug costs for treatments beyond the 14th, with the rest of the costs being met by the NHS.

AMD is the most common cause of poor vision among older people. There are two main types: wet AMD and dry AMD. Wet AMD is the more aggressive form and deteriorates faster. Lucentis is only for the treatment of wet AMD and does not work for everyone as sometimes the damage to the eye is too severe.

NICE is also currently appraising the use of Macugen, also called pegaptanib, administered via an injection into the back of the eye.

For more information about the upcoming revised NICE guidance, please see:

[www.nice.org.uk/newsevents/pressreleases/pressreleasearchive/PressReleases2007.jsp?domedia=1&mid=D444E059-19B9-E0B5-D47E367B08EAB78B](http://www.nice.org.uk/newsevents/pressreleases/pressreleasearchive/PressReleases2007.jsp?domedia=1&mid=D444E059-19B9-E0B5-D47E367B08EAB78B)

### **New eye health articles on NHS Choices**

The DH policy team has been working with the NHS Choices team over the last few months on a series of eye health articles and two videos on eye care. To access these, please click the link below.

[www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/eyehealth/Pages/Eyehealthhome.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/eyehealth/Pages/Eyehealthhome.aspx)

## About NHS Primary Care Contracting (NHS PCC)

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NHS PCC comprises of a small, national team who work closely with PCTs to help them assimilate the need for change and then implement it effectively. Highly experienced and technically expert across all areas of primary care contracting, our team are:

- responsive to the needs of PCTs
- on hand to provide instant support where and when it is needed
- able to develop tailored individual support to meet local needs

For further information, see: [www.pcc.nhs.uk](http://www.pcc.nhs.uk) where both NHS PCC Eye Care and Dental Board Bulletins are available electronically.

### **Have you found this bulletin useful?**

PCC welcomes input and suggestions for improving the briefing papers and publications we produce as well as the support we offer. We also welcome ideas for new publications that would be helpful to SHAs and PCTs. Please email any feedback to our Communications Lead, Julia Battersby on: [julia.battersby@pcc.nhs.uk](mailto:julia.battersby@pcc.nhs.uk). Please also use this email address to request regular copies of NHS PCC Dental Board Bulletin.

**Visit [www.pcc.nhs.uk/boardbriefings](http://www.pcc.nhs.uk/boardbriefings) for electronic copies of this and other bulletins.**