



Dear Colleague

GENERAL OPHTHALMIC SERVICES (GOS):

- **Patient signposting over holiday period**
- **Homeless patients**
- **Winter COVID-19 and flu vaccines**
- **Data sharing for SCONE project**
- **Health marketing campaigns**
- **Eyes.Scot Website**

Summary

1. This letter advises on:
 - A reminder to practices closing over the festive holiday period about the importance of having appropriate patient signposting messaging in place;
 - Homeless patients and eOphthalmic arrangements;
 - A reminder to community optometry practice staff about their eligibility to receive a Winter COVID-19 and flu vaccine;
 - Data sharing for SCONE project;
 - A reminder of the Scottish Government health marketing campaigns and associated assets available;
 - An update on the Eyes.Scot website.

Action

2. NHS Boards are asked to immediately copy and issue the Memorandum to this letter to all:
 - optometrists, ophthalmic medical practitioners and body corporates on their Ophthalmic Lists;
 - community optometry practices in their NHS Board area.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Ferris

Deputy Director

16 December 2022

Addresses

For action
Chief Executives, NHS Boards

For information
Chief Executive,
NHS National Services
Scotland

NHS Board Optometric
Advisers

Enquiries to:

eyecare@gov.scot

**MEMORANDUM TO NHS:
PCA(O)2022(07)**

Summary

1. This Memorandum advises on the following:
 - A reminder to practices closing over the festive holiday period about the importance of having appropriate patient signposting messaging in place;
 - Homeless patients and eOphthalmic arrangements;
 - A reminder to community optometry practice staff about their eligibility to receive a Winter COVID-19 and flu vaccine;
 - Data sharing for the SCONE project;
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Patient signposting over holiday period

2. Community optometry practices that will be closed over the festive holiday period (and on any other public holidays) are reminded about the importance of having appropriate messaging in place for patients contacting the practice with an emergency eye problem, which should normally be to phone NHS24 on 111.

Homeless patients and eOphthalmic arrangements

3. Practitioners are advised that when completing a GOS(S)1, GOS(3) or GOS(S)4 eOphthalmic payment claim form that involves a patient that is homeless, it is acceptable to enter the practice address in the patient address fields.
4. Some patients who are homeless often receive their GOS eye examination in a day centre. Where this is the case, the day centre address can alternatively be used as the patient's address on the GOS(S)1 form. Practitioners are reminded that a domiciliary additional visiting fee cannot be claimed for GOS eye examinations undertaken in a day centre.

Winter COVID-19 and flu vaccines

5. Community optometry practice staff, as frontline healthcare workers, are reminded that they can still book their Winter COVID-19 and flu vaccines via the [online booking portal](#). Further guidance on booking an appointment, including what constitutes a frontline health and social care worker as well as details of drop in vaccination centres, are available on [NHS Inform](#).

Data sharing for SCONE project

6. The [Scottish Collaborative Optometry-Ophthalmology Network e-research \(SCONE\) project](#) is a collaboration between the University of Edinburgh, Glasgow Caledonian University and the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh. It brings together community-acquired retinal images with other routinely-collected healthcare data within Scotland's NHS National Safe Haven.
7. This is a globally important study that has the potential to save the lives of millions of people. As such, optometry practices in Scotland are highly encouraged to participate in the SCONE project by facilitating the secure transfer of retinal images held locally in their practice to Public Health Scotland's Safe Haven, which is enabled by the [NHS Scotland Public Benefit and Privacy Panel for Health and Social Care \(PBPP\)](#) (Ref: 1920-0121 Tochel, 27th October 2021).
8. The [Scottish Government's Charter for Safe Havens in Scotland](#) sets out the agreed principles and standards for the routine operation of Safe Havens in Scotland, where data from electronic records can be used to support research when it is not practicable to obtain individual patient consent while protecting patient identity and privacy.
9. As data controllers, practices wishing to participate in the SCONE project are advised to read the Scottish Government's Charter for Safe Havens in Scotland and ensure that they are comfortable with the stringent safeguards that are in place. Any patient information statements published should also be updated to ensure compatibility with data sharing with the NHS.

Health marketing campaigns

10. Practices are reminded that Scottish Government health marketing campaigns are available to use and promote. This includes the 'Don't Let Your Protection Fade' winter vaccination campaign, the 'Respect' healthcare workers campaign, the 'Right Care, Right Place' campaign and the NHS24 'Healthy Know How' winter campaign. Campaign assets and stakeholder toolkits can be accessed via [PRGloo](#).

Eyes.Scot Website

11. The restricted access function on the [Eyes.Scot](#) website is now live on NHS Board pages. This means NHS Board pages on the website can only be accessed by professionals via a username and password.
12. Restricted access log in details were distributed to NHS Board colleagues via email on Thursday 1 December 2022. NHS Boards were asked to distribute these details to all optometrists, ophthalmic medical practitioners and body corporates on their Ophthalmic Lists and all community optometry practices in their Board area, as well as any other appropriate NHS staff requiring access.

13. If you forget the password, or have not yet received it, please contact your NHS Board Primary Care team.
14. The Scottish Government will issue a new password to NHS Boards for onward distribution on the first day of every 6 months.
15. NHS Boards have been given until 31 January 2023 to populate their Board pages on the website with information. It should therefore be noted that some Boards have not yet completed their pages and information may not yet be available in your Board.

Enquiries

16. Any queries about this Memorandum should be emailed to the Scottish Government at: eyecare@gov.scot.

Dentistry, Optometry and Audiology Division
Directorate of Primary Care
Scottish Government