



Dear Colleague

**Community Eyecare:**

- **Continuing Professional Development (CPD) allowance claim process**
- **Tests and procedures for General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) eye examinations**
- **Record keeping for GOS(S)4 NHS optical vouchers**
- **Mpox**
- **Provision of NHS email accounts**
- **Data sharing for Scottish Collaborative Optometry-Ophthalmology Network e-research (SCONe) project**
- **Migration to the BT Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN)**

**Summary**

1. This letter advises on:

- The CPD allowance claims process for appropriate CPD undertaken by optometrists and ophthalmic medical practitioners in the 2023 calendar year;
- The tests and procedures required for the purposes of a GOS eye examination;
- The record keeping requirements for GOS(S)4 NHS optical vouchers (repair or replacement of optical appliances);
- Mpox update;
- The provision of NHS email accounts to community optometrists and community optometry practices;
- Data sharing for the SCONe project;
- Migration from Capita SWAN to BT SWAN.

**Action**

2. Health 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 for whom they are the Host Health Board;
- community optometry practices in their Health Board area.

Yours sincerely,

**Tom Ferris**

**Deputy Director**  
Dentistry, Optometry and Audiology Division

26 September 2024

**Addresses**

For action

Chief Executives, Health Boards

For information

Chief Executive,  
NHS National Services  
Scotland

Health Board Optometric  
Advisers

**Enquiries to:**

[nss.psdGOSCPDclaims@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.psdGOSCPDclaims@nhs.scot)  
(for queries relating to the CPD allowance claim exception process)

[eyecare@gov.scot](mailto:eyecare@gov.scot)  
(for any other queries)

**MEMORANDUM TO NHS:  
PCA(O)2024(04)**

**Summary**

1. This Memorandum advises on the following:

- The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) allowance claims process for appropriate CPD undertaken by optometrists and ophthalmic medical practitioners (OMP) in the 2023 calendar year;
- The tests and procedures required for the purposes of a General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) eye examination;
- The record keeping requirements for GOS(S)4 NHS optical vouchers (repair or replacement of optical appliances);
- Mpox update;
- The provision of NHS email accounts to community optometrists and community optometry practices;
- Data sharing for the Scottish Collaborative Optometry-Ophthalmology Network e-research (SCONe) project;
- Migration from Capita SWAN (Scottish Wide Area Network) to BT SWAN.

2. Where this Memorandum has been received by an optometry practice via their NHS email account, it should be shared with all relevant practice staff.

**CPD allowance claims for appropriate CPD undertaken during the 2023 calendar year**

*CPD allowance claims process*

3. The amounts paid to optometrists and OMPs claiming an allowance for undertaking appropriate CPD during the 2023 calendar year (i.e. in the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023 inclusive) are currently being reviewed. Once these have been determined they will be communicated via a separate PCA.
4. Further to the letter issued to the community optometry sector in December 2023 from NHS National Services Scotland (NSS), changes have been made to the way CPD allowance claim form data is captured, validated and transmitted to NSS to improve the experience.
5. The CPD allowance claim form will be hosted on the eOphthalmic digital web form system, which will enable eligible optometrists and OMPs to enter relevant claim information onto a secure web form and submit this directly to NSS.

6. To access the claim form claimants will log in via the following web address: <https://digitalwebforms.mhs.scot.nhs.uk>.
7. In order to access this claim form, eligible optometrists and OMPs **must** have an active eOphthalmic user account.
8. If you currently submit your GOS, NHS optical voucher and/or Community Glaucoma Service claims via the eOphthalmic web form, you will use your existing eOphthalmic login credentials and PIN number.
9. However, if your GOS and NHS optical voucher claims are submitted via a Practice Management System, you must set up a user account for the eOphthalmic system in order to access the form and submit your claim.
10. Access to the CPD claim form is via SWAN. If an optometrist or OMP accesses NHS systems via an IPsec tunnel, and experiences any issues in accessing or submitting their claim, they should contact their Corporate IT team in the first instance.
11. NSS have prepared detailed guidance on the process and form completion which can be found at the following link: <https://www.nss.nhs.scot/ophthalmic-services/eophthalmic/how-to-set-up-an-eophthalmic-account/>. Please ensure you have read this prior to completing the form.
12. An exception process has been established for claimants who no longer have access to eOphthalmic (e.g. retired individuals) who cannot set up an account as outlined in the link above. It is anticipated that this will apply only to those who are no longer on a Health Board's Ophthalmic List for the provision of GOS. Further information on how claims can be made via this process can be obtained by contacting NSS at: [nss.psdGOSCPDclaims@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.psdGOSCPDclaims@nhs.scot).
13. CPD allowance claims for appropriate CPD undertaken in the 2023 calendar year can be submitted by eligible persons from **Monday 30 September 2024 to Saturday 30 November 2024 inclusive**.

*CPD allowance eligibility criteria*

14. A standard CPD allowance may be claimed by the following individuals:

- optometrists (other than bodies corporate) who were on the Ophthalmic List of an NHS Board for at least six months during 2023, and who have maintained their registration with the General Optical Council;

**or**

- OMPs whose only remunerated medical or optical activity in 2023 was GOS, who were on the Ophthalmic List of an NHS Board for at least six months during

2023, and who have maintained their registration with the General Medical Council.

15. A higher CPD allowance may be claimed by the following individuals:

- optometrists who were registered as an independent prescriber during 2023;
- were included on the Ophthalmic List of an NHS Board and registered with a host Board as an independent prescriber for at least six months during 2023; **and**
- have maintained their registration with the General Optical Council.

16. Only one claim may be made in respect of appropriate CPD undertaken during the 2023 calendar year.

### **Tests and procedures required for the purpose of a GOS eye examination**

17. Practitioners are reminded that, as set out in the [Statement](#), a GOS eye examination must consist of all appropriate tests or procedures relevant to the presenting signs, symptoms and needs of the patient for the purpose of that examination (including the tests and procedures of an eye health assessment – see further below) unless:

- a) the optometrist or OMP considers that the patient has a physical or mental condition which would make the carrying out of a specific test or procedure clinically inappropriate;
- b) in the judgement of the optometrist or OMP, a specific test or procedure is clinically inappropriate for any other reason; or
- c) the patient has refused to undertake a specific test or procedure.

18. The tests and procedures involved in an eye health assessment required for a primary eye examination are set out in the Table of Appendix C of the Statement.

19. It has been brought to the attention of the Scottish Government that some optometrists or OMPs may not be routinely undertaking a dilated internal eye examination for all patients who are aged 60 and over. Optometrists and OMPs are reminded that this is a required element of a primary eye examination for patients of this age. This procedure may be omitted only where the circumstances in paragraph 17 a) - c) apply.

20. The tests and procedures involved in an eye health assessment required for a supplementary eye examination are set out in Table A of Appendix D of the Statement.

21. In line with the [College of Optometrists Guidance for Professional Practice](#), full, accurate and clear records must be kept. This includes, where a patient has refused to undertake a specific test or procedure, recording the reason for this refusal in addition to the advice that has been given.

### **Record keeping requirement for payments to suppliers for GOS(S)4 NHS optical vouchers (repair or replacement of optical appliances)**

22. Practitioners are reminded that the conditions that must be met in order for NSS to make a valid payment to a supplier upon receipt of a GOS(S)4 NHS optical voucher claim (repair or replacement of an optical appliance) are set out in regulation 18 of [regulation 18 of The National Health Service \(Optical Charges and Payments\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 1998](#).

23. This includes a requirement that the supplier must have made and kept a written record of the repair or replacement, including:

- a description of the loss or damage;
- the nature of any repair including details of any parts replaced;
- the date on which the patient signed the declarations and undertaking referred to in [regulation 16\(4\)](#); and
- the date of the replacement or repair.

24. GOS(S)4 claims are subject to payment verification in line with [DL\(2023\)24](#), which involves the post-payment review of patient records and associated documentation. Where this review is unable to ascertain that the standard set out in paragraph 23 above has been met, recoveries are made.

25. Suppliers are therefore reminded that, in order to avoid incurring the recovery of fees, they must meet the prescribed standard for record keeping.

### **Mpox**

26. The World Health Organization recently declared the increase of Clade I Mpox virus cases in Central and East Africa as a public health emergency of international concern. Clade I is linked to higher rates of severe illness and mortality compared to the less dangerous Clade II.

27. The College of Optometrists has published [guidance on its website](#) on managing possible mpox cases in primary eye care settings, and Public Health Scotland also has [mpox information on its website](#). Practitioners are asked to familiarise themselves with this guidance as well as ensuring that they remain aware of any further important updates that may arise with respect to mpox.

## **NHS email accounts for community optometry**

28. The Scottish Government wrote to Health Boards in June 2024 regarding the provision of NHS email accounts to all community optometrists and community optometry practices providing GOS in Scotland.
29. An audit of provision across Scotland had shown that in excess of 500 active community optometrists appeared to have not been provided with a Microsoft 365 licence, and hence a secure NHS email account. Over 100 community optometry practices also appeared to not have a practice NHS email account. This presents a data security and patient safety risk, should a non-NHS email account be used in the provision of NHS services. NHS email accounts are also required to support the eyecare services reform agenda in Scotland.
30. Community optometrists who do not currently have a Microsoft 365 licence and NHS email account, and who have not yet been contacted by their Host Health Board with respect to the provision of these, are asked to make contact with their Host Health Board (the Board in which they undertake the majority of their GOS activity) regarding this. The same ask applies with respect to community optometry practices which do not currently have a practice NHS email account.
31. Contact details for Health Boards can be found on [eyes.nhs.scot](https://eyes.nhs.scot).
32. Community optometrists and community optometry practices who are contacted by Health Boards in relation to this exercise are asked to respond in a timeous manner to ensure that this process can be completed.
33. All community optometrists are reminded that, in order to prevent the deactivation or deletion of an NHS email account, they must interact with their mailbox on a regular basis. An example of interaction would be the reading of an email or the acceptance of a diary appointment.
34. Accounts will be flagged as “inactive” once a period of 30 days has passed where there is no interaction. Inactive accounts will then be subject to the deactivation / deletion policy of the relevant Health Board.

## **Data sharing for SCONE project**

35. The Scottish Government wishes to thank optometry practices who have shared retinal images with the NHS Safe Haven as part of the [Scottish Collaborative Optometry-Ophthalmology Network e-research \(SCONE\)](#) project. In doing so, Scotland is supporting an incredibly important area of research.
36. As a reminder, the 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.

37. 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).
38. 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.
39. As data controllers, practices who have yet to participate 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.

### **Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN) - Migration from Capita SWAN to BT SWAN**

#### *Users of CAT20*

40. Some community optometry practices providing NHS services currently connect to the SWAN using a device called a CAT20 Fortinet router. This connects the practice to SWAN using the practice internet.
41. The current contract for SWAN is with Capita and is coming to an end. Following a comprehensive procurement exercise, BT have been selected as the provider for the new contract.
42. NHS Scotland requires to be fully migrated to BT SWAN by December 2025, with no services remaining on Capita SWAN. In order to achieve this, NSS will start to roll out the replacement service in the near future.
43. The new service is similar to the current CAT20 service but uses Palo Alto firewalls instead of Fortinet firewalls. This will significantly improve the security controls in place, which will further protect optometrists and NHS Scotland.
44. Full instructions in relation to the process for moving to BT SWAN will be provided. NSS will be available to assist practices should any issues arise, as will BT.
45. The replacement process will commence in late 2024 and continue into 2025. The NSS Ophthalmic Customer Service Team will contact practices to advise when their router is being replaced. After this process is complete, all Fortinet devices will be collected by Capita.

*Users of CAT10 (Remote Access) and IPsec Tunnels*

46. Testing is currently being undertaken on the replacement for the CAT10 service, and will be piloted by a small number of practices before being rolled out to all users.
47. The replacement for the SWAN IPsec tunnel service is currently being designed, and testing will commence in the near future.

**Enquiries**

48. Any queries regarding how CPD allowance claims may be submitted via the exception process outlined in paragraph 12 should be emailed to NSS at: [nss.psdGOSCPDclaims@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.psdGOSCPDclaims@nhs.scot).
49. Any other queries about this Memorandum should be emailed to the Scottish Government at: [eyecare@gov.scot](mailto:eyecare@gov.scot).

**Dentistry, Optometry and Audiology Division**  
**Directorate for Primary Care**  
**Scottish Government**