

To: General Ophthalmic Services (GOS)
contract holders

Cc: Commissioners of GOS
Representative membership bodies for
optometry

3 July 2023

Dear colleague

I am writing to provide an update on key developments affecting the General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) regulations and service provision.

Capturing the patient's address on a GOS form

As you will be aware the population of an address within all GOS forms is a mandatory field. In most cases this will be a patient's home address but where the patient has no fixed abode this can be a barrier in accessing services. To help ensure access is available for all we are writing to confirm that an alternative address may be used. This can include your practice address, the address of patient's GP should they have one, a friend/relative's address or a temporary accommodation provider. To summarise, there is no legal requirement to provide a permanent home address in order that a patient can receive GOS services.

Proposed changes to General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) regulations

NHS England has submitted a number of proposals for regulatory changes to the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) following engagement with the Optometric Fees Negotiating Committee (OFNC). These proposals have been granted ministerial approval and will now be subject to standard parliamentary processes with a view to laying the regulations on 20 July 2023. Whilst any regulatory changes will not be confirmed until they are laid before Parliament, we wanted to give you advance notice in order that you have sufficient time to consider how the changes may affect you, your staff and businesses, and to make any necessary preparations that may be required.

The proposed changes and implementation dates are detailed below.

Mandating electronic claims – anticipated implementation date: 1 January 2024

PCSE (Primary Care Support England) introduced an electronic payment claims system in 2019 which is accessible via PCSE Online and several practice management systems (PMS). From 1 January 2024 it will be a contractual requirement that all GOS claims are submitted electronically via your practice

management system or PCSE Online. Ongoing support via PSCE will remain in place in order that practices are supported in transition to electronic submission.

We are aware that unplanned system outages may occur on occasion and some domiciliary service contractors operate in low signal areas. To mitigate against these instances, we will be introducing a new paper slip in order that a patient's signature can be collected. Once the system is accessible, the performer should complete the claim electronically, leaving the patient signature blank, and retain this slip either in the form of hard or scanned copy within the practice. At the same time, we will also amend the regulations for GOS 3 vouchers to reflect that in the scenarios as detailed above these vouchers may be issued to patients once the system is available.

A new process for submitting claims electronically in respect to uncollected glasses and back vertex distance changes will be introduced at the same time. PCSE will share more detailed user guides for the above system changes ahead of the implementation date.

Reduction to the claim window for GOS 1, 5 and 6 forms - anticipated implementation date: 1 January 2024

We will be reducing the claim period for submission of sight test forms from six months to three months to enable more timely data and prompt payments for contractors.

We recognise that there may be exceptional circumstances where it may not be possible for contractors to submit claims within any regulated timescale. In such cases ICBs can review the circumstances and where it is appropriate to do so, arrange with PCSE for the claim to be paid. Both OFNC and NHS England will monitor these arrangements to ensure they are working in the interests of patients and contractors without adding unnecessary bureaucracy for contractors or the NHS.

Death of contractor – anticipated implementation date: 1 November 2023.

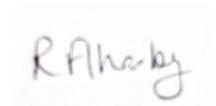
In the event of the death of a contract holder current regulations detail that the GOS contract terminates after 7 days unless arrangements have been made to extend the contract by up to 3 months. We recognise that in these circumstances families and next of kin may not always have adequate time to make any alternative arrangements. We are therefore proposing that this period will be extended to 28 days to allow adequate time for any such arrangements to be put in place.

Removing the need to collect data on GOS contract applicants' sex - anticipated implementation date: 1 November 2023

Current regulations state that it is a requirement for the sex of a contractor to be declared when submitting an application to hold a GOS contract. The award of the contract is not dependant on the sex of a contractor and therefore we propose to remove this requirement from the regulations and for this to be reflected in the application form.

If there are any questions, please contact your ICB commissioning team or OFNC representative membership organisation.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Foskett-Tharby', enclosed in a light grey rectangular box.

Rachel Foskett-Tharby
Deputy Director for Dental and Ophthalmic Contracts
NHS England