

PCT Chief Executives
PCT Directors of Finance

Tuesday, June 16, 2009

Gateway reference 12019

Dear Colleague,

General Ophthalmic Services - payments for continuing education and training

Summary

1. I am writing to notify you of the arrangements for payments for loss of earnings in respect of continuing education and training undertaken by optometrists and ophthalmic medical practitioners on PCT lists and the level of payment in respect of 2008 CET which is payable this year.
2. Please could you bring this information to the attention of all staff dealing with general ophthalmic services, optometrists and ophthalmic medical practitioners.
3. Please make payments for continuing education validly claimed between 1 July 2009 and 30 September 2009 to General Ophthalmic Service's contractors.

Payments for continuing education and training

4. Following consultations with representatives of the professions, the Secretary of State has agreed that payments should be made in respect of continuing education and training undertaken by optometrists and ophthalmic medical practitioners without another medical appointment (i.e. who do no other remunerative work but the testing of sight). The payment for 2008 is £458. Payments will be made retrospectively in respect of claims made by optometrists and ophthalmic medical practitioners relating to CET training undertaken during the year from 1 January to 31 December 2008. This year

the period during which optometrists and ophthalmic medical practitioners may make their claims will be 1 July – 30 September 2009.

5. As the arrangements for local listing of clinicians changed in 1 August 2008, the Payment Directions (which would normally be made under section 120 of the National Health Act 2006) cannot apply across the whole of the year. The Secretary of State has however decided that it is proper for these payments to be made and applied equally to all eligible performers.

6. PCTs are therefore instructed by the Secretary of State to make additional extra regulatory payments in respect of performers who;

(a) undertook continuing education and training in 2008, and

(b) were included in a PCT ophthalmic, supplementary and/or performers list for no less than a total of six months in that year.

7. PCTs are instructed by the Secretary of State to continue to account for these additional payments as payments in respect of the non-discretionary General Ophthalmic Services. The value of the payments should be recorded in all in-year financial monitoring returns and end of year accounts notes as part of the gross expenditure on the General Ophthalmic Services (and on line 479, continuing education and training payments, in the General Ophthalmic Services cash expenditure monitoring return FIS(FHS)3). In addition, these payments will need to be identified in the PCT's accounts as extra regulatory payments in respect of the provision of Family Practitioner Services, in accordance with the guidance in Chapter 5 (Losses and special payments) of the NHS Manual of Accounts. In the light of these instructions, PCTs need not consider these payments as being novel, contentious or repercussive cases, which require further approval by the Department, but may be treated as falling within each PCT's delegated limits for special payments.

Action

8. A claim form is on the Department of Health website and may be downloaded for completion and submission to PCTs. A more detailed note on the payment is attached at Annex A.

9. PCTs (or their support agency) are asked to provide optometrists and ophthalmic medical practitioners listed with them with a copy of the note at Annex A and a copy of the claim form. They may wish to do this at the same time as sending out payment advices rather than making a separate mailing.

Yours Sincerely

Derek Busby Eye Care Services
Commissioning Directorate

General Ophthalmic Services - payments for continuing education and training

The Department of Health has agreed with the optical profession and the British Medical Association that a payment should be made in respect of loss of earnings associated with continuing education and training.

The payment

The payment in respect of CET undertaken between 1 January to 31 December 2008 is £458 and will be payable in 2009. The payment is due to -

(a) opticians, other than a corporate optician; and

(b) ophthalmic medical practitioners, who conduct only sight tests and have no other remunerated medical employment (such as hospital work or general practice),

who were on a PCT's ophthalmic, supplementary and/or performers list for at least six months in the relevant year and have maintained their professional registration. The payment is for having undertaken appropriate continuing education and training.

Claims

Claims must be made in writing to the appropriate PCT (or where the PCT uses a support agency to the agency) and be made by contractors whether the contractor is claiming for him/herself or for a performer. For contractors on a performers list who are claiming a payment for themselves the claim should be made to a PCT (or support agency) where they have a contract and with which they undertake the most work (if they have contracts with more than one PCT).

When contractors claim for a performer, the claim should normally be made by and paid to the contractor for whom the performer works. Where a performer is employed by two or more contractors, the CET allowance should be claimed by and paid to the contractor whom the performer nominates for the purpose of payment of the CET allowance. The contractor shall make the claim to the PCT on whose performers list the performer is entered (which may not be the area where the contractor is him/herself listed) or, in the case of a performer who ceased to work by 1 August 2008 and so was never entered onto a performers list but who otherwise meets the eligibility criteria, to the PCT on whose supplementary list he was entered.

A separate claim shall be made for each person in respect of whom an allowance is payable and only one claim shall be made for each person.

Payments must be made to contractors. Arrangements for payments to assistants are a matter for agreement between contractors and assistants and not a matter for the NHS. In cases where the contractor has provided or made available to the assistant sufficient CET to enable the assistant to meet the

statutory requirements for compulsory CET (in the case of an optometrist subject to the requirements of the GOC) then the payment may be retained by the contractor. However if the contractor has not provided or made available to the assistant sufficient CET to enable the assistant to meet the statutory requirements for compulsory CET, the payment is due to the performer.

For ophthalmic medical practitioners the payment may only be made to practitioners who have no other medical appointment i.e. who do no other remunerative work than the testing of sight.

Practitioners are not required to produce direct evidence of undertaking CET as a compulsory part of the claim or pre-condition of payment. A claim may only be paid in respect of somebody who has maintained their professional registration. However, PCTs may conduct sample or selective checks if they deem it necessary to test the probity of NHS payments.

The claim form is available from the Department of Health website and may be downloaded by PCTs for issue to contractors on their lists. Contractors or performers may also, if they wish, download the form for submission to their PCTs.

There is a three-month period for making claims, which this year runs from 1 July to 30 September 2009.