



New King's Beam House  
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**Gateway Reference: 11184**

Monday, 19 January 2009

Dear Colleague,

**General Ophthalmic Services: Increases to NHS Sight Test Fee for the period 1 April 2008 and 31 July 2008**

As you are aware, the Department agreed with the representatives of the ophthalmic services trade bodies to increase the fee for the NHS sight test and the domiciliary sight testing allowances from 1 April 2008.

Following consultations with representatives of the professions, the Secretary of State has determined that;

- (a) the NHS sight test fee for Optometrists and Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners will be increased to £19.80, and
- (b) the fees payable to Optometrists and Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners for NHS domiciliary visits will be increased to £34.87 for the first and second patients seen at one visit and to £8.73 for the third and subsequent visits.

Payments for NHS sight tests carried out during this period were previously paid in accordance with The Statement of Remuneration ("the Statement") made under section 10 of the National Health Service (General Ophthalmic Services) Regulations 1986. These regulations were revoked on 1 August 2008 when the General Ophthalmic Services Contracts Regulations 2008 came into force.

Due to a legislative oversight the increase in payments for NHS sight tests agreed between the Secretary of State for the Department of Health and the representatives of the professions cannot be made in accordance with the Statement that applied at that time. The Secretary of State has however

decided that it is proper for these payments to be made and applied equally to all service providers in all PCT areas.

PCTs are therefore instructed by the Secretary of State to make additional extra statutory or extra regulatory payments to those service providers who;

- (a) provided ophthalmic services between 1 April 2008 and 31 July 2008, and
- (b) who claimed fees for those services in accordance with the Statement that applied at that time,

to bring those fees claimed during this period up to the new fee levels in line with the agreement between the Department and the optical bodies as set out above.

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. These payments will need to be reported in the PCT's accounts as extra statutory or extra regulatory payments in respect of the provision of Family Health 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.

Yours Sincerely

David Lye  
For the Secretary of State for Health