

# NEWS RELEASE

**Release:** Immediate: 22 June 2011

## **Freeze in English GOS Fees, but CET payment and supervisor's grant increase**

The Department of Health have imposed a freeze on the GOS Sight Test Fee, which will stay at the same level of £20.70 until March 2012, but the CET payment and the grant for supervising pre-registration trainees have both increased by 5%.

**Commenting on the announcement from the Department, the Chairman of the negotiating Committee, Michael Bateman said:**

"We made clear in the strongest possible terms that the proposed freeze was unacceptable to the profession, especially at a time of rising domestic inflation which is pushing up practice running costs and international inflation which is increasing the cost of spectacles and lenses. These are significant pressures on the profession, and freezing the sight test fee will have a real impact on the optical front-line and on the ability of the profession to deliver the sight testing service.

"Over many years we have delivered very significant efficiency savings to the government, not least in the level of diagnostic equipment now common in optometric practices, increased levels of regulation, and the documented increase in the time taken to conduct a GOS sight test. We have made very clear to Departmental Officials and Ministers, that we will not under-value the services optometrists and OMPs provide and that there is absolutely no flexibility in the £20.70 sight test fee for any 'good will' work.

"We rejected the offer on fees and it was imposed by the Minister on the advice of his officials. We have asked those officials to make clear to NHS Primary Care Commissioning and other parts of the NHS and Department that the profession is not in a position to take on any further burdens in return for what was already an inadequate sight test fee, now being further eroded by inflation and extra practice costs."

The Optical Negotiators were however able to negotiate higher than inflation increases of 5% on the CET payment and on the grant to supervisors of pre-registration optometrists. These take the CET payment to £491 and the supervisor's grant to £3,166.

In accepting the CET payment increase, the negotiators made clear that, whilst the increase went some way towards meeting the increased CET burden, it remained an inadequate payment which did not cover the cost of achieving the necessary CET points.

Whilst welcoming the increased supervisors grant, the negotiators pointed out that the level of support was still way out of line with the level of grants for the other contractor professions, and that the cost of provision such as the College fee and the charges made for hospital placements were still escalating.

A meeting is being arranged with the Minister, and the negotiators will shortly start discussions about the parameters of the 2012 fees negotiation round.

**ENDS**

**Further information:** Bob Hughes OFRC Secretary  
**e-mail:** bobhughes@aop.org.uk  
**Tel:** 07770 346432

**Note for Editors:**

The increase on gross fees for GPs and community dentists was 0.25%. Taken together, the increases in the two grants for optometry amount to a 0.1% increase on gross fees but without a requirement to achieve additional efficiency gains which the Department has negotiated with the other professions.