

OFNC

Association of British Dispensing Opticians
Association of Optometrists
British Medical Association
Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians

Optometric Fees Negotiating Committee

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Chair: Trevor Warburton

Secretary: Ann Blackmore

Hamid Butt
Head of Dental and Eye Care Finance
Digital, Data & Primary care
Department of Health & Social Care
4th Floor, 39 Victoria Street
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23st March 2018

Dear Hamid,

GOS Fees 2018/19

In Ann Blackmore's absence I am responding to your letter of 20th March. You are correct that the profession and GOS providers will be bitterly disappointed at the contents of your letter.

Whilst the minor increase in grants is welcome, the offer on fees is unacceptable especially following the previous two years' freeze and in the light of more positive settlements being announced elsewhere. Leaving aside pay which has stood still at a time of inflation, the costs of operating community optical practices have increased every bit as much as for other primary care contractors. This is not acceptable to OFNC. It is not a negotiated settlement and we cannot agree to it, so regrettably you will have to impose it on us.

We trust that, at the very least, the Department is taking action as requested to prevent the unnecessary burden of DPOs being imposed on us, without benefit or necessity, through the UK's data protection bill and NHS's England's over-simplistic approach to the NHS in this area.

We also trust that funding will be found this year for grants towards NHS connectivity in the optical sector. Previous bids were rejected and now the lack of foresight is coming home to roost. The current initiative by Carol Reece to provide NHS Mail accounts to all practices in England is welcome but is only a temporary fix very late in the day. Some Trusts have already withdrawn fax machines for referrals and one can only assume that no impact or risk assessments have been carried out or they would have revealed the risk to patients' eyesight due to the lack of alternative urgent routes into time-critical ophthalmology. Given the NHS desire to rapidly move to being paperless, this problem will return in spades without access to eRefer and the NHS network.

Yours sincerely



Trevor Warburton
Chair, OFNC