

PCT Chief Executives
NHSCB Area Teams

26 March 2013

Gateway reference: 18854

Dear Colleague

General Ophthalmic Services: Increases to NHS Sight Test Fee, Pre-registration supervisors allowance and continuing education and training allowance and arrangements for Universal Credit.

Summary

1. I am writing to announce increases in:

- .. the NHS sight test fee from 1 April 2013;
- .. domiciliary sight testing allowances from 1 April 2013;
- .. the pre-registration supervisors allowance from April 2013; and
- .. the continuing education and training allowance for 2012, payable in 2013.

No action is required on the continuing education and training allowance as further guidance will be issued later this year.

2. Please could you bring this to the attention of all staff dealing with general ophthalmic services.

Increased sight test fee for Optometrists and Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners

3. Following consultations with representatives of the professions, the Secretary of State has determined that the NHS sight test fee for Optometrists and Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners will be increased to £20.90.

4. For superannuation purposes, please note that for Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners the practice expense component of the sight test will be £5.31 from 1 April 2013.

5. Please pay GOS contractors the increased sight test fee for sight tests. Revised General Ophthalmic Services Payment Directions are attached which apply from 1 April 2013.

Increased NHS domiciliary visiting fees for Optometrists and Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners from 1 April 2008

6. The fees payable to Optometrists and Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners for NHS domiciliary visits is £36.82 for the first and second patients seen at one visit and £9.22 for the third and subsequent patients.

Pre-registration Training for Optometrists

7. From 1 April 2013 the allowance paid to supervisors of pre-registration trainees has increased to £3,326. Claims from trainers taking on pre-registration trainees on or after 1 April 2013 should be paid at this new rate.

Payments for continuing education and training

8. The payment in respect of continuing education and training undertaken by optometrists and ophthalmic medical practitioners on PCT lists will be £516 for 2012. Although the level of payment has been agreed it will not be claimable until later in 2013. I will write to you again with guidance on this payment. There is no action required on this now.

9. Revised General Ophthalmic Services Payment Directions are attached which apply from 1 April 2013.

Implementation of a new charges exemption for Universal Credit

10 A new benefit, Universal Credit (UC), will be introduced by the Department for Work and Pensions on 29 April 2013. UC will initially be introduced in 4 pathfinder areas: Oldham, Tameside, Warrington and Wigan. Regulations have been amended to provide exemption for all those involved in the pathfinder between 29 April and the end October 2013. Revised arrangements will be put in place for wider roll out of UC in due course.

Existing exemption arrangements will continue as normal.

11. UC claimants, their partners, and any children included in the UC award, will qualify for help with health costs. Help with health costs includes:

- Free NHS prescriptions
- Free NHS dental Treatment
- Free wigs and fabric supports
- Free sight tests
- Access to optical vouchers to help with the cost of glasses or contact lenses
- Assistance with the costs of travel to an NHS appointment on referral by a primary care practitioner (eg doctor, dentist or optician).

12. We will not be issuing revised forms in time for the pathfinder start date, so we have put in place a workaround which will enable patients to make a valid declaration of entitlement. The patient will be instructed to tick the box for income based jobseekers allowance and they should show their UC award notice as evidence of entitlement.

Yours Sincerely

Derek Busby
Head of Ophthalmic Services