



Dear Colleague

GENERAL OPHTHALMIC SERVICES

1. **NHS Eye Examinations: Second Opinions**
2. **NHS Eye Examinations: Proposed changes from 1 October 2009**
3. **Tax Credits: Increase in the annual income limit**

Summary

1. This letter advises NHS Boards and Practitioner Services of a delay in the implementation of the proposed changes to NHS eye examinations and of an increase in the income level for tax credits. It also clarifies the position regarding entitlement to second opinions under general ophthalmic services.

Action

2. NHS Boards and Practitioner Services are asked to note the information about:

2.1 the delay in the implementation of the proposed changes to NHS eye examinations;

2.2 the increase in the income level for tax credits and the creation of a new entitlement category for this year only to implement this increase; and

2.3 second opinions;

contained in the Memorandum to this letter.

3. Copies of the NHS (Optical Charges and Payments) (Scotland) Amendment (No 2) Regulations 2009, which make the amendments required to implement the increased income level for tax credits, are being sent to NHS Boards under separate cover. On this occasion copies of the Amending Regulations are not being sent for distribution to optometrists and ophthalmic medical

26 August 2009

Addresses

For action
Chief Executives, NHS Boards

Director, Practitioner Services

For information
Chief Executive,
NHS National Services Scotland

Enquiries to:

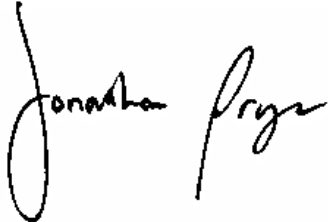
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practitioners and NHS Board should make copies available for inspection by practitioners if required.

4. Copies of the Memorandum to this letter are being sent under separate cover for distribution to all optometrists and ophthalmic medical practitioners on NHS Board lists

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Pryce'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

DR JONATHAN PRYCE
Deputy Director

**NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE
GENERAL OPHTHALMIC SERVICES**

- 1. NHS Eye Examinations: Second Opinions**
- 2. NHS Eye Examinations: Proposed changes from 1 October 2009**
- 3. Tax Credits: Increase in the annual income limit**

1. This Memorandum advises of a delay in the implementation of the proposed changes to NHS eye examinations and of an increase in the income level for tax credits. It also clarifies the position regarding entitlement to second opinions under general ophthalmic services.

NHS Eye Examinations: Second Opinions

2. It has come to the Scottish Government's attention that some patients are approaching optometrists/ophthalmic medical practitioners for a further free NHS eye examination as they wish a second opinion following a primary eye examination undertaken elsewhere. Second opinions cannot be provided under general ophthalmic services. If a patient approaches an optometrist/ophthalmic medical practitioner for a second opinion they should be advised that this is not available free of charge under NHS arrangements and a private charge will be levied.

NHS Eye Examinations: Proposed changes from 1 October 2009

3. The Memorandum to NHS: PCA(O)(2008)3, issued on 22 May 2008, advised of the 3 year fee agreement reached for optometrists/ophthalmic medical practitioners providing NHS eye examinations. Paragraph 6 of that Memorandum advised that as part of the 3 year fee agreement NHS primary eye examinations would be undertaken in line with the timescales set down in the Memorandum of Understanding on the Frequency of NHS Eye Examinations with all other eye examinations undertaken within these timescales being undertaken as NHS supplementary eye examinations. It was proposed that these changes would take effect from 1 October 2009.

4. Discussion on the amendments required to the NHS (General Ophthalmic Services) (Scotland) Regulations 2006 ("the 2006 Regulations") to implement these changes have only recently concluded and it will not be possible to make the changes required in time for the proposed 1 October 2009 effective date. Information about the changes which will be made to the 2006 Regulations and the revised effective date will be issued in due course.

Tax Credits: Increase in the annual income limit

5. Currently those families whose income as calculated for tax credit purposes does not exceed £15,050 and who are in receipt of Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit with a disability element or severe disability element or Child Tax Credit alone because they are not eligible for Working Tax Credit are

entitled to a voucher towards the cost of glasses/contact lenses. With effect from 6 April 2009 the income limit as calculated for tax credit purposes increased from £15,050 to £15,276. For this year only this increase is being implemented by means of the introduction of a new entitlement category. Those within this new entitled category will receive a NHS Tax Credit Exemption certificate and so the introduction of this new category will have no impact on optical practices.

6. A copy of the NHS (Optical Charges and Payments) (Scotland) Amendment (No 2) Regulations 2009, which brings this change into effect, will be available at NHS Board premises for inspection in due course and can be viewed at: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/ssi2009/ssi_20090288_en_1.

7. Any enquiries arising from this Memorandum should be taken up with your NHS Board.

Scottish Government Health Directorates
26 August 2009