

Primary Care Directorate  
Dentistry and Optometry Division

Chief Medical Officer Directorate  
Pharmacy and Medicines Division



Dear Colleague

## **NHS PHARMACY FIRST SCOTLAND – GUIDANCE AND REFERRAL FORM FOR TREATMENT OF MINOR EYE CONDITIONS**

### **Summary**

1. This Circular provides updated guidance for both community optometry and community pharmacy teams and an updated referral form for the assessment and treatment of minor eye conditions as part of the NHS Pharmacy First Scotland (NHS PFS) service.

### **Background**

2. The NHS PFS service came into force in community pharmacies on 29 July 2020 and replaced the Minor Ailment Service (MAS).
3. NHS Circulars PCA(O)(2020)18 and PCA(P)(2020)24, published on 6 November 2020, provided information about the NHS PFS service, along with guidance and a referral form for the assessment and treatment of minor eye conditions.

### **Details**

4. The guidance and Optometry-Pharmacy referral form have now been reviewed and updated. The updated referral form should be used with immediate effect.
5. Optometry teams should note that there have also been some changes made to the eye products that can be supplied by community pharmacies under the NHS PFS service. Further details are below.

22 October 2021

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### **Addresses**

#### For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards

#### For information

Health and Social Care  
Partnerships

NHS Directors of Pharmacy

NHS Board Optometric  
Advisers

NHS Education for Scotland

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### **Enquiries to:**

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## Updated Guidance and Optometry-Pharmacy Referral Form

6. Updated guidance for community optometry and community pharmacy teams relating to the assessment and treatment of eye conditions under NHS PFS is attached to this circular as **Annex A**.
7. An updated two-way Optometry-Pharmacy Referral Form is attached as **Annex B**. This is designed for community optometrists to refer patients to their local pharmacy for NHS PFS, and for community pharmacy teams to refer patients to community optometry practices where a patient has initially presented at a pharmacy but specialist advice is required.
8. Both updated documents will be published online on the Eyes.Scot website at – <https://www.eyes.scot/for-professionals/nhs-pharmacy-first-scotland/> and on the Scotland's Health On the Web (SHOW website) at <https://www.publications.scot.nhs.uk/>
9. Ongoing discussions between community optometry teams and their local pharmacies is strongly encouraged to develop ways of working which take local needs into account, whilst ensuring a safe and efficient patient journey.

## Updated list of eye products available for supply under NHS PFS

10. It should be noted that the eye products included on the NHS PFS List of Approved Products have been updated as of 1 October 2021. The eye products that may be supplied are set out in the referral form at Annex B.
11. Community Pharmacy Scotland and Optometry Scotland have been consulted on the terms of this circular.

## Actions

12. NHS Boards are asked to:
  - note the contents of this Circular;
  - copy to all community pharmacy contractors and the Area Pharmaceutical Committee for information;
  - copy to all optometrists, ophthalmic medical practitioners, body corporates and practices on their ophthalmic lists.
13. When sharing the Circular locally it may also be helpful if NHS Boards are able to provide a list of community optometry and community pharmacy contact details including NHS email addresses (where available).

Yours sincerely,



**Alison Strath**  
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer  
Pharmacy & Medicines Division



**Tom Ferris**  
Deputy Director  
Dentistry and Optometry Division

## NHS Pharmacy First Scotland

### Guidance for optometry teams

*NHS Pharmacy First Scotland* (NHS PFS) is a consultation service designed to encourage the public to visit their community pharmacy as the first port of call for minor illnesses and common clinical conditions. The Minor Ailment Service (MAS) has been discontinued and replaced by this new service, which is available now in every pharmacy delivering NHS services in Scotland.

As a broad overview of how the service operates - a person consults with a member of the pharmacy team who will assess their symptoms, resulting in one or more of the following outcomes:



Help the person manage the condition by themselves by discussing appropriate self-care advice



Supply an appropriate treatment for the symptoms (either on NHS Approved List or over the counter sale - both within OTC product licensing)

Discuss relevant self-care advice including what to do if symptoms do not improve



Refer to another healthcare professional, if appropriate

### How do the public access NHS Pharmacy First Scotland?

People can access this service by attending a community pharmacy of their choice, usually without an appointment. There is no registration required.

### Who is eligible?

- Everyone registered with a GP practice in Scotland or the Defence Medical Services on a permanent or temporary basis (including care home residents).
- People who live in Scotland (including gypsy or travellers / asylum seeker or dependant of an asylum seeker).

Visitors to Scotland are excluded from accessing NHS PFS, however pharmacists will still be able to provide general help and advice to these patients as well as providing medication by OTC sale (if appropriate).

## How can optometry and pharmacy work together?

Optometrists are the experts in community eye care. Patients with any eye condition (including contact lens problems) should seek advice from optometry for advice and management.

Where the outcome of an eye examination by an optometrist is that a patient requires treatment for a minor eye condition, it may be appropriate for optometry practices without an independent prescriber optometrist to refer these patients to a pharmacy rather than their GP practice, to obtain a supply of medication.

Community pharmacies are able to sell a wide range of eye medications over the counter. A selected number of these treatments are available free of charge via the NHS PFS Approved List (see later in this document for further information on the Approved List).

The optometrist can use the [referral form](#) to request that a supply (within product license) is made via NHS PFS. It supports the principle of “Right Care, Right Place,” helping patients to access the most appropriate service to meet their needs in a timely manner.

As before with MAS, the optometrist’s clinical assessment would be utilised (in a similar way to a GP accepting a consultant’s assessment of a patient’s clinical condition) prior to a supply being made and the responsibility for the choice of product based on examination remains with the referring optometrist.

**Care must be taken by the optometrist to ensure the product recommended is able to be supplied under the OTC license.** For example, chloramphenicol can be used to treat a variety of superficial eye infections, but is only available in a pharmacy (either via NHS Approved List or OTC sale) for the treatment of bacterial conjunctivitis in adults and children over 2 years for a maximum of 5 days treatment.

Patients who present in the first instance to a pharmacy and do not, in the pharmacist’s opinion, need to go directly to hospital should be directed to a local optometry practice for an eye examination using the same form.

It is good practice that the referring pharmacy contacts the optometry practice by telephone, whilst the patient is still in the pharmacy to confirm availability of an appointment, thus providing a better patient experience. However, this may not always be possible.

## Referral best practice

### Optometrists should:

- ✓ Triage the referral, offer an appropriate appointment and then examine the patient.
- ✓ Confirm patient's eligibility for NHS PFS (where appropriate)\*
- ✓ Complete the editable request form and email it to the patient's pharmacy of choice (where the practice has secure NHS email) or print the form so the patient can take it directly to their choice of pharmacy
- ✓ Ensure any treatment recommendations comply with the licensed indication(s) for the eye product and those which are to be supplied on NHS are within the national Approved List
- ✓ Record the request on the patient's clinical record
- ✓ Review patient's requirement for ongoing treatment
- ✓ Inform the patient's GP where applicable: request any item(s) to go onto the patient's repeat prescription (this is for further supplies only, not after the initial supply)

\* the patient must be eligible for NHS PFS to access treatment free of charge from the Approved List – otherwise the product can be sold OTC

### Pharmacies should:

- ✓ When responding to a referral from an optometrist:
  - Confirm the patient's eligibility for NHS PFS (where appropriate)\*
  - Contact the optometrist if necessary re the request
  - Supply the requested product under NHS PFS if appropriate, recording details of the optometrist involved on the patient's PMR
- ✓ When making a referral to an optometrist:
  - Triage and refer to optometrist as first line option where required, helping to signpost to the patient's choice of local optometry practice. If the optometry practice is closed and the patient is concerned about their vision they should phone NHS 24 free on 111
  - Make the patient aware that the optometrist will first triage the referral before offering an appropriate appointment and examining them, so they may not be seen immediately

**Managing patient expectations correctly will be key to the success of this initiative.**

**At all times it is essential that patient has a clear understanding of their journey between optometry and pharmacy to ensure this is efficient and safe, whilst allowing the respective healthcare professionals to manage their workloads.**

## Which conditions are covered by NHS Pharmacy First Scotland?

Following a consultation with the patient, pharmacies can provide advice and/or treatment for a range of ailments. NHS PFS is not simply an order system for non-prescribers, so it is important that optometry and pharmacy practices work together to understand each other's practice and that there are open communication channels for discussion around referrals.

The products available on the [Approved List](#) to be supplied (within their stated product license which can be found [here](#)) for free under NHS PFS can be found at:

[NHS Pharmacy First Scotland \(PFS\) | National Services Scotland](#) (scroll down to the Approved Items section)

**Evidence based approach** – the Approved List will ensure that treatments offered via the NHS are clinically effective and represent value for money for NHS Scotland. Developed by the Area Drug and Therapeutics Committee Collaborative, the list is supported by all Health Boards to help deliver a consistent approach between pharmacists and GPs. The content of the Approved List will be reviewed fully every two years. Minor amendments e.g. product has been discontinued or long term out of stock will be made when required. The most up to date version will be accessible via the above link.

The first review of the NHS PFS Approved List has been completed recently. Details of changes made can be found on page 2, with further explanation of the rationale for the decisions in Appendix 1 at the end of the Approved List document (linked to above).

If the patient is not eligible for NHS PFS, or would benefit from a specific product not included on the Approved List, treatment can be supplied by an over the counter sale if appropriate (using the same form for referral). Alternatively, a referral/prescription request could be made to their GP.

As the network of IP pharmacists grows, this could be incorporated into the Common Clinical Conditions Independent Prescribing service (“NHS Pharmacy First Plus”)– which allows the treatment of common clinical conditions within the pharmacy – speak to your local pharmacist to find out if this can currently be offered in your area.

### Subsequent supplies

After the first supply, the patient may be reviewed by an optometrist to assess the need for ongoing treatment. At this point, a further supply could be made by the pharmacy (to ensure continuity of treatment) and a request submitted by the optometrist to the GP to add the item to the patient's repeat prescription. The route of obtaining further supplies should be made clear to the patient at this point.

### Developing relationships

It is recommended that optometry practices and pharmacies work together to develop a deeper understanding of how the service will operate and to strengthen referral pathways for patients in their local area.

By discussing the content of this document with your local optometry and pharmacy teams, you can agree what works for everyone e.g. telephoning optometrist practices prior to sending a patient, using email/printed forms for referrals.

Please ensure that local Health Board guidance is followed at all times.



## NHS Pharmacy First Scotland Consultation Form

Optometry ↔ Pharmacy Referral



PATIENT DETAILS			
Name		Telephone	
Address & Postcode		Date of Birth/CHI	
		GP Practice	
		Known allergies	
Eligible for NHS Pharmacy First Scotland?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Referral type	Optometry to Pharmacy <input type="checkbox"/>	Pharmacy to Optometry <input type="checkbox"/>	
CONSULTATION DETAILS e.g. presenting complaint(s) – symptoms, duration, actions already taken, other current medication?			
OPTOMETRY REPORT FOLLOWING CLINICAL ASSESSMENT			
TREATMENT REQUIRED			
To be supplied free of charge via NHS Pharmacy First Scotland Approved List			
Carbomer 0.2% eye gel 10g*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Xailin Night eye ointment PF 5g	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carbomer 0.2% eye gel preservative free 10g*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hylo Night eye ointment PF 5g	<input type="checkbox"/>
* please refer to Part 3 Eye Products of the Scottish Drug Tariff for eligible items and to the local Health Board Formulary for preferred brands		Sodium cromoglicate 2% eye drops (patients ≥ 2 years only)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hypromellose 0.3% eye drop 10ml	<input type="checkbox"/>		5ml <input type="checkbox"/>
			10ml <input type="checkbox"/>
Chloramphenicol 1% eye ointment (patients ≥ 2 years only) 4g	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chloramphenicol 0.5% eye drops (patients ≥ 2 years only) 10ml	<input type="checkbox"/>
To be purchased via OTC sale (Pharmacy teams - no record on PMR is required in this instance)			
Duration of treatment			
Referrer's name (Optometrist/Pharmacist)		GOC/GPhC Number	Referring Practice stamp (not required when being sent by secure email)
Contact number	Date		
Referrer's signature (not required when being sent by secure mail)			