

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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OFNC UPDATE: MOUNTING CONCERN OVER DELAYS IN COVID-19 FUNDING INFORMATION FOR OPTICAL PRACTICES IN ENGLAND

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The OFNC has kept the sector up to date while waiting for NHS England to publish its guidance on ongoing COVID-19 support for optical practices. To our increasing concern and dismay, NHS England is still to confirm its position over two months after the first phase of support formally ended in June.

As we reported in our July updates, the OFNC has agreed with NHS England that there will be continued average GOS support:

- until 31 July for all open GOS contractors in England, without any activity threshold
- until the end of August for all domiciliary providers, with no activity threshold
- until the end of August for all practices which meet a minimum level of historic GOS1 activity.

Frustratingly, the level of activity required for fixed practices to qualify for support in August has still not been confirmed despite the end of that month now having passed. We will expect NHS England to take a fair and pragmatic approach in deciding which practices are eligible for payments.

Meanwhile, and as explained in our update of 31 July, we continue to negotiate with NHS England on further support beyond August for practices in deprived areas which largely provide NHS care and are struggling to recover, and for domiciliary providers. We fully appreciate the difficult circumstances many contractors are still facing, and the added difficulty caused by the lack of certainty over future support arrangements. We fully share that frustration.

We are continuing in urgent discussions about these issues with NHS England and hope to be able to make a further statement about future COVID-19 support soon.

ENDS

The Optometric Fees Negotiating Committee (OFNC) is the national negotiating body for eye care in England with the Westminster Parliament, the Department of Health and Social Care, and NHS England-NHS Improvement. It comprises the leaders of the UK representative bodies: ABDO, AOP, FODO and BMA (for OMPs) and works in partnerships with the College of Optometrists and the General Optical Council.