

E: [eyecare@gov.scot](mailto:eyecare@gov.scot)

Dear Colleague,

## Remobilisation of NHS Ophthalmic Services in Scotland

My purpose in writing to you is to explain the plans to remobilise our NHS ophthalmic services in Scotland.

As you will be aware this is not a simple process. We need to be mindful of the wider implications of COVID-19 and the essential requirement that we continue to reduce the risk of community transmission and protect our patients, ourselves and our practice teams. There are also obviously implications with prolonging the return to providing more essential community eye care services and to further delaying offering this care to our patients.

The Scottish Government's route map <https://www.gov.scot/news/route-map-for-moving-out-of-lockdown/> gives an indication of the order in which the current COVID-19 restrictions will carefully and gradually change. For community eye care, these phases for remobilisation are presently:

### Phase 1: (present phase) - Increasing capacity within our EETCs

During Phase 1, optometry practices have remained closed for face-to-face patient care, but many of you have been providing remote triage and consultation. The capacity within the Emergency Eyecare Treatment Centres (EETCs) has been increased by NHS Boards to meet the demand.

### Phase 2: Increasing essential eye care & starting to safely re-open community optometry practices

Remote triage and telephone consultations will still be important, but as we enter Phase 2 we will ask practices to re-open for face-to-face emergency and essential eye care unless there are justifiable reasons why this cannot happen; the EETCs will close. The precise date will be confirmed following the next 3-weekly review of lockdown regulations on 18 June 2020 if the First Minister determines that the conditions for entering Phase 2 have been met. Re-opening must be undertaken with considerable changes to your practice layout and to the way that you look after patients. The priority is safety.

In anticipation of Phase 2, **you should now start to prepare your practices to re-open**. A document has been prepared by NHS Education for Scotland which will help: <https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/28963/optometry/covid-19-eyecare-delivery-support>.

### **Phase 3: Increasing capacity within community optometry practices for non-routine eye care**

It is hoped that practices will be able to increase capacity for non-routine eye care as we move into Phase 3. The focus will still remain on emergency and essential care, but the scope will increase to enable us to see more patients.

If it is considered safe to do so, we will start to re-mobilise some of our domiciliary eye care provision.

#### **Other Issues**

##### *Supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to support the Remobilisation of NHS Ophthalmic Services*

The supply of appropriate PPE is an essential pre-requisite to support the phased remobilisation of NHS ophthalmic services. We are working very closely with NHS National Services Scotland to ensure that optometry teams have an adequate supply of appropriate PPE during the remobilisation. We will keep practices briefed on the supply.

##### *Financial Support*

With the vital requirements to ensure safe practice and the subsequent reduction in capacity that will result, I understand that there is concern regarding the ongoing viability of community optometry practices. The Scottish Government has already provided considerable financial support to practices, and we continue to consult with relevant stakeholders to finalise the next phase. Further information regarding this will be issued in due course.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr Janet Pooley PhD MCOptom  
Optometric Advisor**