SENT ON BEHALF OF THE CHIEF OPTOMETRIC ADVISOR – 19 June 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Following the Welsh Governments statutory review of lockdown arrangements the First Minister for Wales today announced an easement of restrictions.

I can now confirm the move to the Amber Phase for optometry services from 22 June 2020.

The Welsh Government wrote to all optometry practices in May to provide our Action Plan for recovery, return to work self-assessment document, and further guidance to support practices in their preparation for wider re-opening on entering the Amber phase.

**Required Actions Prior to Opening**

The guidance details action practices are required to take prior to re-opening. For ease of reference, please find attached the guidance and self-assessment document previously circulated. Please note, prior to re-opening, all practices must complete the document and return to NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership, with confirmation of practice opening hours. nwssp-primarycareservices@wales.nhs.uk

*Personal Protective Equipment*

Arrangements have been made to supply all practices with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for use when examining NHS patients presenting for General Ophthalmic Services or Wales Eye Care Services. Details for initial supply and ongoing ordering will follow within the coming days from the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government will continue to work with NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership to monitor NHS primary care activity to ensure the right amount of PPE is provided and distributed to practices.

Practices providing private health care must make their own arrangements to procure PPE in the same way that they would procure other consumables for their private practice

*Financial Support*

During the initial stages of the Amber phase, practices will continue to be supported with an average NHS monthly payment as described in the recovery plan Amber Phase. Submission of General Ophthalmic Services claims remains suspended.

During the Amber Phase, it is a mandatory requirement for practices to complete and submit daily activity figures. This is essential to ensure the right amount of PPE is available, to plan services during the Amber Phase and to inform future planning decisions.

Further communication from the Welsh Government will follow over the coming days with full details regarding the process of collecting and submitting daily activity data.

Financial support (average payment) for practices will continue on the basis that practices must be open and providing NHS services to at least 75% of their pre-Covid-19 arrangements, and provide weekly activity data. Please refer to the guidance document for Covid-19 health related exemptions.

The Welsh Government anticipates the new arrangements being in place by the end of June.

*Clinical Prioritisation*

I would like to draw your attention to the attached clinical prioritisation tool developed in collaboration with Optometry Wales, the Welsh Optometric Committee and NHS Wales Optometric Advisers.

The prioritisation and scheduling of patients for treatment as services resume, should consider the clinical needs and presenting symptoms relative to the risk of sight loss and harm to the patient above all else.

The clinical prioritisation document provides a toolkit to enable optometrists and dispensing opticians to consider how they manage the process practically and safely.

Please ensure you remain up to date with the latest guidance from the professional bodies, including the recently updated guidance from the College of Optometrists and Royal College of Ophthalmologists regarding the use of non-contact tonometry in optometry practice: <https://www.college-optometrists.org/the-college/media-hub/news-listing/non-contact-tonometry-covid-19.html>.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to say, that during the past three months, we have been living and working through the peak of a global pandemic. Rising to the challenges of lockdown, optometrists and dispensing opticians in Wales have made significant changes to service delivery to continue to safely treat NHS patients.  In collaboration, all stakeholders have worked hard to support practices and clinicians to make these changes, whilst continuing to deliver eye health care effectively. This collaboration and pace of change would not have been considered possible at the start of the year.  I am extremely grateful to the profession in Wales, your professionalism throughout has been exemplary.

I will ensure this collaboration continues as we work through the detail of contract reform and future work.

Yours sincerely,

**David O’Sullivan**

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