

Directorate for Primary Care

Dentistry, Optometry and Community Hearing
Division



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Dear Colleague

Primary Care Optometry: Portable Slit Lamp Grant Funding

Summary

1. This letter advises of time-limited grant funding being made available by the Scottish Government to support community optometry practices in possessing a portable slit lamp for use in the provision of General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) in domiciliary settings (i.e. the place where a patient normally resides). This grant is being paid under [section 1A](#) of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978.
2. It also sets out the eligibility criteria for claiming the grant.

Action

3. Health Boards are asked to immediately copy and issue the Memorandum to this letter to all:
 - optometrists, ophthalmic medical practitioners and body corporates on their Ophthalmic Lists, for whom they are the Host Health Board;
 - community optometry practices in their Health Board area.
4. NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) should ensure it is familiar with the Memorandum to this letter, and in particular the requirement to have the necessary arrangements in place to manage the administration and payment of the portable slit lamp grant to eligible community optometry practices.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Ferris

Deputy Director
Dentistry, Optometry and Community Hearing Division

11 March 2025

Addresses

For action
Chief Executives,
Health Boards

Chief Executive,
NSS

For information

Health Board Optometric
Advisers

Enquiries to:

Any queries about this
Memorandum that relate:

- Prior to submission of a grant claim form to NSS, should be emailed to the Scottish Government at: eyecare@gov.scot;
- After submission of a grant claim form to NSS, should be emailed to NSS at: nss.psdgospslg@nhs.scot.

**MEMORANDUM TO NHS:
PCA(O)2025(01)**

Summary

1. This Memorandum advises on the following:
 - Time-limited grant funding being made available by the Scottish Government to support community optometry practices in possessing a portable slit lamp for use in the provision of General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) in domiciliary settings (i.e. the place where a patient normally resides). This grant is being paid under [section 1A](#) of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978.
 - The eligibility criteria for claiming the grant.
2. Where this Memorandum has been received by an optometry practice via their NHS email account, it should be shared with all relevant practice staff.
3. References to the “Statement” mean the Statement of GOS Remuneration and CPD allowances which is available in its latest form on the [Eyes](#) website.

Background

4. It is the Scottish Government’s intention to amend Appendix E of the Statement in due course such that possessing a portable slit lamp which meets the following **minimum** standards will be required in order to provide GOS in a domiciliary setting in Scotland:
 - 10x magnification;
 - White and cobalt blue light;
 - An adjustable slit width;
 - Built-in illumination.
5. A portable slit lamp enhances the quality of the GOS eye examination provided for patients in a domiciliary setting and practitioners will benefit from the use of this equipment when assessing the anterior eye.

Portable Slit Lamp Grant

6. To support GOS providers in complying with this future requirement, the Scottish Government is making grant funding available on a time-limited basis where the qualifying criteria set out in paragraph 10 are met, up to a maximum of £5,000 for each portable slit lamp. The value of the grant will be the actual amount paid (excluding VAT), supported by relevant receipted invoices.
7. There are currently no plans to repeat this grant funding process in future.

8. This grant funding is available to:

- practices premises that have additionally undertaken to provide GOS in a domiciliary setting (under [Regulation 6\(3\)\(e\)](#) of the National Health Services (General Ophthalmic Services) (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (“2006 Regulations”)), and that meet the qualifying criteria for the grant; and
- mobile practices that meet the qualifying criteria for the grant.

9. “Practice premises” and “mobile practices” take the meaning as defined under [Regulation 2](#) of the 2006 Regulations.

Qualifying Criteria for Portable Slit Lamp Grant

10. The qualifying criteria for the grant (all of which must be met) are as follows:

- A. The portable slit lamp in respect of which a grant claim is made must meet the minimum standards set out under paragraph 4.
- B. The portable slit lamp in respect of which a grant claim is made must have been ordered between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025 inclusive. This means that practices that have already invested in purchasing this equipment, and meet the qualifying criteria, have the opportunity to be reimbursed some or all of this financial cost up to a maximum of £5,000 for each portable slit lamp (excluding VAT).
- C. The portable slit lamp in respect of which a grant claim is made must be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer’s guidelines. The cost of such maintenance is not included within the portable slit lamp grant.
- D. Either:
 - i. The practice premises or mobile practice making the claim must have provided at least one GOS eye examination in a domiciliary setting within the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 inclusive, and commit to continuing to provide GOS eye examinations in a domiciliary setting until at least 31 March 2026.

or

- ii. Practice premises or mobile practices that have not provided at least one GOS eye examination in a domiciliary setting within the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 inclusive, but commit to providing GOS eye examinations in a domiciliary setting until at least 31 March 2026, may claim as long as the rest of the qualifying criteria are met. Where this is the case and the applicant is a practice premises, it must notify the relevant Health Board (in accordance with [Regulation 7\(2\)\(a\)](#) of the 2006 Regulations) that the practice premises is undertaking to provide GOS

in a domiciliary setting, within seven days of submitting the grant claim form to NHS National Services Scotland (NSS). The Health Board will then update the information held about the practice premises on the National Primary Care Clinician Database (NPCCD) system that Health Boards use to maintain their Ophthalmic List. This will support the expansion of GOS provision in domiciliary settings. Contact details for each Health Board can be found on the [Eyes](#) website.

- E. Each practice premises can only submit a claim for one portable slit lamp. For mobile practices, the number of claims permitted must not exceed the number of mobile testing kits owned by the business.
- F. Grant claims will only be paid in respect of:
 - i. practice premises that have an active Payment Location Code (PLC) in the NPCCD system that Health Boards use to maintain their Ophthalmic List, on or after the date this Memorandum is issued.
 - ii. mobile practices where the owning business has at least one active PLC in NPCCD, on or after the date this Memorandum is issued.

Process for Making a Grant Claim

11. The portable slit lamp grant claim forms (one for practice premises, one for mobile practices) can be accessed on the [Eyes](#) website.
12. Applicants must submit the relevant completed grant claim form from a personal NHS email account to NSS at nss.psdgospslg@nhs.scot with 'Portable Slit Lamp Grant' in the subject field **by Monday 31 March 2025**, and in addition comply with either of the following in full before any grant payment will be made:
 - i. For practices in possession of the portable slit lamp equipment at the point of submitting the grant claim form, the applicant must also submit to NSS (with the claim form) a relevant receipted invoice and serial number for each equipment.
 - ii. For practices not in possession of the portable slit lamp equipment at the point of submitting the grant claim form, the applicant must also submit (with the claim form) satisfactory evidence of having ordered the equipment. Once the practice has taken possession of the portable slit lamp equipment, the applicant must additionally submit to NSS relevant receipted invoice(s) and serial number(s) for the equipment.
13. The claim form must be completed and signed by the practice owner or a person who is authorised to sign on their behalf.
14. Where NSS is satisfied that a claim it receives meets both the qualifying criteria set out in paragraph 10 and complies with the process set out in paragraph 12, it will notify the applicant accordingly and provide an indication of when payment is

likely to be made. This will be determined by NSS and may be either as part of the practice's monthly GOS schedule payment, or by a standalone BACS payment.

15. The relevant grant amount will be paid to the bank account associated on NSS systems with the PLC stated on the grant claim form.

Provision of Data to Health Boards

16. Following the completion of portable slit lamp grant payments, NSS will provide to Health Boards a report detailing the practices to whom a grant has been paid and the relevant equipment serial number(s). This information is intended to assist Boards with the integration of this equipment into their practice inspection programmes.

Payment Verification and Recoveries

17. Applicants must ensure that the information entered on the grant claim form is accurate and valid as this payment will be subject to payment verification.
18. Where a grant is paid, and it is subsequently discovered that the qualifying criteria have not been met, the whole grant will be recovered by NSS from other payments the relevant practice receives.

Enquiries

19. Any queries about this Memorandum that relate:

- Prior to submission of a grant claim form to NSS, should be emailed to the Scottish Government at: eyecare@gov.scot;
- After submission of a grant claim form to NSS, should be emailed to NSS at: nss.psdgospslg@nhs.scot.

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