

Coverage: Northern Ireland

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Geographical area: Local Government Districts

Theme: Health and Care

Annual Health Service Ophthalmic Statistics in Northern Ireland (2012/13)

Introduction

The Family Practitioner Services (FPS) Ophthalmic Services are responsible for the payment of primary care ophthalmic practitioners, and the maintenance of the statutory Ophthalmic List.

This bulletin presents statistics on Health Service ophthalmic activity recorded by FPS. Data includes the number and amount paid for sight tests, vouchers and repairs carried out in Northern Ireland in 2012/13 as well as time series data from 2005/06 where available.

In April 1989, free sight tests for the whole population of the UK were abolished. The Health Service does however provide a free eye sight test if:

- You are under 16 years of age;
- You are 16, 17 or 18 years of age and in full time education;
- You are 60 years of age or over;
- You are a diagnosed diabetic or you suffer from diabetes mellitus;
- You have diagnosed glaucoma;
- You are aged 40 years old or over and have been advised that you are at risk of glaucoma or a member of your immediate family (parent, brother, daughter, son or daughter) has diagnosed glaucoma;
- You are registered blind or partially sighted;
- You require complex lenses;
- You or your partner are in receipt of Income Support, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance or Income-based Employment Support Allowance;
- You or your partner are in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit;
- You are named on a valid NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate;
- You are named on a valid HS Charges certificate (HC2); or
- You are named on a valid HS Charges certificate (HC3) which may entitle you to partial assistance.

You are entitled to Health Service vouchers towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses if:

- You are under 16 years of age;
- You are 16,17 or 18 years of age and in full time education;
- You have been prescribed complex lenses;
- You or your partner are in receipt of Income Support, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance or Income-based Employment Support Allowance;
- You or your partner are in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit;
- You are named on a valid NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate;
- You are named on a valid HS Charges certificate (HC2); or
- You are named on a valid HS Charges certificate (HC3) which may offer partial assistance.

You are entitled to a repair or replacement of glasses or contact lenses if you:

- are under 16;
- if you are 16 or over you may be entitled to a voucher towards the cost of repair or replacement if the Business Services Organisation (BSO) agrees that:
- The loss or damage was due to illness; and
- you can't get any help through a warranty, insurance or after sales service; and
- you would be entitled to an HS voucher for glasses or contact lenses (see above).

Summary of results

- There were 643 ophthalmic practitioners on the ophthalmic list in Northern Ireland in April 2013. This is an increase of 23 (3.7%) since April 2012;
- There were 258 ophthalmic premises in April 2013, with the majority (70) in the Northern Local Commissioning Group (LCG);
- In 2012/13, there were 437,700 Health Service sight tests in Northern Ireland, an increase of 3,300 (0.8%) on the previous year. This equates to 22,912 sight tests per 100,000 population;
- 123,000 (28.1%) Health Service sight tests were for patients aged 60 to 74 years;
- There were 203,600 Health Service Optical vouchers processed in Northern Ireland in 2012/13, an increase of 5,300 (2.7%) on the previous year. There were 10,659 vouchers processed per 100,000 population;
- There were 30,700 Health Service repairs or replacements carried out in 2012/13, an increase of 900 (3.1%) on the previous year; and
- In total almost £20.8 million was paid for Health Service optical work in 2012/13.

Ophthalmic Practitioners

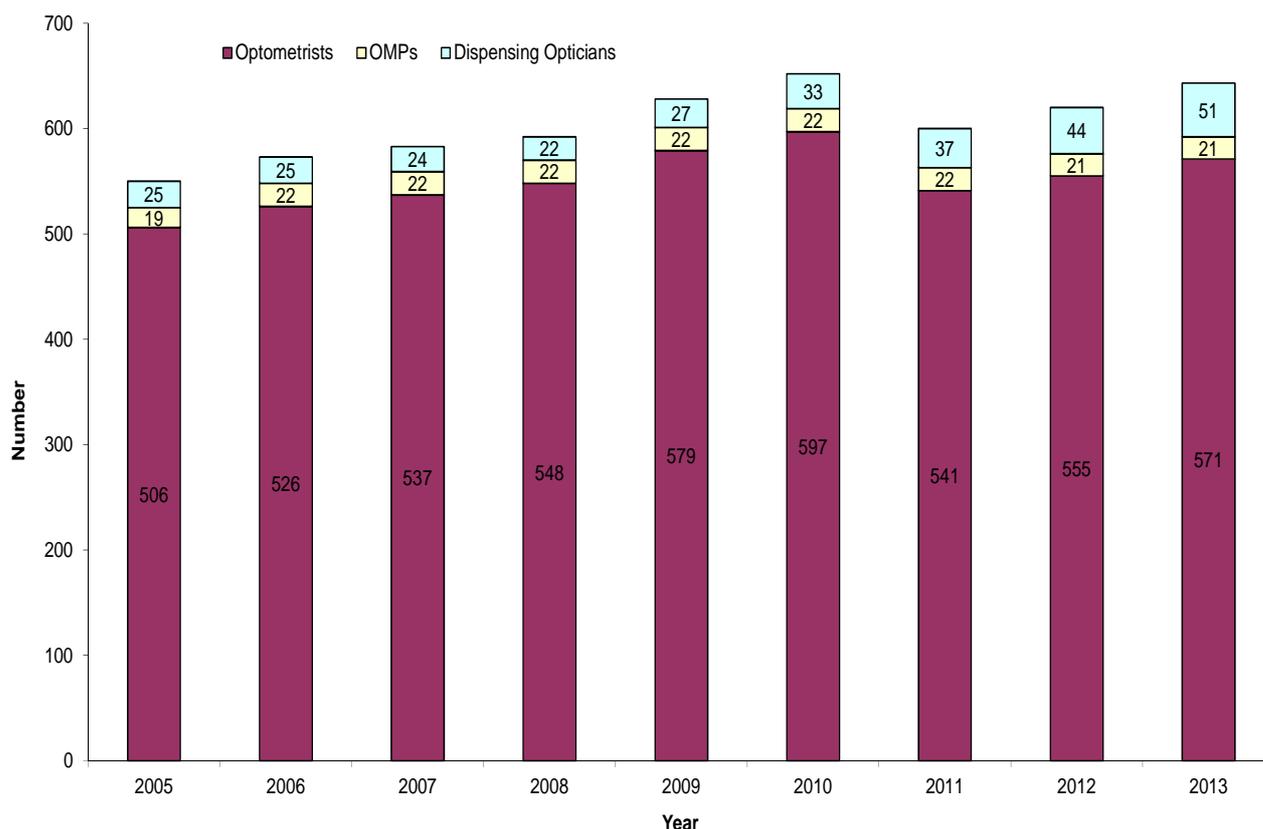
This report shows the number of ophthalmic practitioners (Optometrists, Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners and Dispensing Opticians)* who were authorised, in Northern Ireland, to carry out Health Service funded sight tests as at 1st April each year.

Figure 1 and Table 1 and show that there were 643 ophthalmic practitioners in 2013. 571 (88.8%) were Optometrists, 21 (3.3%) were Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners (OMPs) and 51 were Dispensing Opticians (7.9%).

Over the last nine years, since 2005, the total number of practitioners have increased by 93 (16.9%) from 550 to 643. The number of ophthalmic practitioners has increased more rapidly than the population in Northern Ireland, in 2005 there were 30.6 practitioners per 100,000 population and by 2013 this had increased to 33.6 per 100,000 population.

A review of the ophthalmic practitioners list was carried out during 2010 and anyone who had not carried out any health service work for some time was removed from the list so the number of Optometrists decreased between 2010 and 2011 due to this exercise.

Figure 1: Number of Practitioners as at 1st April, Northern Ireland (2005 to 2013)



* See Annex A for explanation of these roles.

Table 1: Number of Practitioners and Rate per 100,000 Population¹ as at 1st April, Northern Ireland (2005 to 2013)

Period	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011 ²	2012	2013
Optometrists	506	526	537	548	579	597	541	555	571
OMPs	19	22	22	22	22	22	22	21	21
Dispensing Opticians	25	25	24	22	27	33	37	44	51
Total	550	573	583	592	628	652	600	620	643
Rate per 100,000 Population¹									
Optometrists	28.2	29.2	29.5	29.8	31.2	31.9	28.6	29.2	29.8
OMPs	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.1
Dispensing Opticians	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.5	1.8	2.0	2.3	2.7
Total	30.6	31.8	32.0	32.2	33.8	34.8	31.7	32.6	33.6

¹Rates are calculated using the population registered in Northern Ireland for Health Service treatments at April each year.

²A review of the ophthalmic practitioners list was carried out during 2010 and anyone who had not carried out any health service work for some time was removed from the list.

Ophthalmic Premises

There were 258 ophthalmic premises in Northern Ireland in 2013 that can perform Health Service sight tests, the number had been gradually increasing over the last five years but 2013 saw the first decrease in premises numbers. The majority of ophthalmic premises are in the Northern Local Commissioning Group (LCG). Table 2 shows the distribution of premises across Northern Ireland.

Table 2: Number of Ophthalmic Premises as at 1st April by Local Commissioning Group (2009 to 2013)

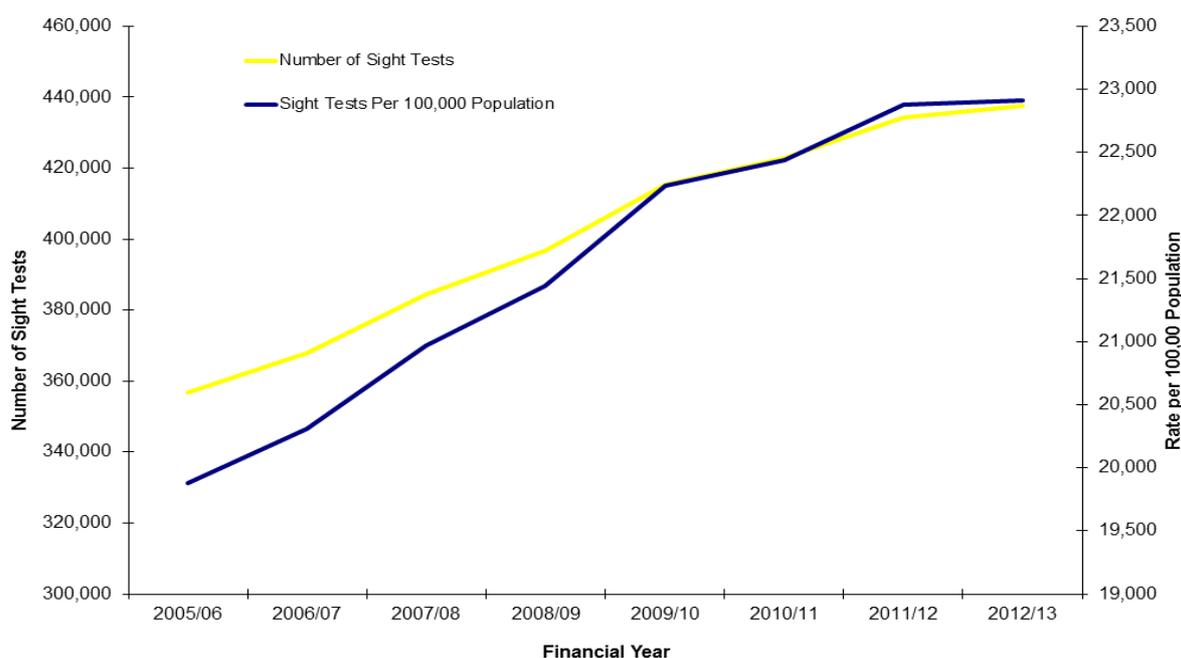
Local Commissioning Group	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Belfast	57	58	57	59	57
Northern	68	68	69	68	70
South Eastern	47	49	49	49	46
Southern	47	46	46	46	45
Western	41	42	43	43	40
Northern Ireland	260	263	264	265	258

Health Service Sight Tests

The information in this report relates to Health Service sight tests only and excludes private sight tests. Information on the number of private sight tests is not routinely collected.

The number of sight tests has been increasing year on year. In 2005/06 there were 356,918 tests and by 2012/13 this had increased by 22.6% to 437,701 tests. Figure 2 and Table 3 show the number of sight tests each year since 2005/06 and the rate of tests per 100,000 population.

Figure 2: Number and Rate¹ per 100,000 Population of Health Service Sight Tests in Northern Ireland (2005/06 to 2012/13) – non-zero y-axes



¹Rates are calculated using the population registered in Northern Ireland for Health Service treatments at October - the mid-point for each financial year.

Table 3: Number of Health Service Sight Tests, rate per 100,000 population and percentage of population receiving Health Service Sight Tests (2005/06 to 2012/13)

Year	Number of Health Service Sight Tests	Health Service Population Estimates ¹	Health Service Sight Tests per 100,000 Population
2005/06	356,918	1,795,000	19,880
2006/07	367,875	1,811,000	20,312
2007/08	384,520	1,834,000	20,967
2008/09	396,633	1,850,000	21,439
2009/10	415,491	1,869,000	22,234
2010/11	422,830	1,885,000	22,434
2011/12	434,399	1,899,000	22,879
2012/13	437,701	1,910,000	22,912

¹Rates are calculated using the population registered in Northern Ireland for Health Service treatments at October - the mid-point for each financial year.

UK Comparisons

There were over 15 million Health Service eye tests in the UK from April 2012 to March 2013. Table 4 shows the number of Health Service sight tests in each of the UK countries and the rate of eye tests per 100,000 people. In Scotland, where Health Service sight tests are available for free to the whole population, there are 30,017 Health Service sight tests per 100,000 people while Northern Ireland saw the lowest level of eye tests per 100,000 people at 22,912 tests.

Table 4: Number of Health Service Sight Tests and Rate per 100,000 population in UK Countries (2012/13)

Country	Health Service Sight Tests	Tests per 100,000 Population ²
England	12,339,253	23,067
Scotland ¹	1,594,996	30,017
Wales	767,996	24,983
Northern Ireland	437,701	22,912
United Kingdom	15,139,946	23,733

¹Excludes supplementary eye examinations.

² Calculated using the 2012 Mid-Year Population Estimates for England, Scotland and Wales (published 8th August 2013) and using the population registered in Northern Ireland for Health Service treatments at October 2012.

Health Service Sight Test Payments

The payment made for delivering Health Service sight tests has increased each year in line with rises in the population and incremental costs. In 2005/06 the payment was just over £6.5 million which worked out at £18.34 a test; by 2012/13 this had increased by 38.4% to just over £9 million which worked out at £20.70 a test. Table 5 shows the increases in costs since 2005/06.

Table 5: Payment for delivering Health Service Sight Tests (2005/06 to 2012/13)

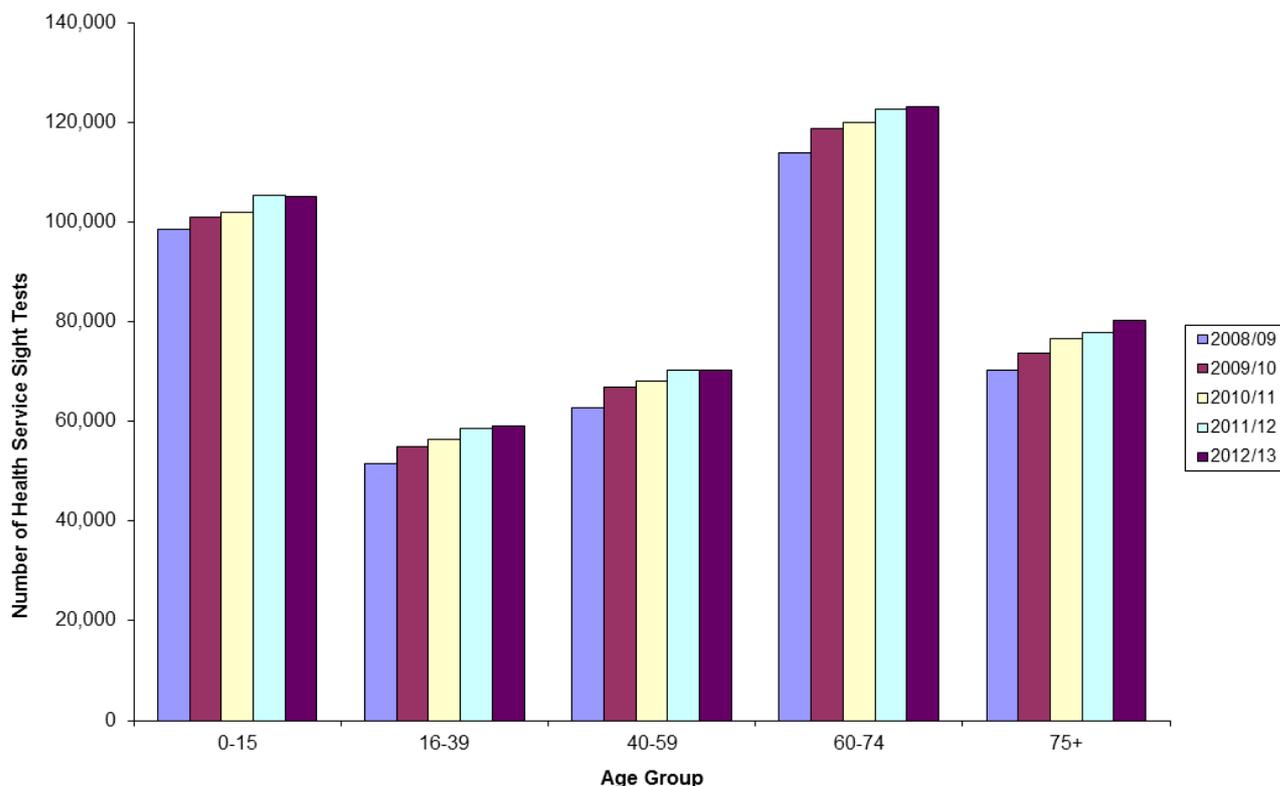
Year	Number of Health Service Sight Tests	Payment for Health Service Sight Tests (000s) ^{1,2}	Payment per Test
2005/06	356,918	£6,545	£18.34
2006/07	367,875	£6,796	£18.47
2007/08	384,520	£7,265	£18.89
2008/09	396,633	£7,663	£19.32
2009/10	415,491	£8,350	£20.10
2010/11	422,830	£8,734	£20.66
2011/12	434,399	£8,992	£20.70
2012/13	437,701	£9,060	£20.70

¹Excludes additional fee paid for domiciliary visits, see table 9 for domiciliary fees.

²Data includes only payments directly related to claims for sight tests and will not include any post payment adjustments.

In 2012/13, over a quarter (28.1%) of Health Service sight tests were carried out on 60-74 year olds, followed by 24.0% on those aged 15 and under, while 18.3% of tests were for those aged 75 and over. The smallest percentage of test was carried out on 16-39 year olds (13.5%). Figure 3 shows the age distribution of sight tests over the last 5 years. Each age group has seen an increase in the number of sight tests while the percentage of sight test has remained stable across each group.

Figure 3: Number of Health Service Sight Tests in Northern Ireland by age group (2008/09 to 2012/13)



Looking at the number of Health Service sight tests per 1,000 population by age, the older age groups attend sight tests much more than the younger age groups. For every 1,000 people aged 75+ in the population on average 644 had a Health Service sight test each year over the last five years compared to just 268 per 1,000 population for those aged under 16 years. See Table 6 for details.

Table 6: Health Service Sight Tests per 1,000 population by age group (2008/09 to 2012/13)

Year	Health Service Sight Tests per 1,000 Population ¹					
	0-15	16-39	40-59	60-74	75+	All Ages
2008/09	260	80	129	494	623	214
2009/10	266	85	135	505	643	222
2010/11	268	88	135	498	652	224
2011/12	275	91	137	500	648	229
2012/13	273	93	136	494	655	229

¹Rates are calculated using the population registered in Northern Ireland for Health Service treatments at October - the mid-point for each financial year.

Sight tests are only free on the Health Service for those who qualify for certain exemptions. It is important to note that someone may be entitled to a free sight test for multiple reasons, but the Optometrist will only check one box on the form for the exemption reason.

The most common exemption reason given in 2012/13 was age-related - children (aged under 16), those in full time education (aged 16-18) and those aged 60 and over accounted for 67.5% of all exemptions. Those with or at the risk of particular medical conditions (diabetes, glaucoma, registered partially sighted or blind or needing complex lenses) are entitled to a free sight test and this was identified as the reason for 3.9% of tests and those on various benefits which qualify for free sight tests made up 22.1% of exemptions.

For the remaining 6.5% of sight tests the recording system did not capture the exemption reason. This may be because the scanner did not pick up the reason from the form or because the exemption reason which entitles someone to free treatment changed and appropriate box was not available on the form at the time of the test. Table 7 shows the high level detailed exemption reasons and an additional table supplied with this report (Table 7a) give the breakdown in finer details.

Table 7: Percentage of Exemption Reasons¹ for Health Service Sight Test (2005/06 to 2012/13)

Year	Exemption Reason ¹			
	Age Related	Health Related	Benefits Related	Unknown
2005/06	73.3	5.9	20.9	-
2006/07	73.8	5.8	20.4	-
2007/08	75.3	5.7	19.0	-
2008/09	74.9	5.8	19.2	-
2009/10	70.6	5.7	23.2	0.5
2010/11	67.1	4.3	24.8	3.9
2011/12	67.8	3.9	22.1	6.3
2012/13	67.5	3.9	22.1	6.5

¹A person may be entitled to a free sight test for multiple reasons, but the Optometrist will only check one box on the form for the exemption reason

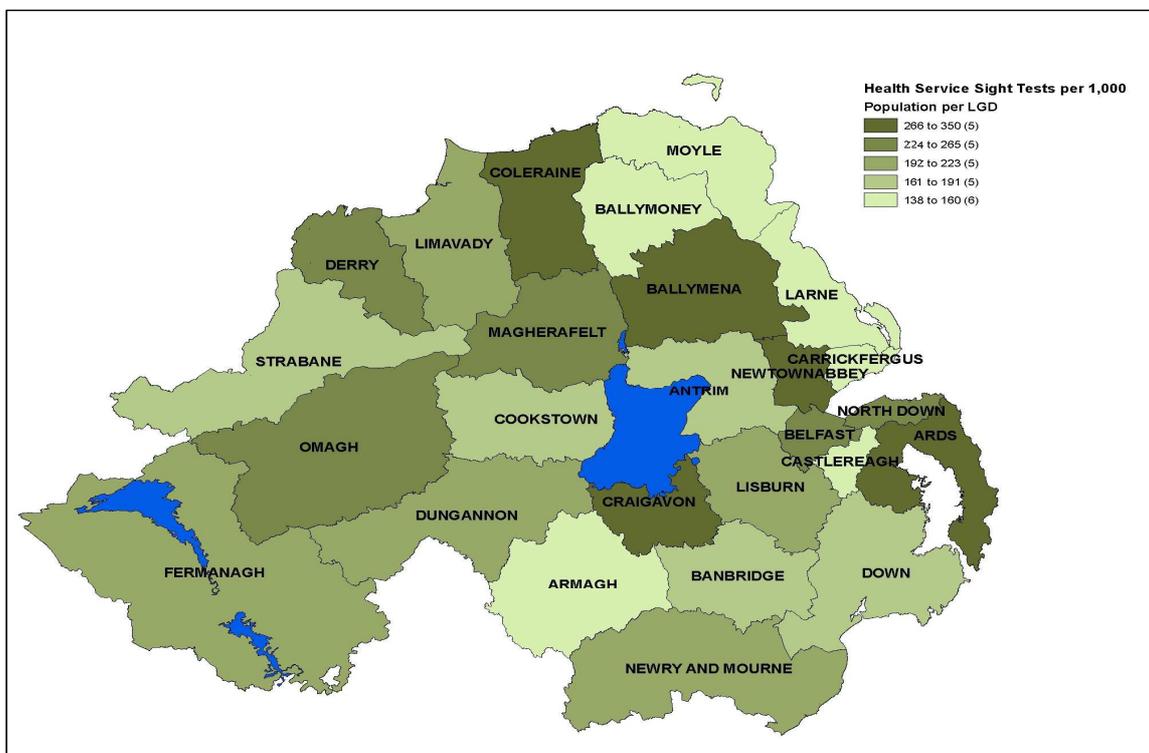
Around one quarter of all Health Service sight tests take place in an ophthalmic premises in the Northern Local Commissioning Group (LCG), while premises in the Western LCG have the lowest percentage of Health Service sight tests with around 17% each year. See Table 8.

Table 8: Health Service Sights Tests by Local Commissioning Group of Ophthalmic Premise (2010/11 to 2012/13)

Local Commissioning Group	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Belfast	80,992	82,183	82,767
Northern	108,895	110,633	113,133
South Eastern	83,603	85,651	83,263
Southern	79,354	83,266	85,587
Western	69,986	72,666	72,951
Northern Ireland	422,830	434,399	437,701

Throughout Northern Ireland 229 Health Service sight tests were carried out per 1,000 population during 2012/13. The highest rate was in Ballymena Local Government District (LGD) premises at 350 tests per 1,000 population and the lowest rate was in Armagh LGD premises at 138 tests per 1,000 population. Map 1 shows the rates in each LGD in Northern Ireland.

Map 1: Number of Health Service Sight Tests per 1,000 population¹ by Local Government District of Ophthalmic Premise (2012/13)



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¹Rates are calculated using the population registered in Northern Ireland for Health Service treatments at October - the mid-point for each financial year.

A number of interesting things are collected at the time of a Health Service sight test; however detailed information is only available for the last three financial years. A summary of the additional information collected between 2011/12 and 2012/13 is given below.

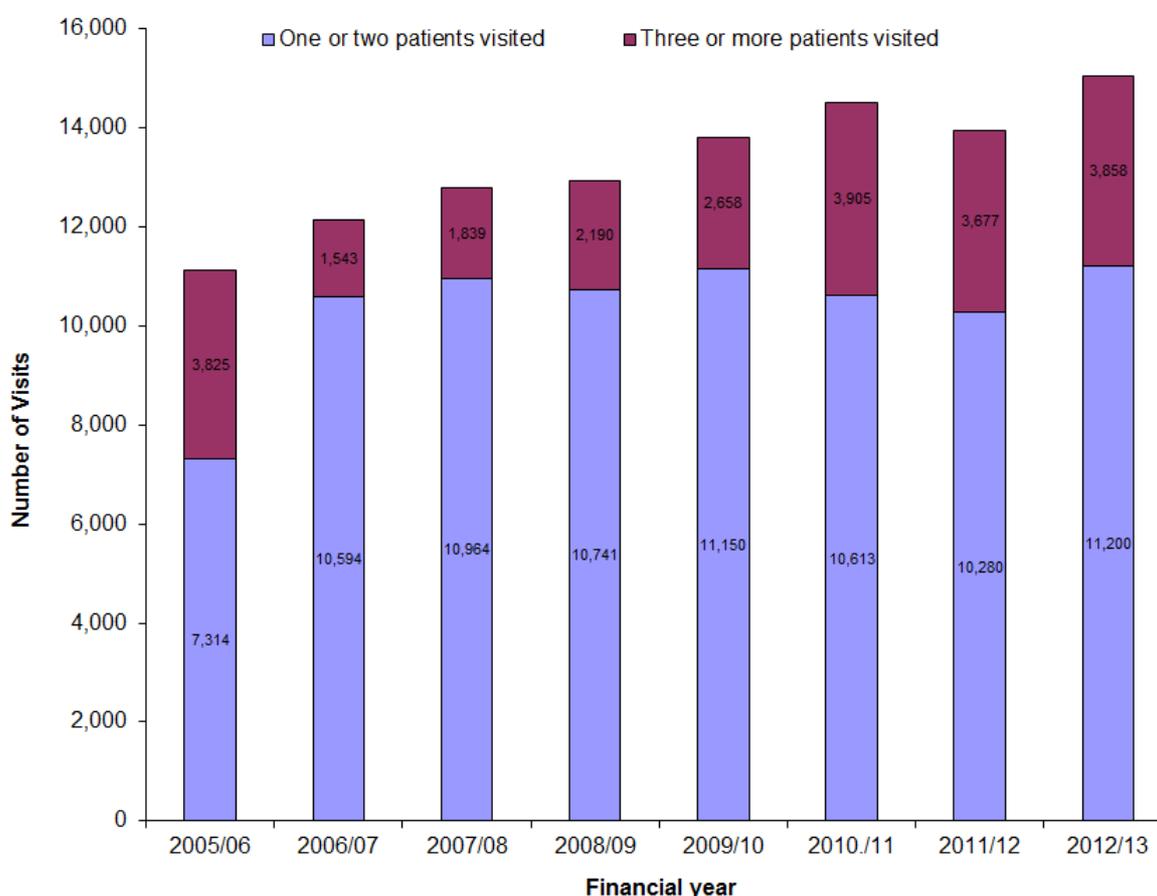
- In 2011/12, 305,264 (70.3%) had an eye prescription change and in 2012/13 the number increased to 306,827 (70.1%) people;
- In 2011/12, 10,947 (2.5%) were referred on to a GP and in 2012/13 this increased to 11,724 (2.7%) people;
- In 2011/12, 19,014 (4.4%) were advised to get an early retest and in 2012/13 this increased to 26,200 (6.0%) people;
- In 2011/12, 2,263 (0.5%) were complex lens wearers and in 2012/13 this increased to 3,171 (0.7%) people;
- In 2011/12, 1,081 (0.2%) were hospital in-patients and in 2012/13 this increased to 1,868 (0.4%) people; and
- In 2011/12, 1,693 (0.4%) were registered as partially sighted or blind and in 2012/13 this decreased to 1,253 (0.3%) people.

Domiciliary Visits

Those who qualify for a Health Service sight test but are unable to leave home unaccompanied are entitled to a free sight test in their own home. This group usually include older and / or people with disabilities. These patients can receive a test using portable versions of optical equipment. This domiciliary service is provided both by high street optometrists (or OMPs) and mobile service providers.

The number of domiciliary visits has been slowly increasing but is subject to fluctuations each year. In 2005/06, 11,139 visits were made and by 2012/13 this had increased by 35% to 15,058 visits. When a visit takes place the number of patients tested at each address must be recorded. In most cases only one or two patients are seen at each address. Figure 4 shows the number of visit over the last eight years.

Figure 4: Domiciliary Visits (2005/06 to 2012/13)



There was a significant change in the number of patients seen at any one address after 2005 when the statutory regulations in relation to mobile eye services changed.

Table 9 details the money paid out for domiciliary visits at both the higher (first one or two patients visited) and lower rates (third or more patient visited).

Table 9: Domiciliary Sight Test Payments^{1,2} (2005/06 to 2012/13)

Year	Higher Rate Payments (1/2 Patients Visited) (000s)	Lower Rate Payments (3+ Patients Visited) (000s)	Total Payments (000s)
2005/06	£236	£31	£267
2006/07	£345	£13	£357
2007/08	£365	£15	£380
2008/09	£365	£19	£384
2009/10	£394	£24	£418
2010/11	£386	£36	£422
2011/12	£375	£34	£408
2012/13	£408	£35	£444

¹Payments include domiciliary fees only and not sight test fees.

²Data includes only payments directly related to claims for sight tests and will not include any post payment adjustments.

Health Service Optical Vouchers

After a Health Service sight test is carried out the patient may be given a Health Service optical voucher which they can put towards buying glasses, having lenses fitted to their current frames or getting contact lenses. The value of the voucher will depend on the strength of their prescription: the more complex or stronger their prescription, the higher the value of the voucher that they will be entitled to. When a voucher is issued to the patient it must be used within a maximum of two years from the date of issue and it does not have to be used in the same place the sight test was carried out. In some cases a patient may be given more than one voucher, for example, some children may receive a voucher for a spare pair of glasses.

The data in this report relates to the number of patients who received voucher(s) that have since been used and processed. A voucher should only be submitted to FPS for processing after the glasses/contact lenses have been dispensed.

The number of patients receiving voucher(s) has been increasing year on year since 2005/06. In 2005/06, 171,038 patients received vouchers and by 2012/13 this had increased by 19.0% to 203,618 patients, the largest number recorded over the last eight years.

Figure 5 shows the number of vouchers processed along with the number of glasses/contact lenses dispensed each year since 2005/06. On average there are around 25,000 spare glasses/contact lenses dispensed year. Table 10 shows the number of vouchers per 100,000 population.

Figure 5: Number of Optical Vouchers Processed in Northern Ireland and Number of Glasses/Contact Lenses Dispensed (2005/06 to 2012/13) – non-zero y-axis

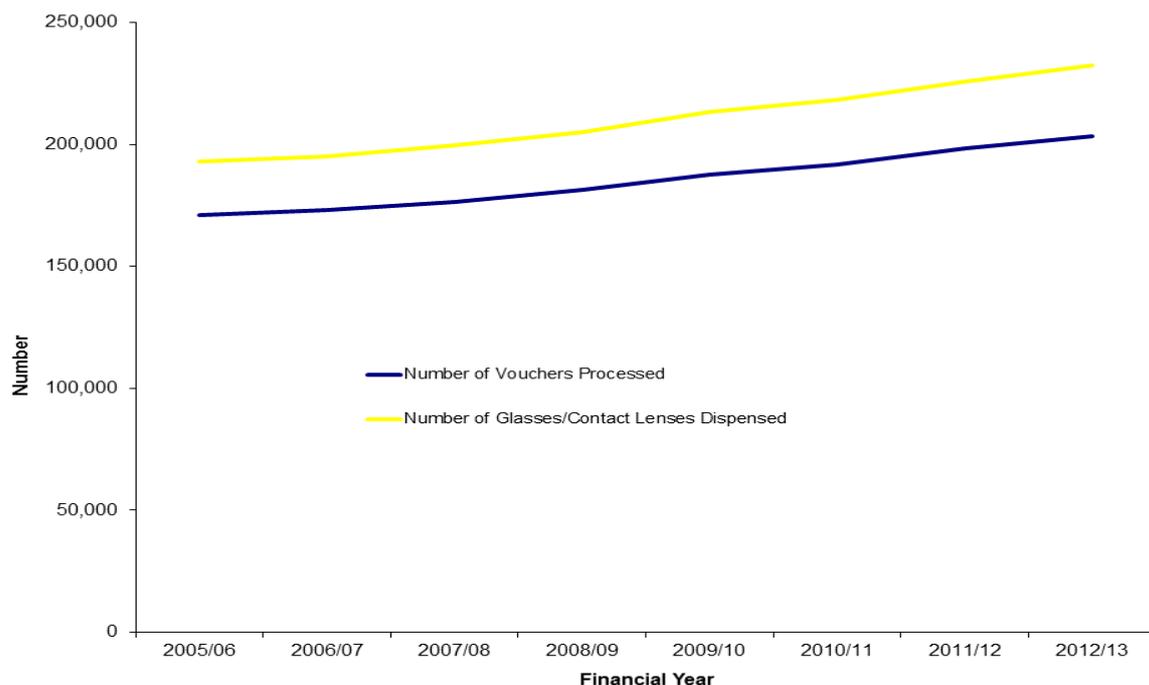


Table 10: Number of Health Service Optical Vouchers Processed and rate per 100,000 population (2005/06 to 2012/13)

Year	Number of Optical Vouchers Processed	Health Service Population Estimates ¹	Optical Vouchers per 100,000 Population
2005/06	171,038	1,795,000	9,527
2006/07	173,096	1,811,000	9,557
2007/08	176,557	1,834,000	9,627
2008/09	181,424	1,850,000	9,806
2009/10	187,700	1,869,000	10,044
2010/11	191,688	1,885,000	10,170
2011/12	198,285	1,899,000	10,443
2012/13	203,618	1,910,000	10,659

¹Rates are calculated using the population registered in Northern Ireland for Health Service treatments at October - the mid-point for each financial year.

Looking at the number of individual patients receiving vouchers which have been processed against the number of sight tests gives an indication of the prescribing rate in Northern Ireland – however it is possible that vouchers will not be processed in the same time period as the sight test because patients have up to 2 years to use the vouchers and some vouchers may never be processed at all.

Approximately just under half of all sight tests result in a prescription for a voucher(s) towards glasses/contact lenses. The prescribing rate had been gradually falling but has seen some increases in the last three years. Table 11 details the prescribing rate since 2005/06.

Table 11: Prescribing rates in Northern Ireland (2005/06 to 2012/13)

Year	Health Service Sight Tests	Vouchers	Prescribing Rate
2005/06	356,918	171,038	47.9%
2006/07	367,875	173,096	47.1%
2007/08	384,520	176,557	45.9%
2008/09	396,633	181,424	45.7%
2009/10	415,491	187,700	45.2%
2010/11	422,830	191,688	45.3%
2011/12	434,399	198,285	45.6%
2012/13	437,701	203,618	46.5%

Health Service Optical Voucher Payments

The payment for delivering Health Service optical vouchers has increased each year in line with rises in the population and incremental costs. In 2005/06 the payment made was almost £7.7 million which worked out at £44.83 per patient; by 2012/13 this had increased by 34.5% to £10.3 million which worked out at £50.63 per patient. Table 12 shows the increases in payments since 2005/06.

Table 12: Payment for delivering Health Service Optical Vouchers (2005/06 to 2012/13)

Year	Number of Vouchers Issued	Payment for Vouchers¹ (000s)	Average Voucher Payment
2005/06	171,038	£7,668	£44.83
2006/07	173,096	£7,937	£45.86
2007/08	176,557	£8,312	£47.08
2008/09	181,424	£8,754	£48.25
2009/10	187,700	£9,278	£49.43
2010/11	191,688	£9,508	£49.60
2011/12	198,285	£9,843	£49.64
2012/13	203,618	£10,310	£50.63

¹Data includes only payments directly related to claims for vouchers and will not include any post payment adjustments or point of dispensing fees.

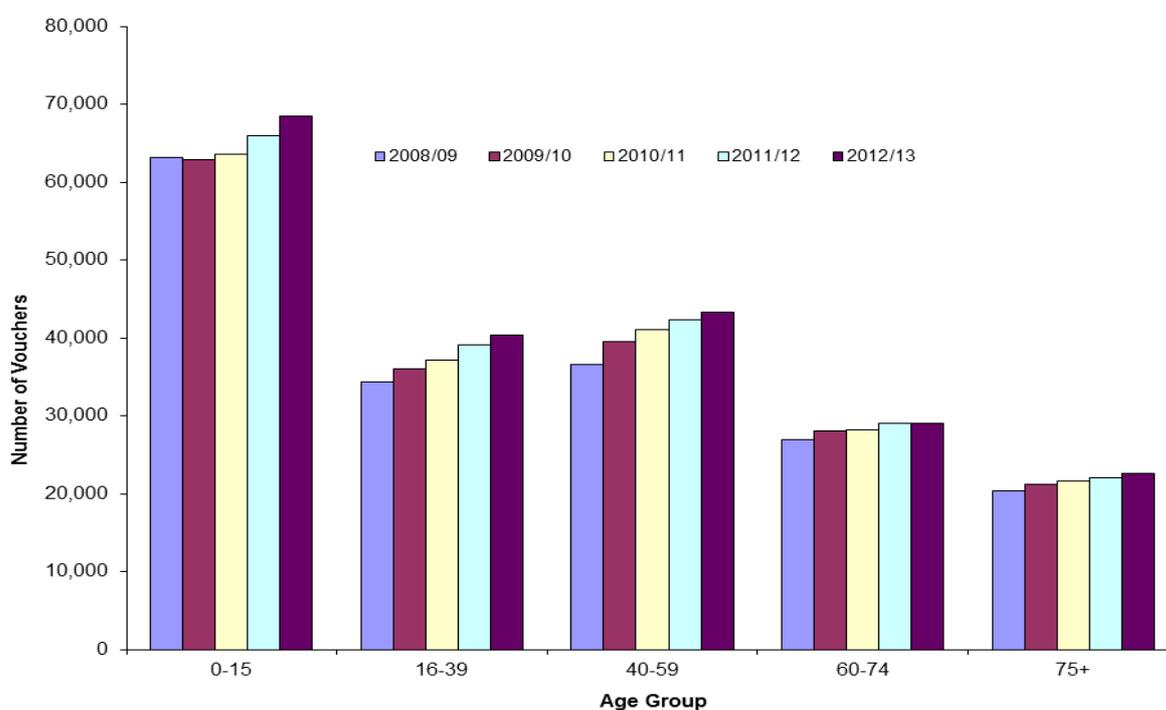
There are different types of vouchers given to eligible patients which they can use towards the cost of new lenses for their existing frames, glasses or contact lenses which will differ depending on the strength and type of lenses prescribed by the optometrist. Table 13 shows the different types of vouchers and the payment given for each voucher type in 2012/13. The most common voucher processed was a single vision type A. A full explanation of all ophthalmic codes is available in Annex B.

Table 13: Vouchers Processed by Type (2012/13)

Voucher Type	Lens Code [†]	First Glasses/Lenses	Additional Glasses/Lenses
Single Vision	A	143,308	22,659
	B	26,120	5,576
	C	879	347
	D	629	160
Bifocal	E	26,615	11
	F	5,232	1
	G	117	-
	H	97	-
Complex – Single		471	13
Complex – Bifocal		150	1
Total Glasses/Contact Lenses Dispensed		203,618	28,768
Prism		2,310	
Tint		2,635	
Small Glasses Supplement		698	

Around one third of all patients receiving Health Service Optical Vouchers are children aged 15 and under, while those aged 75 and over account for around 11% of all patients receiving vouchers that have been processed. Figure 6 shows the age distribution of patients receiving vouchers over the last 5 years. Each age group has seen an increase in the number of vouchers over the years.

Figure 6: Number of Health Service Optical Vouchers processed in Northern Ireland by age group (2008/09 to 2012/13)



[†] See Annex B for details.

As with sight tests, optical vouchers are only free on the Health Service for those who qualify for certain exemptions. It is important to note that someone may be entitled to a voucher for multiple reasons, but the Optometrist will only check one box on the form for the exemption reason.

The majority of vouchers processed over the last eight years are for those receiving benefits. It is also possible to get a voucher if you require complex lenses, which contribute to less than 1% of vouchers each year.

Over the last three years the percentage of vouchers given out where the exemption reason is unknown have been increasing, this may be because the scanner did not pick up the reason from the form or because the exemption reason which entitles someone to free treatment changed and appropriate box was not available on the form at the time of the test. Given the fall in the percentage of vouchers due for benefit related exemptions it is likely most of the unknown reasons are benefits exemptions. Table 14 shows the high level detailed exemption reasons and an additional table supplied with this report (Table 14a) give the breakdown in finer details.

Table 14: Percentage of Exemption Reasons¹ for Health Service Optical Vouchers (2005/06 to 2012/13)

Year	Exemption Reason ¹			
	Age Related	Complex Lenses	Benefits Related	Unknown
2005/06	41.2	0.3	58.5	-
2006/07	41.3	0.3	58.4	-
2007/08	41.6	0.3	58.1	-
2008/09	42.6	0.3	57.1	-
2009/10	41.7	0.3	58.0	0.0
2010/11	44.5	0.2	50.2	5.0
2011/12	45.6	0.2	46.8	7.4
2012/13	46.9	0.2	43.5	9.4

¹A person may be entitled to a free sight test for multiple reasons, but the Optometrist will only check one box on the form for the exemption reason

Just under a quarter of all vouchers processed were in premises in the Northern Local Commissioning Group (LCG), while the South Eastern LCG has the lowest percentage of vouchers with around 16% each year. See Table 15 for data for the last three years.

Table 15: Health Service Optical Vouchers by Local Commissioning Group (2010/11 to 2012/13)

Local Commissioning Group	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Belfast	37,008	38,371	39,276
Northern	45,634	46,553	49,179
South Eastern	31,159	32,452	31,901
Southern	39,988	42,372	43,582
Western	37,899	38,537	39,680
Northern Ireland	191,688	198,285	203,618

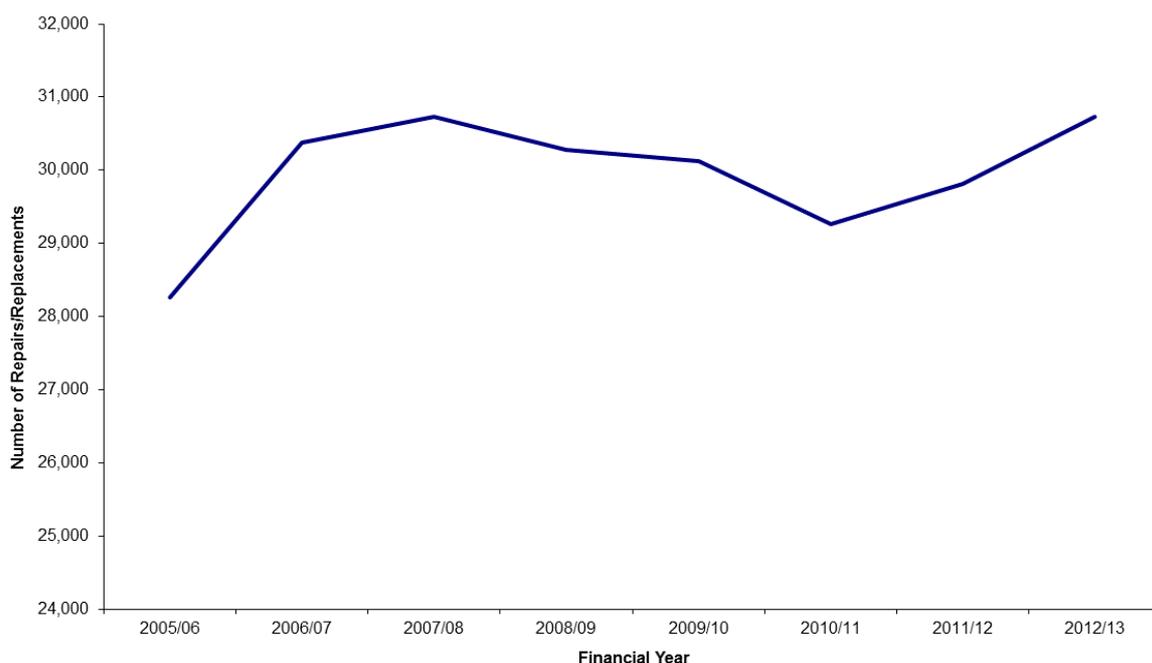
Health Service Vouchers for Repair or Replacement

It's up to the optometrist to determine whether a pair of glasses needs to be replaced as a result of fair wear and tear (in general, glasses are expected to last for about two years. However, this is not a statutory limit.)

A repair or replacement voucher should only be issued when there is no reason to believe that there has been a change of an eye prescription. Children under 16 are eligible for repairs or replacements in cases of loss or damage without prior approval by FPS. In line with the General Ophthalmic Services discretionary payments protocol adults (including students aged 16-18 years) glasses should only be repaired or replaced when FPS is satisfied that the breakage or loss was due to illness and in very exceptional circumstances of major hardship. FPS may also consider the replacement of lost, stolen or broken glasses, without which the patient's quality of life would be affected extremely adversely.

The number of repairs and replacements fluctuates year on year, but is generally around 30,000 per annum. Figure 7 shows the number of repairs/replacements each year since 2005/06.

Figure 7: Number of Health Service Optical Vouchers for Repairs or Replacements in Northern Ireland (2005/06 to 2012/13) – non-zero y-axis



Health Service Payments for Repair or Replacement

The payment for delivering Health Service repairs and replacements increased by £201,000 (25.8%) between 2005/06 and 2012/13, from £779,000 to £980,000. The average repair payment has been increasing each year from 2005/06 to 2008/09 at around £1 per repair per year, but in more recent years this have stabilised at around £31 per repair. Table 16 shows the payments for repairs and replacements since 2005/06.

Table 16: Payment for delivering Health Service Optical Repairs and Replacements (2005/06 to 2012/13)

Year	Number of Repairs / Replacements	Payment for Repairs / Replacements (000s) ¹	Payment Per Repairs / Replacements
2005/06	28,254	£779	£27.58
2006/07	30,376	£866	£28.52
2007/08	30,724	£918	£29.88
2008/09	30,276	£928	£30.66
2009/10	30,130	£923	£30.63
2010/11	29,269	£910	£31.10
2011/12	29,812	£929	£31.15
2012/13	30,733	£980	£31.88

¹Data includes only payments directly related to claims for repairs and will not include any post payment adjustments or point of dispensing fees.

Almost all repairs and replacements carried out each year are for children aged 15 and under – almost 98%, while age groups 16-39, 40-59 and 60-74 account for the least number of repairs and replacements - between 105 and 172 per age group over the last five years. Those aged 75 and over account for around 270 of the repairs and replacements per annum between 2008/09 and 2012/13. Table 17 shows the age distribution of patients getting repairs/replacements over the last five years.

Table 17: Number of Health Service Repairs/Replacements in Northern Ireland by age group (2008/09 to 2012/13)

Year	Age of people getting Repairs/Replacements						All Ages
	0-15	16-39	40-59	60-74	75+	Unknown	
2008/09	29,526	163	172	113	296	6	30,276
2009/10	29,398	155	136	124	283	34	30,130
2010/11	28,546	162	144	127	281	9	29,269
2011/12	29,185	146	143	105	229	4	29,812
2012/13	30,064	142	138	124	265	-	30,733

One quarter of all Health Service repairs or replacements take place in the Northern Local Commissioning Group (LCG), while the South Eastern LCG had the lowest percentage of Health Service repairs or replacements with 18% each year. See Table 18 for figures over the last three years.

Table 18: Health Service Optical Repairs and Replacements by Local Commissioning Group (2010/11 to 2012/13)

Local Commissioning Group	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Belfast	4,744	4,731	4,922
Northern	8,227	7,656	7,831
South Eastern	5,151	5,664	5,544
Southern	5,761	6,139	6,655
Western	5,386	5,622	5,781
Northern Ireland	29,269	29,812	30,733

Further information is also collected on the type of repair or replacement that is done in each case. The most common is either a complete replacement of the glasses followed by a repair or replacement of the whole frame where the lenses will be re-used. Table 19 shows the type of repair or replacement; please note that it is possible to have more than one type of repair per set of glasses, for example there may be a repair done to the front and the lens.

Table 19: Health Service Optical Repairs and Replacements by Type (2010/11 to 2012/13)

Type of Repair / Replacement¹	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Complete Replacement	17,915	18,223	18,715
Repair/Replace Frame	5,706	5,741	5,994
Repair/Replace Front	2,308	2,491	2,590
Repair/Replace Side	999	1,064	1,110
Repair/Replace Lens	2,580	2,585	2,555
Prism	32	42	31
Tint	78	90	81
Small Glasses Supplement	363	422	459

¹It is possible to have more than one repair per pair of glasses, for example, the front and lens may be repaired at the same time.

Health Service Ophthalmic Service Payments

Anyone entitled to a Health Service sight test and subsequent voucher(s) towards glasses/contact lenses costs will normally pay nothing towards the cost. However there are circumstances, such as those named on a valid HC3 certificate, where the patient is only entitled to partial help towards the costs of a sight test and/or voucher(s) and not the full amount. Over the last eight years patients entitled to partial help have contributed between £11,000 and £14,000 towards the total cost per annum. Table 20 shows the amount paid towards ophthalmic services and patient contributions from 2005/06.

Table 20: Payments and Patient Contributions for Health Service Ophthalmic Services (2005/06 to 2012/13)

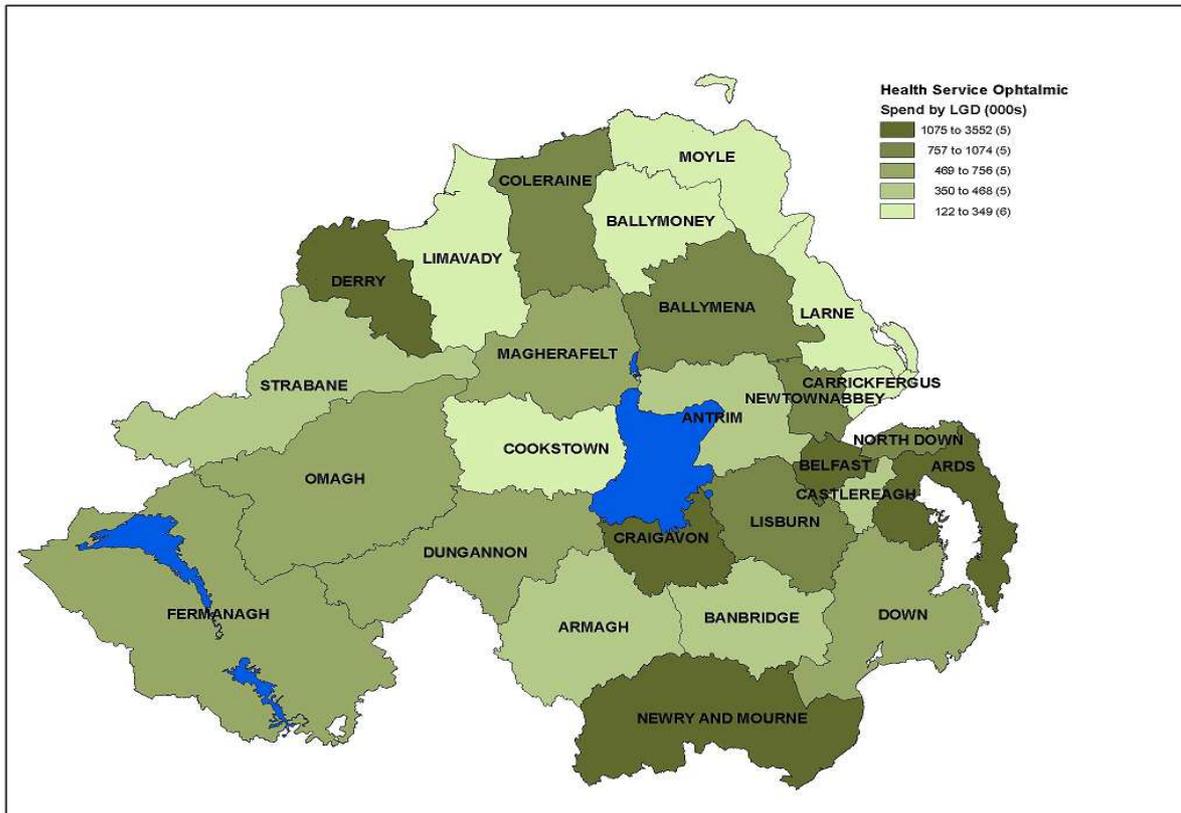
Year	Health Service Payments¹ (000s)	Patient Contributions (000s)	Total Amount (000s)
2005/06	£15,260	£14	£15,273
2006/07	£15,957	£14	£15,971
2007/08	£16,875	£11	£16,886
2008/09	£17,730	£12	£17,742
2009/10	£18,968	£12	£18,980
2010/11	£19,574	£11	£19,585
2011/12	£20,172	£13	£20,184
2012/13	£20,793	£13	£20,807

¹Data includes only payments directly related to claims for sight tests, vouchers and repairs and will not include any post payment adjustments, point of dispensing fees, levies or any training fees.

Once an optometrist has carried out a sight test, supplied a patient with glasses or contact lenses or replaced/repared an existing pair of glasses they must complete a claim form and send this to FPS for payment. The time periods for submission of payment claims are six months from the date of test for sight test claims and three months from the date of supply for vouchers and repair/replacement claims. Late claims will not be considered for payment other than in very exceptional circumstances.

In 2012/13, almost £20.8 million was paid to optometrists in Northern Ireland. Map 2 shows the split across Northern Ireland, the majority of money was paid to optometrists in Belfast Local Government District, followed by Craigavon and Derry Local Government Districts.

MAP 2: Total Ophthalmic Payments¹ by Local Government District (2012/13)



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¹Data includes only payments directly related to claims for sight tests, vouchers and repairs and will not include any post payment adjustments, point of dispensing fees, levies or any training fees.

Notes

1. Ophthalmic statistics are compiled from claims received and paid through the FPS Ophthalmic Payment System. The system records claims for Health Service sight tests, vouchers and repairs and automates the payment process. The system is designed to be a payment system rather than an information system and there may be anomalies in the data due to scanning errors. However where feasible quality checks have been carried out and information sought from the original paper form where possible.
2. All data in this report relates to the date the activity was processed and paid on the system rather than activity date. The time periods for submission of payment claims are six months from the date of test for sight test claims and three months from the date of supply for vouchers and repair/replacement claims.
3. Data includes only payments directly related to claims for sight tests, vouchers and repairs and will not include any post payment adjustments, point of dispensing fees, levies or any training fees.
4. Data excludes sight tests to prisoners in Northern Ireland.
5. Population estimates and rates are calculated using the population registered in Northern Ireland for Health Service treatments at October - the mid-point for each financial year unless otherwise stated.
6. All tables and charts provided in this report along with further more detailed tables are available in excel at:
<http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/1807.htm>
7. Activity data on sight tests paid for by the Health Service, optical vouchers and repairs are collected via a series of General Ophthalmic Service (GOS) forms which are used in the ophthalmic service payment process:
 - GOS(NI)ST – Health Service sight tests, including information on patient eligibility status.
 - GOS(NI)V – Health Service optical vouchers - including information on patient eligibility status.
 - GOS(NI)R – Health Service optical repair/replacement vouchers - including information on patient eligibility status and voucher type.
8. Data for other parts of the UK are available at:
England: [http://www.hscic.gov.uk/searchcatalogue?topics=1/Primary care services/Eye care services&sort=Most recent&size=10&page=1#top](http://www.hscic.gov.uk/searchcatalogue?topics=1/Primary%20care%20services/Eye%20care%20services&sort=Most%20recent&size=10&page=1#top)
Wales: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/health2012/120531/?lang=en>
Scotland: <http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Eye-Care/Publications/>

9. Further information on entitlement to Health Service tests, vouchers and repairs in Northern Ireland can be found at:
<http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/1780.htm>

10. Media enquiries about this press release should be directed to the DHSSPS press office on 028 9052 0505, or out of office hours contact the Duty Press Officer via pager number 076 9971 5440 and your call will be returned.

11. Further information on the statistics provided in this publication can be obtained from the BSO Information and Registration Unit:
Responsible Statistician: Mr Sandy Fitzpatrick
Telephone: 028 9053 2965
E-mail: info.bso@hscni.net

Annex A – Definition of Optometrists, Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners and Dispensing Opticians

Optometrist (previously known as ophthalmic opticians)

An optometrist is an eyecare professional who is qualified to examine all aspects of the health of the eyes and test the sight of a person in order to determine if an optical appliance is required. Optometrists are qualified to prescribe and dispense spectacles and contact lenses and to detect signs of eye disease or oculomotor balance problems during an eye examination.

Ophthalmic Medical Practitioner (OMPs)

An ophthalmic medical practitioner is a qualified doctor who specialises in eyes and eyecare. In addition to their medical skills in detecting eye abnormalities and disease they are qualified to test sight and prescribe optical appliances.

Dispensing Optician

A dispensing optician is qualified to dispense and fit spectacles and other optical appliances but not to test a person's sight or prescribe spectacles. They often work in association with optometrists and ophthalmic medical practitioners

Annex B – Voucher Codes

Letter code	VOUCHER LETTER CODES AND TYPE OF OPTICAL APPLIANCE	Value of Voucher (2012)
A	Glasses with single vision lenses of a spherical power of not more than 6 dioptres with a cylindrical power of not more than 2 dioptres	£37.10
B	Glasses with single vision lenses - (a) of a spherical power of more than 6 dioptres but less than 10 dioptres with a cylindrical power of not more than 6 dioptres; (b) of a spherical power of less than 10 dioptres with a cylindrical power of more than 2 dioptres but not more than 6 dioptres.	£56.40
C	Glasses with single vision lenses of a spherical power of 10 or more dioptres but not more than 14 dioptres with a cylindrical power of no more than 6 dioptres	£82.60
D	Glasses with single vision lenses - (a) of a spherical power of more than 14 dioptres with any cylindrical power; (b) of a cylindrical power of more than 6 dioptres with any spherical power	£186.50
E	Glasses with bifocal lenses of a spherical power of not more than 6 dioptres with a cylindrical power of not more than 2 dioptres	£64.20
F	Glasses with bifocal lenses - (a) of a spherical power of more than 6 dioptres but less than 10 dioptres with a cylindrical power of not more than 6 dioptres; (b) of a spherical power of less than 10 dioptres with a cylindrical power of more than 2 dioptres but not more than 6 dioptres.	£81.60
G	Glasses with bifocal lenses of a spherical power of 10 or more dioptres but not more than 14 dioptres with a cylindrical power of no more than 6 dioptres	£105.80
H	Glasses with prism-controlled bifocal lenses of any power or with bifocal lenses - (a) of a spherical power of more than 14 dioptres with any cylindrical power; (b) of a cylindrical power of more than 6 dioptres with any spherical power	£205.10