

Ophthalmic Services General Ophthalmic Services Memorandum

9 February 2018

**To all Optometrists and
Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners
providing General Ophthalmic Services**

Dear Practitioner

Asylum Seekers: Access to General Ophthalmic Services

This memorandum gives details regarding access to General Ophthalmic Services for Asylum Seekers.

1. Eligibility for GOS

The Health & Personal Social Services Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015, s.9. (b), makes provision for persons who “have made an application to be granted temporary protection, asylum or humanitarian protection under those rules”. These visitors are entitled to health services in Northern Ireland on the same basis as someone ‘ordinarily resident’ and will be issued with an HSCNI number on registering with a GP.

When the Home Office accepts an application for asylum, if the applicant is eligible for health assistance with Health Costs from the National Asylum Support Service they are issued with an **HC2 certificate**, which is usually valid for 6 months. This HC2 certificate provides entitlement to GOS, as is the case with other persons who have received a HC2 certificate. The HC2 certificate is re-issued periodically during the application process.

When an Asylum seeker presents to your practice requesting access to GOS you are advised to ask them to confirm their personal details and ask to see their HC2 certificate in order to evidence eligibility. As with any patient if they do not have their HC2 certificate with them you should explain the importance of the validity of the HC2 and that they are signing a GOS claim which contains a self-declaration stating they have a HC2 and are hence have financial assistance with charges. You should advise the patient that you can still proceed to provide GOS but that you will be stating that you have NOT seen evidence of the HC2 certificate and that the responsibility for the declaration of exemption sits with the patient. In this instance you should tick the “evidence not seen” box on the appropriate GOS claim form.

Providing Support to Health and Social Care

*Ophthalmic Services, 2 Franklin St, Belfast, BT2 8DQ
☎ 0300 555 0113*



It is important to note that as with any GOS provision:

- a. the patient must also have a valid Health and Care Number
- b. the patient may be entitled to a GOS (Sight Test) for other reasons (medical exemption e.g. diabetes etc.....).

**If you have any enquiries arising from this memorandum please contact the
Business Services Organisation.**

