



## Ophthalmic Services

### General Ophthalmic Services Memorandum

6 August 2013

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

Guidance on examining patients with specific learning difficulties, e.g. dyslexia, and the use of 'vision therapy' in treating these patients.

All children under 16 years old, and those under 19 in full time education, are eligible for General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) sight tests to investigate and manage conventional visual problems. However specific investigations and treatment associated with learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia, such as 'vision therapy' or colorimetry are currently outside the scope of GOS.

Early recall of children for reviews of 'vision therapy' in relation to their learning difficulty is not facilitated under GOS. The prescribing of 'tints' for learning difficulties cannot be provided under GOS as their benefit is not fully evidence based at present.

Practitioners are reminded of the current guidance on sight test intervals (please refer to MOS 275) and the requirement that appropriate clinical reasons must be given to justify an early retest. The recall period and the prescription issued, including prescribing of any tints or prisms must be based solely on the tests

***Providing Support to Health and Social Care***

*Ophthalmic Services, 2 Franklin St, Belfast, BT2 8DQ*

 (028) 9053 5526 ~ 9053 5527 ~ 9053 5528 ~ 9053 5529



undertaken during the GOS sight test and associated findings. The College of Optometrists encourages evidence based practice and optometrists are referred to paragraph A2.04 in College Guidance

*A2.04 Practitioners should consider the evidence for any treatments that they offer to patients and should advise patients if any treatment or course of action is not supported by scientific evidence or established practice. This will enable patients to give an informed choice as to whether they wish to undertake such treatment. Optometrists should also consider whether referral to a medical practitioner is in the patient's best interests either alongside such treatment, or as an alternative to it.*

*Where a practitioner is considering offering treatment that may not be considered as mainstream optometry, they should also consider offering the patient the more conventional options in the first instance. It is only in this way that the patient can make an informed choice based on an understanding of all of the options. The optometrist should explain to the patient why a particular treatment or procedure is being offered or recommended. It is the responsibility of the optometrist to ensure that – as well as for core activities - they are insured for any non-core activity that they intend to take.*

The diagnosis, treatment and management of learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, are multidisciplinary stretching across health and education sectors. The professional, scientific and examining body for optometry in the UK, The College of Optometrists offers specific guidance for Optometrists in relation to the prescribing of tinted lenses for dyslexia (Guideline E2 –see below). **However please note that this prescribing and vision therapy is currently undertaken outside the regulatory framework for General Ophthalmic Services.**

*E2. "When examining a patient with specific learning difficulties, the optometrist has a duty to carry out all tests necessary to satisfy him / herself of the appropriateness of any intervention prescribed, including the prescribing of tinted lenses. The optometrist has a duty to ensure that s/he has the necessary training. Patients with specific learning difficulties may have conventional visual or orthoptic problems that require treatment. Optometrists should ensure that these are addressed before any treatment such as vision therapy or the prescribing of tinted lenses is carried out. It is unethical to use tinted lenses or vision therapy before the patient has been thoroughly examined to exclude other visual problems".*

## **Providing Support to Health and Social Care**

Ophthalmic Services, 2 Franklin St, Belfast, BT2 8DQ

☎ (028) 9053 5526 ~ 9053 5527 ~ 9053 5528 ~ 9053 5529



***Providing Support to Health and Social Care***

*Ophthalmic Services, 2 Franklin St, Belfast, BT2 8DQ*

 *(028) 9053 5526 ~ 9053 5527 ~ 9053 5528 ~ 9053 5529*

