

Ophthalmic Practitioners – Revision Note

Following publication of the *Family Practitioner Services Statistics for Northern Ireland 2017/18*, a data quality issue came to light with regard to the Ophthalmic Practitioner figures. It transpired that the administrative process for adding the date on which practitioners were added/removed from the central register had not been applied consistently over time. This resulted in not all additions/removals from the register being picked up by the programme which collates the statistics.

A thorough data cleansing exercise was completed during the course of 2016 so the data are regarded as more robust from that point on and, as a result of uncovering the inconsistency in the process, additional validation work was subsequently undertaken to further improve the accuracy of the list for the two most recent years (i.e., 2017 and 2018). A large number of Optometrists were removed during the 2016 validation exercise but, unfortunately, actual leaving dates were not established and hence back series figures will be less accurate. For this reason, it has been decided, therefore, to remove the earlier years from the series. In addition, an annual validation exercise will be implemented in order to prevent this issue from reoccurring in future.

The impact of the revision, aside from removing the earlier year's data, has been to reduce the number of registered Optometrists from 698 to 606 in 2018 and 685 to 597 in 2017.

A validation exercise is similarly ongoing with regard to Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners (OMPs) and Dispensing Opticians (DOs) and their numbers have also reduced as a result - from 11 to 9 in each of the two most recent years for OMPs while DOs have reduced from 72 to 65 in 2018 and 69 to 63 in 2017. Note, however, that until this validation exercise is complete, these figures should be regarded as provisional.

Table 3.3 in Annex 3 of the detailed Annex Tables has been revised to reflect these changes, as has Fig 3.1, and associated commentary, in the main report along with the relevant bullet points under the 'Ophthalmic Services Key Points'. Revisions have also been made to the original press release and infographic.

18th December 2018