



THE COLLEGE OF
OPTOMETRISTS



Classification: Official

Publication approval reference: 001559

To:

27 November 2020

Northern Ireland Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians

Dear colleagues,

Supporting optical professions throughout the pandemic

COVID-19 has been a challenge for the entire UK population. For primary eyecare teams, we understand the impact of asking you to scale back care in March and we appreciate your sterling efforts to resume service provision to support patients. We know that you continue to work tirelessly to address the backlog of care, all driven by our profession's enduring common motivation – to deliver the very best care for our patients through this pandemic.

In partnership with patients, we want optometry and dispensing optics professionals always to use their professional judgement to assess risk and to make sure people receive safe care, informed by the values and principles set out in our professional standards. The national standard operating procedures remain your guides and we expect all registrants to follow General Optical Council (GOC) guidance in using their judgement in applying the principles of best practice to the situations they face.

We recognise that some primary eyecare professionals may find themselves working outside their usual scope of practice and this can be stressful. You may have concerns about both the professional practicalities and implications of working in such circumstances.

The healthcare professional regulators, including the GOC, have already committed to take into account factors relevant to the environment in which the professional is working, including relevant information about resources, guidelines or protocols in place at the time. The joint statement issued by the healthcare regulators in March 2020 remains applicable: https://www.optical.org/filemanager/root/site_assets/publications/covid_19/covid-19_joint_regulators_statement_-_final.pdf

It is also important to look after each other during this time. We want optometry and dispensing optical professionals to feel supported and cared for at work. Please seek local help if you are finding the situation difficult or challenging.

Finally, we would like to thank every single one of you for your tireless efforts to support patients. We are very proud of the response of the optical professions to this challenge.

Kind regards,



Mr Raymond Curran

Head of Ophthalmic Services, Health and Social Care Board Northern Ireland



Dr Nikki Kanani

Medical Director for Primary Care, NHS England and NHS Improvement



Mr David O'Sullivan

Chief Optometric Advisor / Prif Optometrig Ymgynghorol, Welsh Government / Llywodraeth Cymru



Dr Janet Pooley

Optometric Advisor, Scottish Government



Mr Colin Davidson

President, College of Optometrists



Sir Anthony Garrett

General Secretary, Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO)



Mrs Lesley Longstone

Registrar and Chief Executive, General Optical Council