

LOC HOT BRIEF

Confidential to Optical Contractors & Performers • August 2014 • Issue 32

Private & Confidential

Dear Colleagues

LOC Hot Briefs contain guidance and advice from the Optical Confederation and LOCSU on important issues relevant to all ophthalmic contractors and performers, which we would like LOCs to be aware of or to take action on.

Any LOC requiring advice/support on any aspect of their work should contact LOCSU on 020 7549 2051 or email info@locsu.co.uk.

Contents

1. Optical Confederation Guidance on Safeguarding and the Prevent Strategy
2. NHS England Framework for Managing Performer Concerns
3. NHS mail accounts
4. Optical Confederation guidance on CET claims

1. Optical Confederation Guidance on Safeguarding and the Prevent Strategy

The Optical Confederation has updated its [Guidance on Safeguarding and the Prevent Strategy: Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults](#).

The update incorporates information from the recently published *Intercollegiate Guidance for Safeguarding Children (2014)*, as well as further updates on the Government's Prevent Strategy.

The guidance includes a simple five step guide for all optical staff and practices to safeguard children and vulnerable adults and to comply with all relevant legislation. It also sets out responsibilities for optical staff and practices under the Government's Prevent Strategy. [DOCET safeguarding training](#) will be updated in due course.

2. NHS England Framework for Managing Performer Concerns

NHS England has published a new [Framework for Managing Performer Concerns](#) following consultation with stakeholders, including the Optical Confederation. This framework encompasses:

- the process for considering applications to the national Ophthalmic Performers List and for decision making for inclusion, inclusion with conditions and refusals to be made by the Area Team

- the process by which Area Teams identify, manage and support primary care performers where concerns arise
- the application of NHS England's powers to manage suspension, impose conditions and make removals from the Ophthalmic Performers List

Key points for optometrists and OMPs applying to join the Ophthalmic Performers List:

- (i) applicants should not be refused entry due to their not having secured a relevant job offer. For registration purposes, applicants only have to be able to demonstrate a significant intention to work in the NHS
- (ii) occupational health assessment and clearance is not ordinarily required for applicants to the Ophthalmic Performers' List

These changes reflect concerns that LOCSU and the Optical Confederation raised in their consultation response and we are pleased to see that NHS England has taken our views on board.

The Framework also states that applicants to the Ophthalmic Performers List are required to provide evidence of child protection training at level 2 as a minimum and should be encouraged to attain level 3 if they have not already done so.

Performance Screening Groups and Performers List Decision Panels

NHS England will establish Performers List Decision Panels (PLDPs) and Performance Advisory Groups (PAGs) within Area Teams in order to support its responsibility in managing performance of primary care performers. The PAG's role is investigative and advisory; the role of the PLDP is to make decisions under the Performers Lists Regulations.

Key points on PAGs and PLDPs:

- a 'discipline-specific practitioner' must be included in the membership of both the PAG and PLDP (i.e. an optometrist or OMP, as the case may be)
- each member of the PAG and PLDP must be appointed to their role in line with a competency framework and have undergone specific training provided by NHS England
- reimbursement for PAG and PLDP members has been set at £50 per hour
- an LRC member may also attend a PLDP at the performer's request to support but not to represent them

A series of [Standard Operating Procedures](#) has been developed by NHS England to support Area Teams with the implementation of this framework, and further guidance for contractors and performers will follow in due course.

3. NHSmail accounts

In a [recent announcement](#), NHS England has encouraged optometrists and optical contractors to sign up to NHSmail, along with pharmacists and dentists.

The Optical Confederation is extremely disappointed that [Health and Social Care Information Centre](#) guidance, launched without consultation with the Optical Confederation, states that optometrists or contractors wishing to take up the offer of an NHSmail account will be expected to complete the NHS Information Governance Toolkit (IGT) and comply with level 2 standards as a minimum.

The Optical Confederation cannot support this unfunded requirement on front-line community optical practices. It is an unnecessary, unreasonable bureaucratic requirement with no evidence base, given that an NHSmail account is simply a secure platform for information exchange, and does not give the user access to any of the main NHS IT infrastructure.

The Optical Confederation submitted an IT bid to NHS England earlier this year which contained an element of funding for optical practices to support them to comply with NHS Information Governance standards. LOCs will be aware that the initial bid was rejected; however, it should be noted that the Optical Confederation remains in dialogue with NHS England on the matter and it will be a central theme of the sector's response to the current Call to Action.

Any optometrist or contractor wishing to sign up to NHSmail at present should be aware that in doing so they are accepting the burden of completing the NHS IG Toolkit unfunded.

We remind colleagues that the GOS contract does not require contractors to complete NHS IGT.

4. Optical Confederation guidance on CET claims

Optical Confederation [guidance on CET claims](#) for 2013 is now available.

This guidance gives information on who should receive the grant, professional duty, tax matters and more.

The window for making CET claims in 2014 in respect of CET undertaken in 2013 is 4 July 2014 – 14 November 2014.

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