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Gateway Reference: 10524

PCT Chief Executives
NHS Trust Chief Executives
Optometrists
Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners
Dispensing Opticians

14th October 2008

Dear Colleague

**GENERAL OPHTHALMIC SERVICES – INCOME-RELATED
EMPLOYMENT AND SUPPORT ALLOWANCE & CHANGES TO GOS
FORMS**

This letter contains important information about:

- The introduction of income-related Employment and Support Allowance, and
- GOS form changes

Income-related Employment and Support Allowance

1. From 27 October 2008, the Department for Work and Pensions will be introducing Employment and Support Allowance for new claimants who have limited capacity to work. Income-related Employment and Support Allowance will be given to some people who would previously have received income support.
2. Recipients of income support are entitled to NHS funded sight tests and optical vouchers. All those receiving income-related employment and support allowance, who would previously have received income support, will continue to receive the same entitlement once the benefit is introduced.
3. Evidence should be provided in the form of an Employment and Support Allowance award notice. Note: receipt of the contribution based Employment and Support Allowance does not entitle a person to free NHS funded sight tests and optical vouchers although such people may qualify for help if they make an NHS Low Income Scheme claim.
4. The Statutory Instrument amending the Primary Ophthalmic Services and the National Health Service (Optical Charges and Payments) Regulations has been laid and is available at www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk under SI number 2008 2449 for those of you who wish to hold a copy.

5. The GOS forms have been amended to include a box for income-related Employment and Support Allowance. Until the new forms are in circulation those individuals receiving income-related Employment and Support Allowance should use (tick) the income support box to claim free NHS funded sight tests and optical vouchers.

GOS Form Changes

6. The GOS forms have been amended to reflect the new contract regulations, the introduction of income-related Employment and Support Allowance and the entitlement of prisoners on leave from prison to NHS funded sight tests and optical vouchers.

7. All prisoners on leave from prison will be released from custody under licence conditions and will be provided with a copy of their licence, which they would be able to show the optician as proof of entitlement.

8. The new GOS forms will come into circulation as the old forms start to run out. Please continue to use up the old GOS forms. Those receiving income-related employment and support allowance should tick the income support box until the new forms are available.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Osborne
Eye Care Services Policy