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OFNC

Association of British Dispensing Opticians
Association of Optometrists
British Medical Association
Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians

Optometric Fees Negotiating Committee

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Chair: Paul Carroll

Secretary: Tony Stafford

Laurence Bickerton
Dental & Eye Care Services
Department of Health & Social Care
39 Victoria Street
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By email

25 March 2021

Dear Laurence

GOS fees 2021/22

Thank you for your letter of 18 March advising that the 2021/22 GOS sight test fees, the Continuing Education and Training (CET) allowance and the pre-registration supervisors' grant will increase by 1.9%.

As you know, our submission to NHS England called for urgent action to address the widening gap between NHS sight test fees and inflation. Recognising the pressure on the public finances and as an interim step to address the chronic underfunding of NHS primary eye care, we proposed an increase of 5.6%.

Your letter does not set out the rationale for the offer of a 1.9% increase, which will disappoint a hard-working sector which has gone the extra mile to keep eye care services running over the last year when hospital care was often just not available. It would be helpful to hear more detail about this when we next meet with NHS England.

Nevertheless, we take this first increase in GOS sight test fees since 2015 as a signal that the Government and NHS England have acknowledged the value of eye care and the need to move towards fairer treatment of GOS contractors in the future. We accept the offer on that basis, and look forward to continuing discussions with the Department and NHS England about fairer fees over the coming year.

Thank you also for sight of the draft Directions on sight test fees and CET allowances, on which we have no comments.

Yours sincerely

Tony Stafford, OFNC Secretary