

Guidance on NHS Choices

1. The NHS Choices system for optics is being upgraded from September 2011 to include more information about practices, self-editable practice profiles and a new feedback and response facility system for patients. This change is to bring optics into line with the NHS Choices systems that have already been rolled out for NHS hospitals, GPs, dentists and pharmacists. The system is part of the new world of seeking patient input into the reformed NHS. NHS Choices has the potential to be a helpful way of communicating with patients, customers and potential customers in the future.
2. This guidance has been produced to supplement the NHS Choices guidance on managing your practice profile which is available at <http://www.nhs.uk/aboutNHSChoices/professionals/healthandcareprofessionals/your-pages/Documents/opticians-how-to-guide.pdf>
3. The Optical Fees Review Committee (OFRC) and the Optical Confederation met with the Department of Health and NHS Choices Team on 6 September 2011.
4. Our aims were to
 - ensure that implementation was fair and guaranteed a level playing field for all
 - minimise bureaucracy
 - ensure Optical Confederation input into the key contents and comments moderation processes (see below)
 - clarify the workload implications for optical practices and businesses.

Clarifications and Agreements

5. The meeting was very constructive and the following clarifications and agreements were reached
 - NHS Choices is being implemented for optical practices (from September 2011) and rolled out in stages with ongoing consultation (see below)
 - there are two aspects of the new system that optical practices will manage, the **profile** itself (main page, opening hours, service descriptions and address), and the right of reply to **feedback** comments posted by patients
 - to manage their **profile editing rights**, all practices will receive their access rights from the local PCT (in the first instance please contact the PCT's Optometric Advisor who will be able to assist you in obtaining 'sign in' rights from the PCT web editor). A similar process is in place to provide **patient feedback response rights** to practices, and you should request both from the local PCT. The same

- person in the practice can manage the profile and feedback systems. NHS Choices will be happy to assist if practices encounter any problems in obtaining these rights. Email: thechoicesteam@nhschoices.nhs.uk for further support
- PCTs will be in touch with practices to ensure they have the correct email contact details for each practice (NB for large companies this will normally be a central contact point)
 - PCTs will retain access rights to edit profiles, although once practices start managing their profiles, they can opt to have sole access i.e. to remove the access rights from the PCT
 - patient comments and feedback will not go live on the system immediately, and the system will not be launched publicly until the majority of providers are granted access to their profile (hopefully in October)
 - the Optical Confederation (linking with our partners in the optical sector e.g. the College of Optometrists) will be consulted on the pre-defined list of services available for inclusion in the profiles. This consultation will also include the drafting of generic service descriptions, which can be attached to the list of services. The patient feedback system will not include comments about product sales (which are private transactions and this will be clear on the feedback pages) but can include comments on clinical and service aspects relevant to NHS patients
 - in the case of all complaints (but particularly about product) patients will be encouraged by the feedback pages to return to the practice for resolution in the first instance
 - if any comments about product inadvertently appear on your practice profile, please contact the NHS Choices team on thechoicesteam@nhschoices.nhs.uk
 - currently only a single generic question is included with the optical patient feedback. Any additions to this question will be designed in consultation with the Optical Confederation and partners to ensure they are appropriate and relevant to optical practice
 - mobile domiciliary providers will appear in the same way as fixed practices in the locality search function
 - it may be possible to develop a bespoke “domiciliary” search function in due course (and the Optical Confederation will work with NHS Choices on this).

Ongoing input

6. The Optical Confederation has also agreed to continue to work with NHS Choices to support effective roll out of the scheme in the coming weeks to ensure a level playing field for all GOS contractors.

Practice profiles

7. As noted above, NHS Choices (in consultation with the Optical Confederation) will be publishing generic descriptions for the services to be included in drop down menus for inclusion in profiles. This will ensure clarity for patients and ensure that the service descriptions are compliant with all regulations

Patient Feedback and Comments

8. Patients can only input if they have an email address and have registered with NHS Choices. These are not conversations, patients can only comment once and the practice has only one right of reply. The patient can also select whether they would recommend the optician to a friend, or not. Annex 1 contains an image of the webpage for patients to leave feedback on your practice profile.
9. These paired comments will remain on the site for five years, in date order, with the comments for the most recent two years highlighted. NHS Choices have confirmed that comments which are libellous, offensive or unsuitable will be moderated before they appear on the site. The names of practitioners or staff and any gender references will not appear.

Responding to comments

10. As the NHS Choices guidance (link below) makes clear, it is good practice to respond to both positive and negative comments.
<http://www.nhs.uk/aboutNHSChoices/professionals/healthandcareprofessionals/your-pages/Documents/opticians-how-to-guide.pdf>
11. In the case of positive comments, this shows your appreciation that the patient has taken the time and trouble to send comments and reinforces your relationship with them.
12. Negative comments can be more difficult to deal with. Practices are advised never to respond hastily and always to respond in moderate terms recognising that if the patient thinks they have had a problem, then they have an issue that needs to be acknowledged (even if they are mistaken). Encouraging the patient to return to the practice and discuss the issue is always good practice.
13. Responses should always, therefore, be polite and measured and, while practices' experience of the scheme builds up, the Optical Confederation contacts below stand ready to advise in individual cases.
14. If necessary, once we have experience of the scheme in operation, the Optical Confederation will issue further or updated guidance.

Implementing the Changes

Phase 1

15. This involves PCTs requesting email contact addresses from practices and supplying these to NHS Choices so that the practice can be linked to the system. This is being rolled out across the country now (and may be close to completion in some areas).

16. Once the system goes live and practices have applied for and received their sign in rights, the same email contact address can be used for receiving alerts about patient and customer comments being posted on the site and for responding to them.
17. Owing to NHS reorganisations some PCTs may be slower than others in allocating 'sign in' rights and contractors who are experiencing delays should contact their LOC to make enquires of the PCT in the first instance. If necessary, the Optical Confederation will be happy to intervene.
18. This is particularly important in the case of companies with practices in more than one PCT area. Following their initial granting of rights by the PCT, these companies will be able to contact NHS Choices who can assist by offering a single password and username for all practices, rather than a separate password for each practice. This will allow companies to manage profiles and feedback more easily. The email address for this is thechoicesteam@nhschoices.nhs.uk.

Phase 2

19. Although practice profiles and patient feedback are technically live, feedback comments will not be uploaded onto the site until sufficient practices are signed up and the system can be publicly launched. NHS Choices anticipates this will be sometime in October 2011. The Optical Confederation will be kept informed as to the exact date and as soon as a firm date is agreed, will issue an alert and update of this guidance.

Further information

20. As noted above (paragraph 2), further information is available in the NHS Choices guidance on managing your profile. There will shortly be links to the NHS Choices guidance on the Optical Confederation websites.
21. If contractors have any concerns about the guidance or other issues, please contact your Optical Confederation representative (see below), who will be pleased to advise you and will raise issues with NHS Choices and issue clarifications.
22. The Optical Confederation contacts are

For ABDO members	Katie Docker kdocker@abdo.org.uk
For AOP members	Geoff Roberson geoffroberson@aop.org.uk
For FODO members	Rebecca Sinclair rebecca@fodo.com
23. Any queries about this guidance or any related NHS Choices matters should also be directed to the contacts above.

Optical Confederation
September 2011

Patient Feedback Tab for Opticians from the NHS Choice Website



Name of opticians

Address and postcode go here
020 123 4567

[Overview](#) [Services](#) [Staff](#) [Facilities](#) [Feedback](#) [Contact](#)

Rate and comment on this optician

All questions are optional, however the more you fill in the more helpful your feedback will be to others.

All comments that pass NHS Choices' [moderation rules](#) will be published. The service provider will then have an opportunity to respond.

Please enter your email address

or [Log in / create an account](#)

We will never publish your email address or share it with anyone but NHS Choices may use it to contact you directly.

Your name or screen name

I prefer my comment to be anonymous

Your visit was in

please select

Overall rating for this optician

I would recommend this optician to a friend ✔

I would not recommend it ✘

I have no view

Your comments

Making your feedback count...

Things to do

- Think about all aspects of your experience and what will be relevant to someone choosing an opticians.
- Give as much detail as you can.
- Be polite, constructive and fair.
- Check you've got the correct optician (your prescription or receipt will show these details).
- Make sure you check your email and verify your comment if needed.

Things to avoid

- Naming individuals.
- USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS.
- Off topic or irrelevant comments.
- Personal attacks and offensive language.
- Commenting on the quality of products (eg, glasses, contact lenses).

[Read our moderation rules](#)

Do you want a reply?

The optician will receive a copy of your message and, though they might respond on these pages, they are under no obligation. If you want a response, please contact the optician directly or, if you feel unable to do so, use the [NHS complaints procedure](#)

If you have any problems with the quality of the product(s) you purchased, please contact the opticians. If you feel unable to do so or are still not satisfied, contact the [Optical Consumer Complaints Service](#)