



## **The Pre-Notification System for domiciliary sight tests**

The domiciliary eye care service is provided for those who are unable to visit a high street practice unaccompanied due to a mental or physical disability or illness. It is vital that this vulnerable patient group have the same access and choice of quality eye care as that available to someone visiting a community optical practice.

The Optical Confederation's Domiciliary Eyecare Committee (DEC) believes that the current pre-notification system presents a key barrier to access for the domiciliary patient. Under the current system, when a patient requests a sight test, the provider has to notify the NHS Area Team of their intention to visit those patients a minimum of 48 hours in advance for 1 or 2 patients, and a minimum of 3 weeks in advance for 3 or more people at the same address. In both cases the maximum notification period is 8 weeks. This system does not allow the patient or the provider the freedom to arrange an appointment at their mutual convenience as they would be able to on the high street. It can also cause an unnecessary delay between a patient deciding they want a sight test and them actually receiving one.

As the pre-notification is not routinely used by the NHS to check that a person is due for a sight test or to check procedures conducted during a sight test in the form of a 'spot check', it is not clear what value this system adds for the patient. It also puts an enormous administrative burden on the NHS and the domiciliary provider. It should be noted that this administrative burden will increase as the demand for domiciliary sight tests increases in line with demographic change.

To ensure that the domiciliary patient enjoys the same flexibility as the person visiting the high street as to when they can have a sight test, the DEC believes that the pre-notification system should be abolished. If the NHS feels that further verification of the domiciliary eye care service is required, then the funds currently used for administering the pre-notification system would be better used in post payment verification (PPV).

The DEC has also put this view forward in the DoH consultation on notification and included it in the NHS Call to Action consultation.