



Date

Title Initial Surname

Street

Town

County

Postcode

PRIORITISING QUALITY PERSONALISED INDIVIDUAL EYE CARE IN RESIDENTIAL/CARE SETTINGS

Dear <Contact>,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Optical Confederation, which represents practitioners and providers of community-based eye health services including those conducted in the domiciliary setting. Our priority is to ensure that high quality eye care is accessible to everyone and, in particular, those who are unable to access a high street practice due to a mental or physical disability or illness. It is in this context that we are writing to you as important partners in care.

As you will know best corrected vision and ongoing good eye care can make an enormous difference to a person's sense of independence and well-being; it is essential for everyone and, under the law, when receiving that eye care everyone is entitled to the same quality of care, which includes ensuring the same respect of privacy, confidentiality and dignity, whether people are seen on the high street or in their home or other residential facilities.

Domiciliary eye care providers work to a Code of Practice which outlines what is expected of them to ensure that everything in the residential or care setting is done in the patient's best interests. The Code has recently been updated to reflect changes in the NHS infrastructure in England and various other legislative changes, including the introduction by CQC of the Quality Standard 50. The Code can be downloaded at

<http://www.opticalconfederation.org.uk/downloads/domiciliary/domiciliary-code-of-practice-2014-final.pdf>

The Code of Practice is primarily intended for eye care providers; however there are four core legal requirements where we would welcome the support of care home staff to help us ensure that your residents, as domiciliary patients, can enjoy the same level of personalised care as that delivered on the high street. I have summarised the four core legal requirements as follows.

What the Code says:

"Providers will advise patients when their next sight test is due. Providers will only contact care homes to arrange a sight test for a patient if there has been a specific request by or on behalf of the patient."

1. Patient's Request - A sight test must always be requested by or on behalf of each individual patient. This can be by a relative, primary carer, or an appropriately authorised person at a care home, they can also make a request on behalf of a number of named patients if they need a sight test, however a care home should not make a request to test 'all the patients in our home' or to 'be the provider for all the residents in our home' because this is in breach of General Ophthalmic Services Contract (GOS) regulations.

What the Code says:

"Providers are not permitted to enter into agreement with care homes or care home chains which restrict in any way the patient or their next of kin's choice of provider."

2. Choice – The patient (or their relative or primary carer) must be able to choose which provider they see. The care home should only suggest a particular provider if the patient has no preference and the care home believes that provider's care is best for that patient. Contracts or agreements between a provider and a care home or care home chain which restrict optical services to any one provider, without allowing each resident their own choice, are not permitted.

What the Code says:

"Each patient will be treated as in individual and providers will conduct tests in such a way as to protect privacy and dignity of the patient at all times."

3. Confidentiality, Privacy and Dignity – The sight test should always be conducted in a room where the patient's privacy, dignity and confidentiality can be assured at all times (just as it would be in a consulting room in a high street practice). However, like any other eye care patient, the resident may choose to bring a supporter/carer/friend with them into the consultation room. If the sight test is not conducted in the resident's own room but in another room set aside for the purpose, please ensure that other residents are not present in that room at that time. If more than one patient is to be examined, those waiting for their sight test should wait in a separate room.

What the Code says:

Providers will not offer or supply optical services including sight testing services, optometric products or other inducements (including any services or products) to third parties including the owners and staff of care homes, in order to gain or retain domiciliary business. This will not prevent legitimate advertising consistent with the regulations or generalised guidance to all care homes.

4. Prohibition on Incentives - NHS eye care providers under their contracts and NHS rules are not allowed to offer any incentive whatsoever to the owners, managers or staff of a care home. This includes not offering free sight tests, spectacles or any other benefits, offers or prize draws. However spectacle offers similar to those available on the high street which benefit only the residents of the care home are acceptable.

If you are aware of (or have concerns about) any provider suggesting or offering such incentives, you should report those concerns to the Optical Confederation Domiciliary Independent Adjudicator Service domiciliary@opticalconfederation.org.uk, NHS England or the local health board <http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Area%20Team/LocationSearch/1839>

We would be grateful if you could bring this advice to the attention of any staff who might be arranging sight tests or other eye care (NHS or private) for your residents, so that you and your staff will be able to help us ensure that your residents who receive domiciliary eye care continue to have choice and the best possible eye care appropriate to their needs.

If you would like more information on the domiciliary eye care service, an information leaflet 'Sight Tests at Home' is available at:

<http://www.opticalconfederation.org.uk/downloads/sighttestsathome.pdf>"<http://www.opticalconfederation.org.uk/downloads/sighttestsathome.pdf>

Alternatively, you can contact the Domiciliary Eyecare Committee at domiciliary@opticalconfederation.org.uk

Thank you for your help and professional leadership

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dawn Roberts', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dawn Roberts BSc(Hons) MSc MCOptom
Chairman – Optical Confederation Domiciliary Eyecare Committee