

**Ophthalmic Services
General Ophthalmic Services Memorandum**

26 February 2018

**To all Optometrists and
Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners
providing General Ophthalmic Services**

Dear Practitioner

REQUESTS FOR PRIOR APPROVAL

From Monday 5th March 2018 practices that **do not use the OCS** (online claims) can avail of a new process for requests for prior approval that are not facilitated within current processes and which may require to be considered as an exceptional/special approval i.e. where exceptional circumstances prevail and do not fall within the current protocols. For example, the current protocol and guidance in respect of 'second' pairs ([MOS 295](#)) still applies and requests for prior approval that fall within the eligibility criteria already in place can still be made via telephone to the BSO as per the [existing MOS](#) and guidance.

From 5th March 2018 requests and queries in regard to exceptional approvals **can be managed by email** through a new and dedicated email address within the Business Services Organisation. This will facilitate consistent and efficient management of prior approvals for all service types e.g. early re-tests under 3/12 and other requests where exceptional considerations may exist. Practices are asked not to email approval requests directly to an optometric clinical adviser but to direct the requests through BSO using this email process when clinical adviser consideration and input is required. **GOS contractors are asked to apply the advice and guidance noted below when seeking prior approval for GOS, and where applicable, LES claims from Monday 5th March 2018.**



Advice for Practices that use OCS (online system) for GOS claims

All practices that use OCS for their GOS claim submissions should in all instances use the prior approval facility within OCS for requests for approvals. The processes in place and the online system ensures that your request will be considered by the Business Services Organisation and, where appropriate, the Health and Social Care Board clinical advisers in a timely and efficient manner. Optometrists/practice staff submitting a request for prior approval should use the OCS prior facility on every occasion from Monday 5th March 2018.

If in the exceptional circumstance a practice cannot submit the request for prior approval using the OCS online system (e.g. system interruption) practices that use the OCS can submit the request via the new email address. **In these instances practices MUST use their assigned practice HSCNI email account** (all practices using OCS have been notified of their email account details) to communicate with BSO for prior approval. GOS contractors are reminded to ensure that, in as far as possible, information which is patient-identifiable is not included in the email. **Practices should NOT use their business or personal email accounts for submitting requests for prior approval.**

** Practices are again reminded to ensure that they check their HSCNI email account daily. If a practice requires a password reset for their HSCNI email account please contact the IT help desk on 028 9536 2400 or email supportteam@hscni.net and a new password will be provided **

Advice for Practices that submit paper GOS claims

Practices that use paper GOS claims should apply the following guidance when seeking prior approval for requests for prior approval that are not facilitated within current processes and which may require to be considered as an exceptional/special approval i.e. where exceptional circumstances prevail and do not fall within the current. For example current protocols already exist for second pairs ([MOS 295](#)) and requests for these can still be made via telephone.

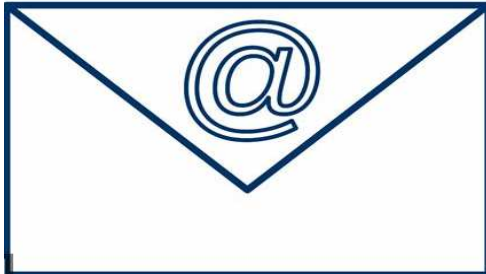
Practices that do not access the Optometry portal because they continue to use and submit paper GOS claims are not in a position to access their assigned HSCNI email account. When contacting BSO through the new and dedicated prior approval email account, these GOS contractor practices MUST remember to ensure that no patient identifiable information is included the email which is submitted - please ensure that you have anonymised as far as is

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possible. The ophthalmic team in the BSO will receive and action the email request and contact the practice accordingly with the decision which has been made in regard to the request for approval.



NEW PRIOR APPROVAL
EMAIL ADDRESS:
priorapproval.bso@hscni.net

USE OF THE PRIOR APPROVAL EMAIL ADDRESS BY PATIENTS WHO PRESENT SEEKING A "SECOND OPINION".

In [MOS 303](#) GOS contractors are provided with advice in respect of patients who present requesting a "second opinion". MOS 303 advises that second opinions are *not routinely facilitated* by General Ophthalmic Services. However, in the exceptional circumstance as outlined in MOS 303, should a patient wish to apply for a "second opinion" to be considered you may provide the new and dedicated prior approval email address to the patient as an alternative means for them to communicate with BSO in regard to their request. Please advise the patient that it is their responsibility to contact BSO outlining all the relevant details and in doing so that they appreciate that their personal contact details etc.....will be shared with BSO and, where necessary and appropriate, the HSCB.

If you have any enquiries arising from this memorandum please contact the Business Services Organisation.

