



THE COLLEGE OF  
OPTOMETRISTS



Dr J Pooley

Chief Optometric Advisor, Scottish Government

10<sup>th</sup> February 2022

Dear Janet,

**Enhancing ventilation for optometrists and dispensing opticians delivering urgent and emergency eye care**

Enhanced ventilation and air filtration are essential components of the Transmission based Precautions that practices need to consider when ensuring the consultation environment is safe for both clinicians and service users. We are writing to ask you to provide support to practices providing eye care to ensure they can provide at least one consulting room with enhanced ventilation and or air filtration as appropriate to ensure they can rebuild and maintain eye care services.

As we have previously highlighted the unique nature of the ocular health assessment, and the characteristics of typical consulting rooms pose several specific challenges when providing eye care to people with respiratory illness, in particular to those with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 where there can be airborne transmission.

Specifically:

- The typically small size of many consulting rooms, lack of windows and limited ability to provide additional natural or mechanical ventilation in many settings
- The duration of time a clinician spends in close proximity (25-50cm) to a patient's face when performing a slit-lamp biomicroscope ocular examination (3-5 minutes per consultation)
- The number of patients that are unable to wear a face-covering when accessing eye care.

Therefore, optometrists and dispensing opticians must have access to consulting rooms with enhanced ventilation and, or air filtration when delivering direct patient care, for those with urgent and emergency needs, where it cannot be postponed or delivered virtually. We advise the profession that where there remains an unacceptable risk of transmission remains following a risk assessment and hierarchy of controls, it may, be necessary to consider the use of respiratory protective equipment.

We now ask each health system to give due consideration to support each contractor to ensure at least one consulting in every practice has enhanced ventilation and, or air filtration to reduce the risk of airborne transmission of respiratory illness and to rebuild and maintain eye care services.

Yours sincerely,

**Mr Colin Davidson**

President, College of Optometrists

**Sir Anthony Garrett**

General Secretary, Association of British  
Dispensing Opticians (ABDO)

c.c. Sussie Dodd, IPC Cell Nurse Consultant, Infection Prevention & Control,