



Llywodraeth Cymru
7 Welsh Government

Email / Address
Y Grŵp Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Health and Social Services Group

Date / Dydiadd: 18 December 2020

Dear Colleagues,

COVID 19: National Restrictions December 2020

The First Minister for Wales announced new national restrictions from close of trading on Christmas Eve. The country will enter COVID alert level 4 (stay at home lockdown) from 28 December 2020 to help to reduce the number of new coronavirus infections across Wales.

In line with previous national restrictions, optometry practices will remain open and within Amber Phase 2, to enable patients to access essential medical services.

We should all be aware of and vigilant to, the continuing risks presented by coronavirus that have not diminished. All practices have a duty to adhere to Amber Phase guidelines as described by the College of Optometrists and previous Welsh Government correspondence. In particular, I would like to remind all optometry practices in Wales that

- Prioritisation and scheduling of appointments should continue to consider the clinical needs and presenting symptoms relative to the risk of sight loss and harm to the patient. Routine appointments should only be scheduled, in line with prioritisation, if there is the appropriate capacity to do so, once all urgent and essential appointments have been managed.
- Telephone and video review should be offered in the first instance to determine COVID status and level of eye care needed.
- Practices should continue to follow the College of Optometrists guidance on infection control, social distancing and PPE.

The College's COVID Pandemic Guidance table is in anticipation of local and national restrictions and is designed to enable optometric practices to act swiftly when restrictions are announced. Optometrists and practice owners should use their professional judgement to immediately and appropriately adapt their practice services. These measures will help to protect local residents from coronavirus infection, while maintaining the community's essential eye health and vision needs.

You will appreciate; this situation is fast moving and is kept under regular review. Please keep up to date with developments. Below are some useful links to the current College of Optometrists guidance:

<https://www.college-optometrists.org/the-college/media-hub/news-listing/preparing-for-local-lockdowns-college-guidance.html>

<https://www.college-optometrists.org/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-guidance-information/covid-19-college-guidance.html> <https://www.college-optometrists.org/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-guidance-information.html>

I recognise many of you have been working long hours to support NHS Wales, whilst also supporting the health needs of family and friends throughout the pandemic. It is important to ensure that you take time to consider your own health and well-being and I would encourage you to take time to explore resources available. Below are some useful links which provide information for well-being and mental health during the pandemic <http://www.primarycareone.wales.nhs.uk/pc-covid19> and <https://www.hhpwales.co.uk/contact-us>, also available by calling 0800 058 2738. Staff can also access free online stress control tools on the [Stress Control website](#).

As we move towards the end of what is the most difficult year that the optometric profession has worked through, I would like to thank you for the professionalism that you continue to demonstrate during these difficult times, and the efforts that are being made by the profession to keep the citizens of Wales safe.

Yours sincerely,



David O'Sullivan

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Directorate of Health Policy / Cyfarwyddiaeth Polisi Iechyd
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.