



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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

Date / Dydiadd: Friday 16 July 2021

Dear Colleagues,

COVID-19: Optometry Practice Services

On Wednesday 14 July, Mark Drakeford, First Minister for Wales, announced the easing of COVID restrictions, continuing to take a cautious approach.

Wales will move fully into alert level one from 17 July. The changes were paused four weeks ago because of the emergence and spread of the delta variant across the UK and to enable more people to be vaccinated in Wales.

Alert level zero is set out in an updated *Coronavirus Control Plan*, published today: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-07/coronavirus-control-plan-alert-level-zero-0.pdf> If the public health situation allows, Wales will move to this level on 7 August.

At alert level zero practices should specifically note:

- COVID risk assessments will remain a legal requirement.
- Reasonable measures will legally be required to manage the risk of coronavirus but they will be for each organisation to determine based on the outcome of their risk assessment, including in relation to physical distancing.
- People should continue to work from home wherever possible.
- Face coverings will remain a legal requirement in all indoors public places, with the exception of education settings and hospitality. The Welsh Government expect to gradually ease these requirements, though the requirements in healthcare settings are likely to be in place longer.

Vaccination Programme

Welsh Government continue to make significant progress with the vaccination programme, all people age 18 and over being offered the vaccine by the start of June. Welsh Government expects to reach 75% take-up for first jabs across all priority groups and age groups ahead of the original target, which is the end of July 2021. The latest figures, show 2.27m people, or 91% of the adult population, have

had a first dose and almost 1.85m people have had a second dose. Take-up is higher than 90% for first doses in all people over age 60; in healthcare workers; care home residents and staff and all those who are extremely clinically vulnerable.

Whilst the vaccination programme is a clear success in the fight against COVID, the pandemic is not over yet. We all need to continue to take steps to protect communities, our patients and ourselves.

Optometry Services

Optometry services remain in the **Amber recovery phase**, as described by the College of Optometrists:

[Amber phase specific guidance](#)

What this means:

- COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in place and primary care remains open for routine services. Primary care services to continue to enable the prioritisation of emergency/urgent and essential care on a needs and symptoms-led basis.

Services provided

- Face to face needs and/or symptoms led eye care and [contact lens practice](#) as prioritised by a clinician dependent on local or national protocols. For example see [Patient Risk Stratification Tool \(Amber phase\)](#)
- Meet outstanding eye care needs as capacity permits
- Domiciliary care as per local protocols
- HES referrals as per local protocols

Practices should continue to:

- maintain pre-practice / upon entry COVID symptom triage
- follow current IPC guidance, including PPE
- ensure social distancing remains in place for optometric settings
- maintain patient triage and prioritisation
- sanitise frames
- maintain good ventilation throughout the practice
- maintain regular lateral flow testing for practice staff

These measures will help minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission and give the public confidence that they can access eye care safely.

Activity Data

Analysis of General Ophthalmic Services (GOS), Eye Health Examination Wales (EHEW) and Low Vision Service (LVS) data, shows activity levels in April

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consistent with the previous 3 year average. It is encouraging to see activity levels returning to pre-pandemic levels.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the UK COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Guidance published by Public Health England on the UK.Gov website and attached to this letter. Please continue to monitor government websites to remain up to date with guidance.

In addition, the College of Optometrists continues to provide guidance during the pandemic. Below is the link to the College of Optometrists website and I would urge all practitioners and optometric practices in Wales to continue to keep up to date with current College professional advice. Regularly re-visit the guidance and ensure that you and your current practice is compliant, particularly in relation to infection control procedures and use of personal protective equipment.

[The College of Optometrists Primary eye care COVID-19 pandemic guidance \(college-optometrists.org\)](https://college-optometrists.org)

I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank you for your continued diligence and efforts made to continue to deliver high standards of eye care throughout the pandemic. This continued vigilance will help to keep yourselves and colleagues, your patients and your community safe in the fight against the global pandemic.

Yours sincerely,



David O'Sullivan

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