

Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning
Recommendations for the Immediate Management of
the Child Vision Screening Backlog for 2019/20 and 2020/21 in England

Covid-19 has caused major interruptions in education and child health services. This has meant that Child Vision Screening services have been delayed, postponed or cancelled for some of the children who started Reception Year in 2019 and in 2020. The immediate and current challenge is the timely management of the resultant backlog of children who have missed their screening opportunity. The primary aim of this screening is to identify all children aged 4 to 5 years with impaired sight, to enable timely intervention. The current priority is to put in place measures for children who commenced Reception year in 2019/20, but there may be need to extend this for eligible children in 2020/21.

The Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning (CCEHC) is aware of a number of issues around restoring and providing screening services. The following immediate failsafe recommendations are intended to support local discussions and facilitate actions to address the school vision screening backlog whilst service providers continue to work towards restoring screening services:

- 1. *The parents of eligible children in 2019/20 who have not been screened should be advised to have an NHS sight test as a failsafe if resumption of the local child vision screening programme is not imminent.***

A template for a letter to parents is provided (Appendix 1) as a starting point for local agreement on how this advice could be presented to parents

- 2. *The Screening Provider should liaise with Local Optical Committee clinical leads, the Specialist Eye Service Provider's Orthoptic / Optometric leads and Screening Service Commissioners to discuss these recommendations for managing the screening backlog.***

The following are intended to facilitate these local discussions by clarifying the responsibilities for taking this forwards:

- i. **Responsibilities for those charged with Screening Service Provision****

- a. **Administrative responsibilities to:****

- In the first instance identify eligible children that started the Reception Year in 2019 who have not been screened.
- Develop communication links with schools and local optical practices.
- Send letter to parents of children whose screening has been delayed, postponed, or cancelled with advice on alternative assessment (Template for Letter to Parents)

- b. **Service delivery responsibilities to:****

- Monitor uptake of this alternative assessment for children who may have missed out on their screening opportunity.

- Develop approaches for failsafe management and reporting of outcomes for audit and quality assurance

ii. Responsibilities for Optical practices

Provide NHS sight tests under GOS for children whose parents present with vision screening letter (e.g. along the lines of the Template for Letter to Parents). This should:

- Be aligned to professional practice guidance¹ which recommends assessment of crowded logMAR letter acuity
- Provide GOS2 statement or prescription to enable parent to report back to screening programme
- Refer if indicated to the local hospital eye services in line with local guidance

iii. Responsibilities for Specialist Eye Services Provider

- Ensure good communications and clear pathway between local optical practices and the specialist eye services for timely receipt and management of referrals
- Provide feedback of referral outcomes to:
 - the screening provider for clinical audit and quality assurance of the service
 - the referring optometrist / optical practice for clinical audit and practice development

Appendices:

Appendix 1: [Template for Letter to Parents of Children who have missed Vision Screening during 2019-20.](#) (attached Word document)

About the Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning (CCEHC)

The CCEHC represents the leading clinical professions and charity organisations in the eye-care sector. It is an independent advisory body providing evidence-based national clinical leadership, advice and guidance to policy makers in health, social care and public health, and those commissioning and providing eye health services in England. It is recognised as such through a Memorandum of Understanding with NHS England.

Our recommendations are supported across the eye health services sector.

Further details on our member organisations and work can be found on www.ccehc.org.uk

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If you require any further information, please contact the CCEHC:
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¹ [Examining younger children - The College of Optometrists \(college-optometrists.org\)](#)