

COMMUNITY OPTOMETRIC SERVICES

Agreement between

HEALTH BOARDS AND OPTOMETRISTS

for the provision of

EYE EXAMINATIONS

SCHEDULE

AGREEMENT made the _____ day of _____ 200
between **THE ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS IRELAND** of
a _____ of the One Part
and all the **HEALTH BOARDS** in the state of the Other Part.

INTERPRETATION:

In this Agreement, the following expressions shall have the meanings as assigned to them below:

"The Minister" means the Minister for Health and Children.

"The Association" means The Association of Optometrists Ireland.

"The Panel" means the panel(s) of Optometrists maintained by the Health Board for its administrative area or for different parts of its administrative area.

"Eligible Person" means a person entitled to ophthalmic services under the Health Act, 1970.

"Authorised Person" means an eligible person having a valid authorisation from the Health Board or being part of an agreed cohort and entitled to an eye examination, being part of the ophthalmic services provided for under the Health Act, 1970.

"The Scale of Fees and Charges" means the schedule of agreed fees and charges for the time being in force.

"The Services" means eye examinations to include internal and external examination of the eyes.

"The Scheme" means the scheme of providing eye examinations as envisaged by this Agreement.

"The C.E.O." means the Chief Executive Officer of the Health Board.

"Designated Officer" means an officer of the Health Board designated by the C.E.O. in accordance with paragraph 16 hereof.

"The Health Board" throughout this Agreement shall be interpreted as meaning the Health Board for the administrative area wherein the Contracting Optician concerned carries on his practice.

The titles "Optometrist" and "Ophthalmic Optician" are synonymous.

"Contracting Optometrist" shall be as defined in recital *d* hereof and in addition where a Body Corporate is involved references to Contracting Optometrist herein shall where the context admits or requires include the Supervising Optometrist.

"Supervising Optometrist" means an Optometrist specified in accordance with paragraph 17 hereof.

"Health Boards" means all the Health Boards in the State.

The masculine gender herein shall import the feminine.

RECITALS:

Whereas

- (a) The Health Boards have obligations to eligible persons under the terms of the Health Act, 1970 as amended.
- (b) The Association is the representative Association of Optometrists in the State.
- (c) The Health Boards are desirous of entering into a National Agreement with the Association to deliver eye examinations for eligible persons within the State.
- (d) It is intended that individual Optometrists (hereinafter in this Agreement referred to as "Contracting" Optometrists) will then make agreements with individual Health Boards to deliver the services to eligible persons in accordance with the terms of this Agreement.
- (e) Model forms of the said separate Agreement between Contracting Optometrists and their Health Board is included in the Schedule to this Agreement – the form in Part One thereof to be used where the Contracting Optometric practice is owned/operated by an individual and Part Two to be used otherwise where the Contracting Optometric practice is owned/operated by a Body Corporate.
- (f) The objects of this Agreement include the following:
 - (i) To provide eye examinations for eligible person as aforesaid.
 - (ii) To achieve significant benefits to eligible persons in terms of health and social gain.
 - (iii) To facilitate maximising the health and social gain potential of the scheme.
 - (iv) To eliminate existing waiting lists for the services.
 - (v) To apply the scheme consistently on a national basis.
- (g) It is hereby agreed between the parties hereto that any changes in the terms of this agreement agreed between the Association of Optometrists Ireland and the Health Services Employers Agency/the Health Boards/General Medical Services (Payments) Board/Department of Health and Children including, without limitation changes to payment arrangements, shall be construed as forming part of the contract upon receipt by the contracting Optometrists of a letter from the Health Services Employers Agency/Health Boards/General Medical Services (Payments) Board/Department of Health and Children, the terms of which have been agreed with the Association of Optometrists Ireland, and the terms of this contract shall be construed accordingly.

NOW IT IS HEREBY WITNESSED THAT the parties hereto have **AGREED** as follows:

COVENANTS BY CONTRACTING OPTOMETRIST

1. The Contracting Optometrist agrees:

- (i) To provide eye examinations and advice to the best of his knowledge and ability for eligible persons at the listed addresses wherein he practices using suitable instruments and equipment in the appropriate environment.
- (ii) To carry out all tests judged to be necessary to determine the patient's need for vision care as in both sight and health provided that the exact format and content will be determined by the Optometrist's professional judgement.
- (iii) To take out and maintain professional indemnity insurance in a sum not less than the minimum amount as may be determined by the Health Boards from time to time and which currently stands at £500,000.00.
- (iv) To produce evidence of such professional indemnity insurance to the Health Board when demanded.
- (v) To provide the services in the same manner and under the same conditions as would be provided for private patients.
- (vi) To provide the services personally or by way of substitute who is also a registered Ophthalmic Optician and the Contracting Optometrist undertakes to ensure that such substitute is also covered by equivalent professional indemnity insurance and the Contracting Optometrist also remains responsible to the Health Board for the services provided to authorised persons.
- (vii) In cases where an authorised person by reason of incapacity is confined to home, nursing home or hospital to provide the services as a domiciliary examination provided that additional costs arising from such cases shall be agreed from time to time between the parties hereto and that prior authority for such cases is obtained from the C.E.O. or other designated Officer.
- (viii) To display in the practice premises a notice to be provided by the Health Board that he has entered into an agreement with that Board to provide the services.
- (ix) To abide by the Rules of the Opticians Board which requires that the names and attendance times of those providing eye examinations are displayed for the information of eligible persons.
- (x) Neither directly or indirectly, either personally or by his servant or agent, to canvass or solicit any eligible person for the purpose of obtaining an authorisation for an eye examination.
- (xi) To notify the C.E.O. of the Health Board of any changes in the information contained in the Optometrist's proposal forming the basis of the Agreement between him and the Health Board (the said model forms whereof are set out in the Schedule hereto).
- (xii) Save in cases where for reasonable cause (to be submitted to the C.E.O. of the Health Board if requested) the contracted Optometrist refuses to accept as a patient any particular authorised person, to accept an authorisation from an eligible person and following upon the provision of services to record on it (the authorisation) the prescription(s) and a statement as to the need for the correction(s) or that no correction is necessary.

- (xiii) To record in addition on the authorisation referred to in the immediately preceding paragraph hereof such other necessary and agreed sections of the authorisation so as to identify any substitute carrying out the eye examination and/or the Contracting Optometrist.
- (xiv) To keep for a period of at least ten years a record of all authorised persons examined by him under this agreement and such record shall include the name, address, medical card/authorisation number, the dates of any examinations carried out and the observations, findings and advice there from and to record details of all such referrals.
- (xv) To make available all of the foregoing to any Optometric Examiner appointed under this agreement.
- (xvi) In a case where an eligible person chooses for any reason to attend a different Contracting Optometrist to one previously attended under the scheme to make available promptly patient records to the new practitioner.

FURTHER AGREED ASPECTS OF SCHEME

2. Eligible persons may choose any participating Contracting Optometrist from the published panel of the Health Board.
3. It is not expected that persons would present for the services more than once every two years but different age cohorts may be subject to different frequencies as may those patients whose condition requires monitoring. These aspects of the Scheme would be subject to review from time to time.
4. Eligible persons will apply to the Health Board in their area to have their applications under the Scheme authorised. It is intended that such application will be approved or rejected within one month. The Health Boards will enter into reciprocal arrangements in exceptional circumstances. Alterations in eligibility of persons to benefit from the Scheme will not be made without discussion and agreement with the Association.
5. The Contracting Optometrist will be entitled to payment for the eye examinations undertaken on foot of this agreement by reference to the agreed scale of fees and charges negotiated between the parties hereto. No charge shall be levied on the patient for such services. It is intended that the said scale of fees and charges shall be that agreed by the Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs for his Department's Optical Benefit within the Treatment Benefit Scheme.
6. The parties hereto and the General Medical Services (Payments) Board shall facilitate the introduction, development and use of appropriate information technology and telematic services for the effective management of the Scheme, including the collection and dissemination of information and the transmission of claims data.
7. The contracting Optometrist may request identification and evidence of eligibility from any person offering an authorisation for services under the Scheme.
8. Where, in the course of the eye examination, or following upon it, it is considered that the authorised person should be referred for medical or Ophthalmological examination, he will be so informed, and with his consent, an appropriate referral will be made by the Contracting Optometrist.

MANAGING AND MONITORING

9. The Optometric services will be an integral part of the Health Board's overall annual service plan to be adopted by the Board and submitted to the Minister. The supervision and implementation of which is a function of the Health Board.
10. An Optometrist Advisor who is a registered Optometrist under the Opticians Act, 1956, shall be appointed by the C.E.O. for agreed periods to give advice to the C.E.O. or a designated officer on all matters with regard to eye examinations for eligible persons by Contracting Optometrists subject to the following conditions:
 - (a) A Contracting Optometrist shall give to the Advisor, all such information and particulars regarding eye examinations under this scheme as the Advisor may require.
 - (b) The Advisor shall bring to the notice of the C.E.O. such developments in clinical practice and other matters which affect the provision of adequate eye examinations under this Agreement and shall advise the C.E.O. as to their significance.

COMPLAINTS

11. Complaints of a non-clinical nature from or on behalf of an authorised person will be investigated by an administrative officer of the Health Board with whatever assistance is appropriate from the optometrist advisor.
12. Where the C.E.O. of a Health Board receives a complaint that the services provided by a Contracting Optometrist and/or the prescription(s) resulting from such an eye examination have been unsatisfactory and continue to be so, the C.E.O. shall appoint an Examining Optometrist to investigate the matter.

The Examining Optometrist shall be chosen by the C.E.O. from a panel of registered Optometrists which is provided by the Association. In the first place and at agreed intervals, such panels will be formed following consultation with the President of the Association or his nominee and the Optometric Director of the Optometry Course in the Dublin Institute of Technology.

The Examining Optometrist may provide an examination under the following conditions:

- (a) The Contracting Optometrist shall be at liberty to attend any such examination if desired and whether or not he attends, shall furnish to the Examining Optometrist all such information and particulars as the Examining Optometrist may require.
- (b) The Examining Optometrist may recommend an alteration to the prescription and, where the prescribed appliances have been supplied by the Contracting Optometrist in the case, no additional charge shall be made for any consequential alteration of the appliances provided on the original prescription. Where the appliances to the original prescription were supplied by another contractor the costs shall be the responsibility of the prescribing optometrist.

- (c) The fees and expenses of the Examining Optometrist shall be borne by the relevant Health Board and the original prescribing Optometrist shall not charge any fees or expenses for attending an examination arranged under this provision of the agreement.
13. In the event that a complaint is of a very serious nature as determined by the C.E.O., (e.g. the allegation of assault, abuse, etc., by the Contracting Optometrist or other staff employed by the Optometrist) same will be investigated thoroughly by the relevant Health Board. In such cases, the contract may be suspended pending the conclusion of such investigations.

TERMINATION AND DISPUTES

14. The Agreement between a Contracting Optometrist and the relevant Health Board may be terminated by either party by:
- (a) Giving not less than three months notice in writing of his/its intention to do so on the other and, immediately after such termination, the C.E.O. of the relevant Health Board will delete the Contracting Optometrist's name from the published panel.
 - (b) Where the C.E.O. has reason to believe that the Contracting Optometrist has not complied with the terms of the Agreement or has failed to give adequate eye examinations to authorised persons, he shall notify the Optometrist by registered post of the reasons for such belief and inform him that he will consider any representations in the matter which may be received from the Optometrist within twenty-one days of the notification. If, after consideration of any such representations with the Optometric Advisor, the C.E.O. is satisfied that the Contracting Optometrist has not complied with the terms of the agreement and/or has failed to give adequate eye examinations to authorised persons, the C.E.O. shall, as he thinks appropriate:
 - (i) Issue a warning to the Contracting Optometrist.
 - (ii) Require the Contracting Optometrist to recoup to the Health Board any overpayments or incorrect payments made to him.
 - (iii) Impose a temporary suspension of the contract.
 - (iv) Terminate the Agreement.

If the Contracting Optometrist is aggrieved by any action of the C.E.O. as above he may appeal in writing to the C.E.O. within twenty-one days of receipt of the C.E.O.'s decision.

As soon as practicable after receiving notice of the Contracting Optometrist's appeal, an Optometric Appeals Tribunal shall be convened by the C.E.O., consisting of one person nominated by the Association, one person nominated by the C.E.O. and an independent chairman who is acceptable to the Association and the C.E.O. This Tribunal shall have power only in relation to appeals arising from the decision of the C.E.O. as above.

The Tribunal shall, having considered the submissions made by both parties, send a report to the C.E.O. which may recommend varying, endorsing or rescinding the action proposed to be taken.

REVIEW MEETINGS

15. Officers nominated by the Health Boards and/or the Health Service Employers Agency and the Association as the professional body representing Optometrists within the State, shall, in order to ensure the effective operation of schemes proposed under this agreement meet from time to time and at least once a year in order to discuss matters of mutual interest in respect of the operation of such schemes, including fees and other charges applicable.

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

16. The C.E.O. may assign to another Officer of the Health Board his functions in relation to the entry into and subsequent performance of this Agreement in which event all references to the C.E.O. herein shall be construed as relating to such officer.
17. In a case where the Contracting Optometrist is a Body Corporate, the Managing Director shall submit to the C.E.O. a statement in writing signed by two Directors or by a Director and Secretary of and on behalf of the said Body Corporate specifying the name of the Supervising Optometrist under whose supervision the optometric practice in respect of which the Agreement relates and the eye examinations therein are conducted. This statement shall be submitted in the format set out in Part Three of the Schedule hereto and shall also be signed by the Supervising Optometrist and witnessed. Where the Supervising Optometrist ceases to act in that capacity, the contract between the Health Board and the said Body Corporate shall terminate one month after the date he has ceased to act unless a new statement as prescribed in this paragraph has been furnished to and accepted by the C.E.O.

SCHEDULE

Part One

Form Of Agreement For The Provision Of Eye Examinations For Medical Card Holders And Certain Of Their Dependants (individual practitioner)

I, _____ (block capitals), being an Optometrist duly registered in a register created by The Opticians Act, 1956, hereinafter called "The Contracting Optometrist", am practising at the address(es) below, which are within the State, hereby propose to provide eye examinations to eligible and authorised persons whose health care is the responsibility of the _____ Health Board in accordance with the terms of national agreement made on the _____ day of _____ 200_____ between the Association of Optometrist Ireland and all the Health Boards in the State as amended or replaced from time to time.

Signed: _____
Registered Ophthalmic Optician

Witness: _____

Address: _____

Occupation: _____

Practice Address(es):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

I hereby accept the proposal.

SIGNED: _____
C.E.O. of _____ Health Board

Part Two

Form Of Agreement For The Provision Of Eye Examinations For Medical Card Holders And Certain Of Their Dependants (Body Corporate)

_____ (block capitals), being a Body Corporate and owner/ operator of the Optometric practice at the address(es) below, which are within the State, hereby propose to provide eye examinations to eligible and authorised persons whose health care is the responsibility of the _____ Health Board in accordance with the terms of national agreement made on the _____ day of _____ 200_____ between the Association of Optometrist Ireland and all the Health Boards in the State as amended or replaced from time to time.

PRESENT when the Corporate Seal
of
was affixed hereto:

Practice Address(es):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

I hereby accept the above proposal.

SIGNED: _____

C.E.O. of

Health Board

Part Three

Statement as Required by Paragraph 17

We hereby specify _____ to be the Supervising
Optometrist under whose supervision the optometric practice in respect of which our
Agreement dated _____ day of _____ 200 _____ with Health Board
relates and the eye examinations therein are conducted.

SIGNED: _____
Managing Director

SIGNED: _____
Director/Secretary

SIGNED BY: _____
In the presence of: _____
Supervising Optometrist

