
EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

These Regulations have effect to amend the National Health Service (Optical Charges and Payments) Regulations 1997 (“the 1997 Regulations”) which provide for payments to be made by means of a voucher system in respect of costs incurred by certain categories of persons in connection with the supply, replacement and repair of optical appliances. These Regulations also amend the National Health Service (General Ophthalmic Services) Regulations 1986 (“the 1986 Regulations”) which provide for the arrangements under which ophthalmic medical practitioners and ophthalmic opticians provide ophthalmic services.

The textual amendments of the 1997 Regulations and the 1986 Regulations which are made by the National Health Service (Optical Charges and Payments) and (General Ophthalmic Services) (Amendment) Regulations 1999 and the National Health Service (General Ophthalmic Services) (Amendment) Regulations 1999 and which extend to England are made to have effect in Wales.

In relation to both the 1997 Regulations and the 1986 Regulations the amendments insert a definition of “amount withdrawn” and substitute the definition of “disability working allowance” with a definition of “disabled person’s tax credit” and also substitute the definition of “family credit” with a definition of “working families’ tax credit”.

Regulation 8 of the 1997 Regulations defines the persons who are eligible for payments to meet, or to contribute towards the cost of being supplied with glasses and other optical appliances. The amendments to this regulation take account of the changes occurring on 5th October 1999 in the income tax and social security systems when family credit and disability working allowance are replaced by working families’ tax credit and disabled person’s tax credit.

The amendments similarly alter regulation 13 of the 1986 Regulations which defines eligibility for free sight tests.

The regulations contain a transitional provision that provides that the entitlement to free sight tests or payments towards the cost of glasses and other optical appliances shall continue whilst payment of family credit or disability working allowance continues.