

*From the Chief Medical Officer*  
Dr Michael McBride  
HSS(MD) 2/2017



Department of  
**Health**  
An Roinn Sláinte  
Mánnystrie O Poustie  
[www.health-ni.gov.uk](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk)

**HSS(MD) 2/2017**

**For Action:**

**Chief Executive PHA** (*for onward  
cascade to all relevant Public Health Staff*)

**Chief Executives HSC Trusts** (*for  
onward cascade to all relevant staff*)

**Chief Executive HSCB** (*for onward  
distribution to GP Medical Advisers*)

**All General Practitioners and GP Locums** (*for onward  
distribution to relevant practice staff*)

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Your Ref:  
Our Ref: HSS(MD) 2/2017  
Date: 21 February 2017

Dear Colleague

## **PATHWAY STANDARDS FOR THE NORTHERN IRELAND DIABETIC EYE SCREENING PROGRAMME**

### **ACTION REQUIRED**

Chief Executives must ensure that this information is drawn to the attention of all staff who may be involved in providing, supporting or facilitating, the Northern Ireland Diabetic Eye Screening Programme and those involved in managing people referred from it into the hospital eye service.

The Public Health Agency, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, the Health and Social Care Board, and other Health and Social Care Trusts should ensure that they can meet the Pathway Standards for the NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Programme.

The Public Health Agency should develop and maintain appropriate external Quality Assurance arrangements. The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust should develop and maintain appropriate internal Quality Assurance arrangements. These should be consistent with arrangements in other UK diabetic eye screening programmes.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that the Department of Health and the Northern Ireland Screening Committee (NISC) have formally endorsed the Pathway Standards for the NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Programme as the standards to be adopted by the Northern Ireland Diabetic Eye Screening Programme. Locally these standards will come into effect in April 2017.

They are available at -

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/543686/Diabetic\\_eye\\_screening\\_pathway\\_standards.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/543686/Diabetic_eye_screening_pathway_standards.pdf)

## Background

The Northern Ireland Diabetic Eye Screening Programme aims to reduce the risk of sight loss by the early detection and treatment (if needed) of diabetic retinopathy and maculopathy. Research has shown that screening can prevent sight loss in more than 15 people with diabetes in Northern Ireland each year.

The Diabetic Eye Screening Programme is commissioned, coordinated and quality assured by the Public Health Agency (PHA), and provided and managed by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Screening is delivered locally in line with national requirements and recommendations. Everyone with diabetes aged 12 years and over is eligible for screening. The only exception is people who have no light perception in both eyes. To be invited, individuals need to be on the primary care diabetes register. This includes those aged 12-18 years.

## Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance (QA) is an essential component of screening programmes. In order to maximise benefit and minimise harm to the public, it is necessary that such programmes should operate within the agreed standards. The PHA should develop and maintain appropriate external QA arrangements and the Belfast HSC Trust should develop and maintain appropriate internal QA arrangements. These should be consistent with arrangements in other UK diabetic eye screening programmes.

## Monitoring

The Diabetic Eye Screening Programme should be subject to ongoing monitoring and audit. A minimum core of information to support the monitoring of programme performance, including how it meets national standards and quality assurance measures, should be collected on everyone aged 12 and over who has diabetes.

Appropriate fail-safe mechanisms should be in place to ensure that screening is offered to all eligible people with diabetes and that those who require referral are followed up in a timely and appropriate way.

## Further Information

Further information can be obtained from Karen Simpson, Health Protection Branch, Department of Health - email address [Karen.Simpson@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Karen.Simpson@health-ni.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely



**Dr Michael McBride**  
Chief Medical Officer



**Professor Charlotte McArdle**  
Chief Nursing Officer

cc     Director of Public Health/Executive Medical Director, Public Health Agency  
Assistant Director Public Health (Screening), Public Health Agency  
Director of Nursing, Public Health Agency  
Medical Directors, HSC Trusts  
Directors of Nursing, HSC Trusts  
Director of Integrated Care, HSCB  
Head of School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Science, QUB  
Post Graduate Dean Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency  
Director of Postgraduate General Practice Education, NIMDTA  
Dean of Life and Health Sciences, University of Ulster  
Head of School of Nursing and Midwifery, QUB  
Head of School of Nursing, University of Ulster (UU)  
Chief Executive, Patient Client Council  
Chief Executive, RQIA

This letter is available on the Department of Health website at  
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/professional-medical-and-environmental-health-advice/hssmd-letters-and-urgent-communications>