

**EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO
THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE (OPTICAL CHARGES AND PAYMENTS)
AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2006**

2006 No. 479

1. This explanatory memorandum has been prepared by the Department of Health and is laid before Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.

2. Description

2.1 These Regulations amend the National Health Service (Optical Charges and Payments) Regulations 1997. They are made under the powers in section 126(4) of, and paragraph 2A of Schedule 12 to, the National Health Service Act 1977.

3. Matters of special interest to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments

3.1 None.

4. Legislative Background

4.1 These Regulations amend the National Health Service (Optical Charges and Payments) Regulations 1997 to increase the value of vouchers issued towards the cost of the supply, replacement or repair of glasses, contact lenses, and other optical appliances.

5. Extent

5.1 This instrument applies to England.

6. European Convention on Human Rights

As the instrument is subject to the negative resolution procedure and does not amend primary legislation, no statement is required.

7. Policy background

7.1 The Government recognises that certain groups of the general public should be entitled to help towards the cost of glasses, contact lenses and other optical appliances.

7.2 Help towards the cost of glasses, contact lenses and other optical appliances is via an NHS optical voucher, the values of which are reviewed annually. The voucher scheme is intended to provide children and people on a low income with a voucher that they may use either to buy from a basic range of spectacles or put towards a more expensive pair of their choice or alternatively put towards the cost of contact lenses. The value of the voucher is determined by the power of the prescription required by the patient. There are 10 vouchers bands ranging in value from £33.70 to £185.90 at the 2006/07 prices.

8. Impact

8.1 A Regulatory Impact Assessment has not been prepared for this instrument as it has no impact on business, charities or voluntary bodies.

9. Contact

Claire Housego at the Department of Health Tel: 0207 633 4126 or e-mail: claire.housego@dh.gsi.gov.uk can answer any queries regarding the instrument.