**Template email 6:   
Driving down the patient backlog – our community practice can help [England only]**

**{{INSERT MP NAME}}**

UK Parliament

House of Commons

Westminster

London

SW1A 0AA

(sent via email) **{{INSERT DATE}}**

Dear **[Insert name]**

**Re: Driving down the patient backlog – our community practice can help**

I am a local optometrist working in **[insert practice/location]** and I am writing to you about the extended role optometrists can play in the delivery of eye care services. Such services are more accessible for patients, and relieve pressure on other parts of the NHS, particularly over-burdened hospital eye departments.

As an optometrist, I know first-hand that eye care services in the UK remain under intense pressure. Latest figures show that 1 in 11 people on an NHS waiting list in England are awaiting an ophthalmology appointment. Some 27,260 of these have been waiting a year or more and it is well evidenced that delays to treatment can lead to preventable sight loss.\*

In my practice **[include services you provide and your expertise – tailoring as much as possible].** I would like to invite you to visit my practice, at a time that is convenient, to meet the team and some of our patients. We could also arrange local media to come along if you are comfortable with that.

Community optometrists, such as me, conduct the NHS sight test but we can also provide other eye care services on behalf of the NHS which reduce hospital waiting times and meet the needs of more patients in the community. These include the treatment of minor eye problems, pre- and post-operative cataract services, the monitoring of patients with stable glaucoma and low vision services. To shine a spotlight on this challenge, the Association of Optometrists, of which I am a member, have produced a briefing document (attached) which explains how a national strategy for eye care in England will support consistent commissioning of extended eye care services.

I would be grateful if you could write to Steve Barclay MP and/or Neil O’Brien MP at the Department of Health and Social Care, on my behalf, and ask them to commit to the national strategy. If you were able to raise this matter in questions and debates in the House also that would be hugely valued.

Best wishes,

**[Name, address, including postcode]**

\*NHS England, Consultant-led Referral to Treatment Times, 2023

The British Ophthalmological Surveillance Unit reports that 22 people a month lose vision through delayed follow-ups in hospital, likely to be under-estimated.