

## MESSAGE FROM MSE TRUST REGARDING REFERRALS

Dear Colleague

You will recall that we recently wrote to you with an update on progress within the Ophthalmology service, and within that we shared plans for the inclusion of a cataract referral pathway into the existing Single Point of Access (SPoA) / Triage Hub managed for us by Primary Eye Services (PES).

I am pleased to confirm this pathway will go live from Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024 and all referrals for Cataract procedure to **ALL PROVIDERS INCLUDING THE PRIVATE PROVIDERS OF NHS SURGERY (ISP)**, should be referred via the OPERA system or generic email address, from this date. Direct referrals to any provider should no longer be made.

This applies to all patients who have a GP within the Mid/South Essex area.

You should either refer using the OPERA portal in line with your routine referrals pathway or if you do not use OPERA, send your cataract referrals to [mse.eyecarehub@nhs.net](mailto:mse.eyecarehub@nhs.net) The cataract referral email addresses for Southend and Broomfield will be switched off on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December

Any referral incorrectly sent directly to an ISP, will be redirected to the Single Point of Access by the ISP to ensure full choice is offered, see below.

Please note, the paediatric referral email address remains a separate referral route as per LOC website.

### Is your patient eligible for surgery?

PES will complete an initial check to confirm your patient meets our local eligibility criteria:

- Best corrected visual acuity 6/12 or worse in the worst eye assessed by the clinician as being due to a rectifiable lenticular opacity,
- **AND** where the reduced visual acuity significantly interferes with activities of daily living.

If your patient has a visual acuity better than 6/12 but has lenticular opacities which are severely affecting their quality of life ie driving ability, please state this in detail in your referral. The request will then go through a Prior Approval Process after referral as per the ICB's commissioning guidelines.

A reminder that MSE ICB do not commission cataract surgery/lens extraction solely for the purpose of correcting longstanding pre-existing myopia (short sighted or near sighted) or hypermetropia (long sighted).

### Patient Choice

Patients who are currently seen in a specific hospital for another Ophthalmic issue will automatically be referred to that hospital for their cataract procedure.

For all other patients, PES will contact your patient with information regarding all local providers, including average waiting time to procedure, to enable the patient to make an informed choice of where they wish to have their cataract procedure.

Where you indicate a preferred provider, this will be noted however the patient will still receive the wider choice information and asked to make an informed choice. If the patient is being recommended to a specific provider, please indicate the reason for this recommendation in your referral letter.

There is a failsafe process of follow up in place for any patient who does not respond to the choice letter.

### **Cataract services at your local NHS Provider**

A reminder that MSEFT are the only local provider able to offer Cataract procedures under general anaesthetic and so if your patient is likely to require this, their only local option is MSEFT.

We are continuing to work towards increasing the number of patients who choose to have their Cataract procedures at MSEFT. We recognise in order to do this we need to offer a service that has:

1. short waiting times from referral to procedure
2. is able to offer flexible appointment times – potentially outside usual working hours
3. provides clear information to patients about the procedure and follow up
4. offers a high-quality experience for patients with good outcomes.

### **Waiting Times at MSEFT**

I am pleased to confirm that we now have additional cataract theatre capacity and have managed to bring our cataract waiting lists down substantially.

The process from the point of receipt of referral to completion of the procedure is currently taking 23 weeks at Southend and Orsett and 16 weeks at Broomfield. However, these waiting times also include the more complex patients (who need theatre capacity etc) which impacts upon the average waiting times; our less complex patients are being seen more quickly. Our aim with the additional capacity is to reduce our average wait times to 8 weeks

Kind regards

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