

WEST Essex MECS - Service Guidelines and Protocols

Commencement Date 11th November 2019

Service Guidelines and Protocols - revised December 2024

Routes of Referral:

- You can accept a patient who self-refers, i.e. patient walks into the practice or telephones the practice
- You can accept a referral from another Optometrist in the practice
- You can accept a referral from an Optometrist in another practice
- You can accept a referral from a GP
- You can accept a referral from A&E, 111, local eye casualty telephone triage
- You can accept a referral from a Pharmacist
- You can accept a referral from another healthcare professional
- You can self refer a patient

Service Requirements:

- Service only available for patients whose GP practice is located West Essex area of HWE ICB, homeless people living in West Essex and for patients of the travelling community living in West Essex.
- Patients may be seen from the Stort Valley area by exception – discuss with PES Clinical Lead
- All patient should be triaged and given an appointment in appropriate timescales. If an appointment cannot be given in the required timescale it is your duty to contact another MECS provider and arrange an appointment for the patient, unless a patient states they would prefer to find their own appointment. [Find a Practice - Search for your nearest participating optical practice](#)
- Provision of MECS is for eye conditions listed on the inclusion list

Included are:

- Loss of vision including transient loss.
- Sudden onset of blurred vision but always consider if a sight test would be more appropriate
- Ocular pain.
- Differential diagnosis of red eye.
- Foreign body and emergency contact lens removal (not by the fitting practitioner).
- Dry eye.
- Blepharitis.
- Epiphora.
- Trichiasis.
- Differential diagnosis of lumps and bumps in the vicinity of the eye.
- Flashes/floaters.
- Patient reported sudden onset field defects.
- Sudden onset Diplopia

Excluded are:

Help and Support: See the OPERA Help Section, contact us through the Blue Bubble or email hello@referral.support

- Patients identified to have severe eye conditions which need hospital attention e.g. orbital cellulitis, temporal arteritis.
- Eye problems related to herpes zoster.
- Adult squints, long standing diplopia.
- Removal of suture.
- Patient's reported symptoms indicate that a sight test is more appropriate than this service.
- Repeat field tests to aid diagnosis following an eye examination.
- Suspected cancers of the eye.
- Dry Age related macular degeneration.

Equipment:

- Access to the internet at your business address (for data reporting and referral system)
- Means of indirect ophthalmoscopy (i.e. wide field Volk lens or headset and lens)
- Slit lamp
- Applanation tonometer
- Distance test chart (Snellen/logmar)
- Near test type
- Equipment for epilation
- Threshold controlled electronic fields equipment able to produce a printed report
- Amsler chart
- Colour Vision Test
- Equipment for foreign body removal
- Appropriate diagnostic ophthalmic drugs – Mydriatic, anaesthetics, staining agent

Appointment requirement for a MECS appointment

- All patients should be offered an appointment within 24 hours or 5 working days depending on the symptoms and triage outcomes.

Care Pathway:

- Telephone triage and booking – ensuring patient suitable for MECS service
- Patient advice and education
- Full diagnostic service and management of results
- Appropriate treatment for clinical condition within Optometrist's competency and qualification
- One stop approach where appropriate
- Timely onward referrals when clinically necessary
- Planned discharge and on-going care planning, feedback to referring clinician where necessary
- Follow up where clinically necessary
- Written Order or Prescription for medication where clinically necessary – as allowed by Optometrist qualification level and adhering to the Commissioner Agreed
- Advice and guidance for referring clinicians

Duties:

- Details of triage to be recorded, even if patient not seen or directed elsewhere, including patient details, DOB etc. and advice given. Including date and time of phone call/face to face conversation. This will be entered and retained on the IT platform and keep any paper records as appropriate.
- Patients must be advised of probable length of appointment and that they may not be able to drive home
- Patients should normally be seen on first available appointment
- If clinically necessary follow up appointment to be given – where appropriate book before patient leaves the first appointment
- Any cancelled appointments – the provider to arrange alternative appointment at least once, within reasonable time frame in terms of clinical appropriateness
- Patient to be seen within 30 minutes of their appointment
- DNAs must be contacted within 24 hours of their missed appointment, giving appropriate advice and asking them to rearrange the appointment

Outcomes:

- No treatment necessary patient informed of this
- Diagnosis of the condition and advise given
- Diagnosis of the condition and treatment given e.g. removal of ingrowing eyelashes
- Diagnosis of condition and advice on eye preparations given
- Diagnosis of the condition and if applicable a Written Order or Prescription is supplied depending on the qualification of the Optometrist
- Diagnosis of condition and follow up appointment given, only given if clinically necessary
- Referral to GP
- Referral to HES routinely
- Referral to HES urgently
- Referral to HES emergency

Follow up appointments:

If clinically necessary a follow up appointment is to be given – where appropriate book this before patient leaves the first appointment.

Referral guidelines:

Help and Support: See the OPERA Help Section, contact us through the Blue Bubble or email hello@referral.support

Routine referrals - Patients/carers should be offered a choice of provider if they are to be referred to secondary care. In West Essex, it's usually Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH), although you may get patients with a preference for another HES, such as Whipps Cross, Addenbrooks and Broomfield, or a private referral. The OPERA IT system will transfer the referral form via nhs.net to the patient's GP. Please ensure you put the hospital preference on the referral form. OPERA will also send an information letter to the patient's GP.

Urgent referrals - Patient/carers should be offered a choice of provider, and this choice entered on the OPERA IT system for inclusion on the referral letter. The referral is then to be generated and manually sent by the practice using nhs.net email to the hospital. A copy letter for information will be automatically sent to the GP.

Wet AMD - must be sent same working day to the fast-track macular clinic via the nhs.net accounts email. PAH email for this is tpa-tr.opthalmology@nhs.net

Suspected Cancer – patient must be referred to their GP same working day in order that a two-week referral can be made. Please notify the GP practice by phone in order that there are no delays.

For all areas, **emergency referrals** follow the appropriate protocols for the Emergency Department, in this area emergencies are normally directed to Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH). The patient should be sent to PAH with an accompanying letter/referral form. See the Essex LOC website for details of referrals. If outside hours of Mon-Fri 9.00am – 5.00 pm then patient should be sent to Moorfields Eye Hospital with the accompanying letter/referral.

The numbers of referrals from this service is expected to be low

The referrals could be to:

- HES
- Other primary eyecare condition services
- Other healthcare services e.g. GP
- Emergencies go direct to the PAH Mon-Fri 9.00am-5.00pm, else Moorfields

In all cases when a referral is sent to the HES then a letter of information is generated and sent to the patient's GP by the OPERA IT system.

Literature to be supplied:

All Patients:

- Should be given Patient Literature relevant to their condition or treatment, e.g. Patient who was dilated should be given a leaflet on drugs used to dilate.
- Should be asked to complete a Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire.
- Where appropriate patients should be given literature on Public Health issues e.g. Smoking Cessation, Nutrition and Vision

For patients discharged:

A letter detailing the test outcomes and any other supporting advice should be sent to the GP within seven days of the appointment.

Help and Support: See the OPERA Help Section, contact us through the Blue Bubble or email hello@referral.support

For patients who are referred:

A letter detailing the test findings and any other supporting advice should be sent to the GP within seven days of the appointment, informing them their patient has been referred to Ophthalmology. This letter is automatically generated and sent by the OPERA IT system. A copy of this referral should be given to the patient/carer.

Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire (PSQ):

It is a requirement of all New Contracts for patients to be asked to complete a Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire (PSQ). Not all patients will choose to do so but the results of these questionnaires need to be reported every month to Clinical Lead, these are in turn reported to the commissioners.

- On completion of the episode, you can add in the patient's mobile number or preferred email address and the PSQ will be sent to them directly for completion at a later time.
- The practice email address could be added if the patient would like support from staff to complete the PSQ immediately after the appointment.

Claiming Fees:

- Fee for performing MECS appointment is £54 and £27.50 for a Follow Up appointment
- The fee claiming process is done automatically via the OPERA IT system
- This IT system is also used to report the results to Commissioners via the Clinical Lead.
- Once you have seen your patient, you will need to complete the OPERA IT system. Certain data is a requirement for this service and you will not be able to sign off the episode without completing all the necessary boxes.
- Once all data has been entered, you will be able to sign off your patient.
- Claims will be made automatically on your behalf on the 10th working day of the month following the sign off date.

OPERA IT system:

More details on the pathway are available on the Primary Eyecare website via the OPERA Help Section on your portal