

Dear Colleagues,

Electronic Eyecare Referral System (EeRS)

We are writing to you to inform you that as part of the National requirements with the 2023/24 operational planning guidance, ICBs are asked to '*expand direct access and self-referral where GP involvement is not clinically necessary*' by 1st September 2023, systems are asked to put in place:

- *direct referral pathways from community optometrists to ophthalmology services for all urgent and elective eye consultations*

As the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care System (ICS) continues to develop a more collaborative and integrated approach to health and care, we intend to use this opportunity to build on work currently underway to achieve this target. With this in mind, and recognising the responsibility of community Optometry practices to refer directly to secondary care providers, in the interests of removing the unnecessary and time-consuming burden for GPs to pass referrals on as they have their own system for their referrals, we are in the process of migrating the referral system to an electronic referral system (REGO).

You will already be aware of the roll out of the REGO electronic referral platform across BOB ICS. This platform will allow all routine referrals to be sent directly from community Optometry practices to the patients' chosen hospital or single point of access within the BOB ICS and neighbouring areas, with the ability to attach any diagnostics to support the referral where necessary.

The aim is to accelerate the roll out and have all community practices registered and using the platform by the 1st July 2023 to identify and resolve any potential issues so that we can meet the 1st September 2023 deadline. It is intended that any referrals by optometry colleagues sent to GP practices will be returned to you for direct optometry secondary care referral. We are committed to working in partnership to establish a safe and effective process.

Alongside this change we are establishing the nationally mandated Eye Health Network to bring local system stakeholders together to support implementation of the process and ensure consistent communications and updates to all providers. This will give you the opportunity to share your views via your Local Optical Committee chairs.

How does this effect my referrals?

Urgent/Emergency referrals: Including Eye Casualty and Rapid Access for Wet AMD

Initially from the 1st September the current pathway will remain unchanged. ~~You should continue to refer your urgent/emergency patients via NHS mail to your local hospital as you do now and continue to follow your local protocols.~~ Any change to current arrangements will be considered as a second phase to implementation and will be an objective of the Eye Health Network

Routine referrals:

These will be sent via the REGO platform, and you will be able to refer your patient to their preferred hospital/single point of access depending on your locality via REGO. An initial roll out “on boarding” period will commence in early July 2023, date to be confirmed ahead of full implementation of the referral process as of 1st September 2023. The REGO system will be enabled so that copies of the patient referral letter are also sent for information to the patient’s GP and appropriate provider (NHS/ISP). Appropriate independent service providers will also be added. The automated links between REGO and the hospital EPR continue to be developed.

We appreciate that some of you are not yet using REGO and this is a change to your referral process. In order to assist with the onboarding/registering process, we will be holding several virtual training webinars to show you how the system works and to answer any queries.

The date and time of these training events will be communicated shortly via your LOC.

The REGO system has many advantages and as the commissioning eye care services platform develops, will support our future intention of integration and transformation of locally commissioned ophthalmology pathways to align Optometry, as an integral component, with other parts of the NHS with appropriate electronic referrals.

Should you have any queries relating to the process or the system, please contact Dimple Mehta via email : dimple.mehta@england.nhs.uk , who will be able to assist you or sign post you to someone who can offer support.

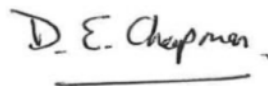
We very much appreciate your assistance with the migration of this process, and whilst we acknowledge the challenge, we are committed to improving patient experience by optimising our system capacity whilst streamlining local process.

Yours faithfully,

Dimple Mehta, NHSE Southeast Speciality Lead for Optometry



Dr David Chapman, ICB Clinical Lead for POD



Dr Abid Irfan, Director of Primary Care and Deputy Chief Medical Officer



Buckingham, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board