**\*GP Deflection is GOING LIVE across Derbyshire from Monday 4th May 2020: Please read this fully and get in touch if you have any questions\***

From Monday 4th May 2020**​**, Derbyshire GP practices will start to deflect patients with eye problems to CUES/MECS for optometrists to triage, initially by video call (or phone call where a video assessment is not possible/necessary).

This adapted CUES/MECS pathway is being introduced in direct response to the current COVID-19 crisis, and will be regularly reviewed as the situation changes. It is not intended as a permanent change to the MECS pathway in Derbyshire.

The adapted service began as a pilot in the Chesterfield & Dronfield area, which was successful and will now be extended out across the county.

ED & 111 deflections are also being considered as a future area of expansion, but we are trying to roll this out in a sensible way to make sure it is working effectively and to ensure that optometry practices have enough capacity to manage the number of presenting patients.

Please find a flowchart of the new pathway attached, along with a spreadsheet of the current participating practices and their contact details, opening hours, etc. There is also a PDF attached with the contact details for CRH & UHDB.

With regard to PPE, it is essential for practices to keep abreast of the latest guidance from the College of Optometrists, NHSE, and other relevant bodies. All slit lamps should be fitted with a breathguard. Even where practices have the requisite PPE available, procedures requiring close patient contact should be kept to the absolute minimum required to thoroughly investigate the patient's presenting symptoms. It is imperative that optometrists work to in line with guidance and do not put themselves or their patients at undue risk.

Here is a link to the latest PPE requirements:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/879111/T4_poster_Recommended_PPE_additional_considerations_of_COVID-19.pdf> The first row of the table applies to optometrists in practice: no aerosol-generating procedures (for example, air-puff tonometry) should be performed, and no patients considered as possible or confirmed COVID-19 cases should be seen in the community setting.

Here is a link to College of Optometrists’ COVID-19 guidance, which includes guidance on how to use and dispose of PPE:

<https://www.college-optometrists.org/the-college/media-hub/news-listing/coronavirus-2019-advice-for-optometrists.html?utm_source=social-media&utm_medium=graphics&utm_campaign=COVID-19>

Please ensure you keep me (alexnhow@hotmail.co.uk) updated with regard to what PPE you have available, so that patients requiring face-to-face assessment can be directed to the correct practice.

The issue of PPE has been escalated by the CCG and we hope to have a workable solution soon.

Thank you so much for your continued involvement and your commitment to helping patients at this difficult time. It really is much appreciated. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Alex