

Future of Minor Eye Conditions Service (MECS) in East Sussex

To: GPs, Pharmacies, 111, ESHT Hospital Eye Service, A&E, UCT and MIU

We are writing to inform you about changes to how people with minor eye conditions in Sussex will be able to receive care and support.

As you may be aware a Minor Eye Conditions Service was first introduced to East Sussex in 2017. The aim of the service at the time was to reduce unwarranted ophthalmology referrals and presentations to A&E.

At NHS Sussex we are keen to ensure consistency where possible across our communities, and with this in mind and acknowledging this service has only been available in East Sussex, a thorough review of the service has been recently undertaken looking at the following criteria:

- Coverage of participating opticians across East Sussex
- The rate of ophthalmology referrals and presentations to A&E in geographical areas with and without a MECs site.
- Value for money
- Patient feedback
- Service duplication

In addition, the review looked at the wider need for community optometry to support elective recovery and found there could be greater opportunities in other areas of Optometry.

Therefore, after careful consideration of the review and its outcomes, it has been agreed that there needs to be increased focus on community optometry, specifically other pathways to MECS as well as cataract and glaucoma' diagnosis and follow up.

I am therefore writing to you to confirm the MECs service will cease from 31 December 2023 (**no referrals to be made after 15 December 2023**). The funding for this service will then be reinvested in cataract and other ophthalmology services.

Alternative provision to MECs is available, and some of these services are listed below. These recommendations do not replace clinical decision making but aim to support you as a guide. The information provided can also be used to inform your appointments teams and receptionists so that advice can be provided to patients when they first make contact.

Minor conditions

Condition / symptom	Alternative provision
Differential diagnosis of lumps and bumps in the vicinity of the eye	GP
Flashes/floaters – recent onset	GP or Hospital Eye Service
Red Eye	No pain - Pharmacy or GP With pain – GP or Hospital Eye Service
Sore or uncomfortable eye	Pharmacy
Worsening dry eye	Pharmacy or Hospital Eye Service

Lid problems	Pharmacy or GP
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More significant conditions:

Condition / symptom	Alternative provision
Loss of vision including transient loss	Hospital Eye Service/A&E or UTC
Ocular pain	Hospital Eye Service/A&E or UTC
Foreign body and emergency contact lens removal (not by the fitting practitioner)	Hospital Eye Service/A&E or UTC
Patient reported sudden onset field defects.	GP or Hospital Eye Service/A&E or UTC
Suspected Foreign body	Hospital Eye Service/A&E or UTC
Sudden Blurry Vision	Hospital Eye Service/A&E or UTC
Sudden Diplopia	GP or Hospital Eye Service/A&E or UTC
Visual Field defect	GP or Hospital Eye Service/A&E or UTC

- **Pharmacy** – Most pharmacies. 96% are signed up to the NHS Community Pharmacist Consultancy Service (CPCS). Details of provision can be found in the link: [NHS England » NHS Community Pharmacist Consultation Service \(CPCS\) – integrating pharmacy into urgent care.](#)

- The interactive map shows all participating pharmacies.

https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1iJbOej8xBbgwDkJJFK_R12V1KB1NNSU&usp=sharing

- **Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC), including Minor Injury Units (MIU)** – There are nurse-led MIUs based in Uckfield, and Crowborough and doctor-led UTCs based in Eastbourne and Hastings. They can help manage with some minor eye conditions and often prescribe medication not available over the counter.
- **Hospital Eye Service (HES)/Accident and Emergency (A&E).** Most HES departments do not operate a walk-in service. The local hospital patient access process will need to be followed.
- **General Practitioner (GP)** – GP practices can help with some minor eye conditions or can help patients choose the most appropriate place to be treated, such as pharmacies or for more serious conditions to A&E or the local Hospital Eye Service.

In addition, NHS Sussex has prepared a patient leaflet to assist with patient access to other services (Annex 1)

If you have any further questions regarding services available for patients, please contact: sxicb-wsx.contactus-plannedcare@nhs.net.

Yours faithfully,
Steve Peacock

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