

**Cataract service update for optometrists
and GPs:
Information from NEL Ophthalmology Network**

September 2025

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to share with you the continued reduction in the waiting times for cataract procedures across the acute Trusts in North East London (NEL).

Please note that the use of the two Single Point of Access for all routine referrals is **mandated** and direct referrals to providers is not an approved pathway. The SPoAs will follow the choice of provider that the patient has indicated.

For Barking & Dagenham, Redbridge and Havering; optometrists can refer directly to the Evolutio triage service where the patient will be offered choice of places to receive their treatment and an invite to book their appointment.

Referral guidance to use the Evolutio triage service can be found on the following link: [Refer to us - Evolutio Care Innovations \(evolutio-ophthalmology.co.uk\)](https://www.evolutio-ophthalmology.co.uk). This service is also available on eRS for GPs.

The rest of the places across NEL- City & Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest also have a single point of access hosted by Moorfields Hospital where community optometrists can send referrals directly to nelondonicb.eyerefer@nhs.net, which routes the referral to the patient's preferred hospital under choice for triage.

Local optometrists are encouraged to continue to refer patients for a cataract surgery to Moorfields, Barts Health and BHRUT Trusts who can usually offer the 18 weeks pathway as routine surgery does not require urgency. *(Please find at the end of the comms- cataract referral criteria for surgery)*

Month	Trust	Site	Referrals to 1 st OPA (weeks)	OPA to Surgery (weeks)	Referral to surgery total (weeks)
September 2025	Barts Health	NUH	8 weeks	12 weeks (All Patients treated @ Whipps)	20 weeks
September 2025	Barts Health	Royal London	9 weeks	12 weeks	21 weeks
September 2025	Barts Health	Whipps Cross	13 weeks	8 weeks	21 weeks
September 2025	BHRUT	King George	9 weeks	9 weeks	18 weeks
September 2025	Practice Plus Group Hospital	PPG Ilford	1 week	1 week	2 weeks

September 2025	Moorfields	Stratford	3 weeks	3 weeks	6 Weeks
Month	Trust	Site	Referrals to 1 st OPA (weeks)	OPA to Surgery (weeks)	Referral to surgery total (weeks)
September 2025	Moorfields	St Anns	1 week	1 week	2 weeks
September 2025	NEL/Nuffield Health	Holly	2 weeks	7 weeks	9 weeks
September 2025	Spa Medica	Dalston	2 weeks	1 week	3 weeks
September 2025	Spa Medica	Watford	2 weeks	2 weeks	4 weeks

The up to date waiting times for cataract surgery currently in NEL are listed in the table above and we will provide regular updates as waiting times continue to fall.

Evidence Based Interventions (EBI) Criteria

There is a strict referral criterion in North East London under the Evidence Based Intervention Policy – see policy as follows:

Cataract Surgery (Policy Extract)

Patients should be referred when both of the following criteria are met: 1. Patient has a best corrected visual acuity of 6/9 or worse in either the first or second eye

AND

2. Patient has impairment in lifestyle such as substantial effect on activities of daily living, leisure activities, and risk of falls

OR

When the patient has any of the following ocular comorbidities:

- Glaucoma
- Conditions where cataract may hinder disease management or monitoring, including diabetic and other retinopathies including retinal vein occlusion, and age-related macular degeneration; neuro-ophthalmological conditions (e.g. visual field changes); or getting an adequate view of fundus during diabetic retinopathy screening
- Occuloplastics disorders where fellow eye requires closure as part of eyelid reconstruction
- Corneal disease where early cataract removal would reduce the chance of losing corneal clarity (e.g. Fuch's corneal dystrophy or after keratoplasty)

- Corneal or conjunctival disease where delays might increase the risk of complications (e.g. cicatrising conjunctivitis)
- Severe anisometropia in patients who wear glasses
- Posterior subcapsular cataracts

However, in the above circumstances you should ideally refer to the provider that is managing their ocular comorbidity rather than an alternative provider due to the complexity of the care that may be required and the opportunity to reduce the number of patients appointments and interventions.

Exclusion - If the patient is already under the care of an ophthalmologist they are excluded from this scheme and must be referred via their GP for consideration of Cataract/PCO surgery to their current ophthalmology provider so cataract surgery can be considered alongside their other condition to minimise patient attendances and provide holistic care.

Provider categories

Please be aware that not all providers offer or are accredited for more complex patient cataract surgery – referrers should ensure they refer as follows or seek guidance from SPoA:

Category 1 (Usually full ophthalmology departments that cover all routine types of eye referrals):

- All relevant Cataract related HRGs for the treatment of those patients.
- Emergency cover (providers must be able to manage their own post-surgical complications)
- No patient exclusions (all ages and complexities)

Category 2 (often standalone cataract units rather than HES):

- Providers should still manage standard post surgical complications with relevant aftercare and patient support without referral to NHS urgent care services.
- Patient exclusions
 - ☐ Under 60 years of age
 - ☐ Under other provider ophthalmologist for other eye condition in the last 12 months
 - ☐ Don't have full capacity to consent
 - ☐ Other medical condition unsuitable for standalone cataract unit
 - ☐ High complexity cataract score