

PLEASE NOTE: IMPORTANT CHANGES TO CCG REFERRAL PATHWAY FOR REGIONAL PAEDIATRIC OPHTHALMOLOGY AND ORTHOPTIC SERVICES

Dear Ophthalmic Contractor,

Paediatric Ophthalmology is now a **regional service** managed by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) with clinical ophthalmology services provided in a number of locations within the Belfast Trust area and in outreach clinics in other Trust locations across Northern Ireland. Paediatric Ophthalmology offers clinical services to children up to the age of 16yrs after which time the patient will be transferred to adult ophthalmology services; hence **persons aged 16years or over** requiring referral to ophthalmology should **not** be referred to the paediatric service but should be referred to general ophthalmology or the appropriate/relevant sub-specialty.

In order to streamline the referral pathways to support the regional Paediatric Ophthalmology service it has been necessary to update the CCG eReferral system to ensure consistency of approach by referring clinicians (GPs and Optometrists). As such some changes to CCG destinations have been made to provide a clear referral pathway for children <16yrs who require referral to Paediatric Ophthalmology.

In tandem with these changes the CCG referral pathway to Orthoptic Services has also been updated, the changes to Orthoptic Service referral pathways reflect the use of CCG now for Orthoptic Services in **ALL** Trust areas.

Please note the following important points in regard to the changes to the CCG system and referrals to Paediatric Ophthalmology and Orthoptic Services. It is vital that the following information is disseminated to all optometrists working in your practice.

What are these changes?.....

1. On the CCG system Paediatric Ophthalmology is now listed as a referral destination in **ALL** HSC Trust areas, the destination is titled "**Ophthalmology – Paediatric Ophthalmology**". **Please note** that in some HSC Trusts the referral destination is listed under more than one hospital location – please check and familiarise yourself with the referral destination and if necessary save it to "My Favourites" on your personal CCG user account. However it is important to understand that **ALL** Paediatric Ophthalmology referrals will be receipted and managed centrally by the Belfast HSCT.

2. Any queries which a referring clinician (GP or Optometrist) has in relation to their referrals and/or appointments and waiting times for Paediatric Ophthalmology must be directed to the Belfast HSC Trust appointments office on 028 961 59700.

Note: emergency ophthalmic referrals to eye casualty for paediatric patients (<16yrs) should be directed to Belfast Trust eye casualty on 028 961 50093. GPs and Optometrists should **NOT** use CCG for emergency paediatric ophthalmology referrals to eye casualty, refer by telephone only.

3. Orthoptic Service referral destinations are now listed alongside all other CCG ophthalmic destinations and are all titled “**Ophthalmology – Orthoptics**”, all previous Orthoptic referral destinations are now deactivated. If necessary please save the Orthoptic Service referral destination to “My Favourites” on your personal CCG user account. Please note that Orthoptic referrals are receipted and managed within each individual Trust area. Contact details for Orthoptic Clinics have previously been made available to all practices and can be found at the following link: [Paediatric Eyecare Information \(hscni.net\)](http://Paediatric Eyecare Information (hscni.net))
4. Optometrists and GPs will use the same CCG referral template and these are labelled accordingly:
 - a. Paed Ophth – For GP & Optom
 - b. Orthoptic – For GP & Optom

Note: Optometrists should NOT use a referral template which is labelled ‘Healthy’ and/or ‘Red Flag’, only GPs will use these.

Where a referral is suspected to be urgent a referring clinician should select the “urgent” option on the CCG referral template, where not urgent select the “routine” option. Please note that in ALL instances the triaging clinician will review the referral information to determine the urgency of an appointment.

As previously advised it is essential that all relevant clinical information and any supporting diagnostic information such as fundus images, OCT scans, visual field plots etc.... (it is recognised that this info is usually only available for Optometrist referrals - GPs are not expected to complete this) are attached to the referral to enable effective and efficient triage.

5. Paper referrals to Orthoptic services in **all HSC Trust areas will cease** (from July 2023) for all Optometry practices which are connected to the HSC Portal and by default have access to CCG. This applies to both referral of children and adults where one referral template will be hosted for use by the referring clinician (GP or Optometrist). **Note**, a very small number of optometry practices (n=6 @ end June 2023) do not have access to the HSC Optometry Portal and only these practices will continue with direct paper referrals to orthoptic services (and for paediatric ophthalmology referrals via the patient's GP).

6. CCG Referral '**Guidance Banners**' for both Paediatric Ophthalmology and Orthoptic Services have been revised, it is essential that **ALL** referring clinicians are familiar with the revised guidance notes to ensure that the referral is directed to the correct clinical service and can therefore be managed in a timely way.
Note: Please ensure that you read the revised guidance banners both for Paediatric Ophthalmology and Orthoptic Services and action all referrals in line with the guidance.

All previously issued guidance to support primary care clinicians is hosted at the following link and you are encouraged to review this to support the adoption and implementation of the changes to the regional Paediatric Ophthalmology service.

[Paediatric Eyecare Information \(hscni.net\)](http://hscni.net)

Queries in respect of this guidance should be directed to ophthalmic.services@hscni.net in the first instance.

Ophthalmic Services

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