**PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE FOR MECS PLUS OTHER SERVICES**

**New NHS high street eye service to benefit patients**

Optical practices in [insert area] are set to deliver free NHS eye health check-ups in the high street when a new service launches on [insert start date].

People with eye problems, such as red eye, sore eye or visual disturbance will be among those who will benefit from the new services delivered by local optometrists.

Launching the service, Chair of the [insert area] Local Optical Committee, [insert name], said: “Optical practices should be the first port of call for anyone with an eye problem. We have the skills, equipment and a qualified staff to ensure that patients are quickly assessed and referred to hospital if there is a more urgent problem. This will be more convenient for patients and reduce pressure on the NHS.”

[insert name] added that around 70% of people with minor eye conditions will be seen within 24 hours in the convenience of their local high street without the need to go all the way to hospital or sit for hours clogging up A&E for minor treatment.

The new NHS services, provided by [insert number] optical practices in [insert CCG area] will help reduce GP and A&E visits. Under the new arrangements, optometrists will also be funded to review patients to re-check results and monitor symptoms in patients with conditions such as cataract, meaning only patients who need specialist intervention will need to be referred to the Hospital Eye Service.

All major high-street optical chains and many independent optical practices in the [insert area] have joined together to offer patients the free NHS service as part of a national eyecare company. Patients will be able to visit any participating local practice for the free service.

It’s part of an NHS blueprint to take services out of hospitals and provide make them more effective by carrying out routine monitoring in community settings, such as high street optical practices, allowing the hospital eye service to treat the most urgent cases and tackle backlogs which could result in avoidable sight loss.

For more information about the eye health services and participating practices, visit the Primary Eyecare [insert name] website: www.[insert PEC link].org.uk. Local GP surgeries, pharmacies and other health professional can visit the site and access posters and leaflets to explain the services to patients suffering eye health problems.

[ends]

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES**

Contact, Communications Officer, Primary Eyecare….

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Enhanced Community Eye Health Service [or name and details of service]**

Planned service rollout includes:

Phase 1: [date]: service(s)

Phase 2: [date]: service(s) [alter as appropriate]

**Local Optical Committee**

The [insert name] Local Optical Committee (LOC) is a statutory body formed to represent NHS ophthalmic contractors and performers within its local area. The LOC is an independent and representative group with statutory rights, recognised and specifically referred to in NHS legislation. For more information, visit the [LOC website](http://www.glosloc.co.uk/content.asp?pID=1).

**Primary Eyecare [insert name]**

The Enhanced Community Eye Care Service [or name of service] is managed by Primary Eyecare [insert name]. Primary Eyecare [insert name] is a not-for-profit company incorporated by the [insert name] LOC whose remit is to act as the prime contractor on behalf of all optical practices in [insert area].

For more details and a full list of directors, visit [www.insertname.org.uk](http://www.insertname.org.uk).

**Opticians and Optometrists**

Optical practices employ optometrists and dispensing opticians. An optometrist is the person who conducts your eye examination or sight test. During a sight test they will thoroughly examine your eyes; testing your vision as well as the health of your eyes and prescribing glasses and contact lenses where necessary.

If you need glasses, and the practice has a dispensing optician, they are trained to provide and supply the most comfortable fitting and aesthetically appealing spectacles taking account of your personal, visual and vocational needs. They are also skilled in the assessment and management of the visually impaired and some will specialize in the fitting and supply of contact lenses.

**LOCSU**

The Local Optical Committee Support Unit (LOCSU) works with the Optical Confederation to support Local Optical Committees (LOCs) across England in developing local eye health services. LOCSU helps community optometrists and opticians work with local commissioners to make community eye services accessible for patients and cost effective for the NHS. LOCs represent the interests of Optometrists, Dispensing Opticians and Contractors of Ophthalmic services in local areas. For information about eye health services visit the Local Optical Committee Support Unit website: <http://www.locsu.co.uk/community-services-pathways/> or contact [info@locsu.co.uk](mailto:info@locsu.co.uk).