



## Postoperative Cataract Care – Independent Sector Provider of NHS Cataract Surgery Collaboration with Primary Care Optometry

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### At a glance

#### Challenge

Demand for cataract surgery is increasing year on year and is predicted to rise by over 20% in the next 10 years<sup>1</sup>. This has been further exacerbated by impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the waiting lists and capacity.

#### Objective

Work collaboratively across the care pathway to streamline patient care, release capacity within the surgical provider and increase productivity.

#### Solution

Implement a post-operative cataract care pathway delivered by primary care optometry to optimise the post-operative care pathway. The solution should utilise an integrated IT system to enable data collection and reporting to NOD, in line with the 'NHS long term plan' of providing care closer to home.

#### Outcome

15,000 hospital appointments avoided so far. The potential to increase capacity by 3,000 new patient appointments per annum working at 80% discharge across the 6 hospitals.

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### Introduction

A national independent sector provider of NHS cataract surgery (Optegra), working with the largest Local Optical Committee company (Primary Eyecare Services) mobilised a national post-cataract assessment service provided by a network of over 1800 optometry practices. The service ensures a consistent, high quality post-cataract assessment, full data reporting to the surgery provider, enabling National Ophthalmology Database<sup>1</sup> (NOD) data reporting, which in turn has enabled the surgery provider to free up over 3000 new patient appointments per year, nationally, to see new patients to support the reduction in waiting lists. The large primary care-based delivery network ensures that care is accessible and close to home. So far there have been over 15,000 post-operative assessments carried out in primary care optometry avoiding a hospital appointment.

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<sup>1</sup> nodaudit.org.uk



## Drivers for Change

Cataract surgery is already the most common surgical procedure undertaken in the UK<sup>2</sup>. With an increasingly aging population in the UK<sup>3</sup> demand will increase, meaning that the capacity to deliver cataract surgery will need to continually increase. In 2015, it was predicted that the demand for cataract services will rise by 25% over the next 10 years and by 50% over the next 20 years.<sup>2</sup>

In 2014 the Five Year Forward view stated that “Out-of-hospital care needs to become a much larger part of what the NHS does<sup>4</sup>”, encouraging the delivery of healthcare services away from the hospital setting and closer to the patient’s home.

More recently, Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) and National Eye Care Recovery and Transformation Programme (NECRTP) guidance has recommended the implementation of a post-operative cataract care pathway in primary care optometry.

The 2019 GIRFT report recommended the use of “commissioned primary care optometry services to review patients who have had uncomplicated/routine cataract surgery and have no serious ocular comorbidity”. The report highlighted that 25 cataract service providers stated that they had already implemented a post-operative review by primary care, and it was also noted that there had been no clinical issues or concerns with this approach. Further, the report also recognised that there is a growing range of independent providers that are commissioned to provide NHS treatment and that this can reduce the pressure on other NHS providers whilst providing comparative quality and often at a lower cost to commissioners.<sup>5</sup>

In September 2020, NECRTP launched an Eye Care Hub on the FutureNHS Collaboration Platform. Within the hub the NECRTP have publishing clinical and commissioning guidance alongside support tools to help transform eye care services across primary, community and secondary care. A postoperative cataract pathway delivered in primary care is also a key recommendation within the newly published Optometry First toolkit Optometry First Toolkit – Eye Care Hub – FutureNHS Collaboration Platform.

An interim joint statement released by the College of Optometrist and the Royal College of Ophthalmologists in June 2021 recommended the discharge of patients following routine uncomplicated cataract surgery. This recommendation aims to help to rapidly increase hospital capacity enabling patients with urgent, complex or sight threatening disease to be seen more quickly. It further recommends that people who have had routine uncomplicated surgery are discharged to primary care<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The Way Forward: [rcophth.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/RCOphth-The-Way-Forward-Cataract-Summary-300117.pdf](https://rcophth.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/RCOphth-The-Way-Forward-Cataract-Summary-300117.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Living Longer: how our population is changing and why it matters: [ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/livinglongerhowourpopulationischangingandwhyitmatters/2018-08-13](https://ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/livinglongerhowourpopulationischangingandwhyitmatters/2018-08-13)

<sup>4</sup> Five Year Forward view: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/5yfv-web.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Ophthalmology GIRFT Programme National Speciality Report [gettingitrightfirsttime.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/OphthalmologyReportGIRFT19P-FINAL.pdf](https://gettingitrightfirsttime.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/OphthalmologyReportGIRFT19P-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [future.nhs.uk/NationalEyeCareHub/view?objectId=29549904#section\\_3](https://future.nhs.uk/NationalEyeCareHub/view?objectId=29549904#section_3)



Most recently, in October 2021, NECRTP secured funding to support the discharge of routine and uncomplicated cataract patients after surgery, with return of postoperative refractive error data and visions to enable NOD reporting.

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## What Was Done?

In April 2016, Optegra worked with Manchester LOC to launch a CCG commissioned post-operative cataract service contracted via GM Primary Eyecare Services (which later became Primary Eyecare Service (PES)). This built on the service already in place for patients from Stockport CCG who accessed surgery at the Optegra Eye Hospital Manchester.

These services demonstrated that a primary care post-operative service was clinically safe, it was well received by the patients and improved productivity in the hospital. This service was aligned to the recognised LOCSU cataract pathway which is equitable with the “enhanced – Level 2” option for post-operative care as outlined in the NECTRP Optometry first toolkit. The pathway ensures that patients are seen in a convenient location, by a suitably qualified professional; it ensures full outcome data reporting and enables capacity to be released in other parts of the system whilst, crucially, maintaining quality and patient safety at the centre of provision.

In 2019, building on their local success, PES signed a national contract with Optegra. This allowed post-operative cataract assessments to be implemented at hospital sites where locally there wasn't a commissioned service, whilst also maintaining the recognised LOCSU cataract pathway.

The objective of the collaboration was to:

- Reduce avoidable visits to the hospital site
- Provide the patient access to post-operative care closer to home
- Ensure that appropriate outcome data was collected and submitted to the surgery provider for local audit by the primary care optometrist
- Report data to NOD
- Improve productivity with released capacity utilised for new patients
- Optimise the use of the wider primary care optometric workforce and estate
- Maintain and improve quality and patient experience

Mr Javad Moayedi, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon and NHS Medical Director for Optegra stated that “Patients also retain the convenience and familiarity of their known local optician.”

It is estimated that 80% of patients would be suitable for post-operative care in primary care optometry.



Continuing, Melissa Ball, Head of NHS at Optegra, stated that “We calculated that if 80% of our post-operative assessments were carried out under a primary care led optometry service, this would enable us to increase in capacity of an extra 3,000 new patient appointments annually.”

*“For Optegra, this approach releases some time pressure for our staff, consultants and optometrists, and so an increased number of patients can be seen by us and treated with surgery - which in turn helps to reduce the waiting times for individuals, and tackles the broader NHS backlog. The plus for community optometrists and opticians is to retain their patients for any ongoing care as well as increase and develop their skills within ophthalmology. It also creates a closer relationship between the hospital and opticians which is always a good thing.”*

**Mr Javad Moayedi, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon and NHS Medical Director for Optegra**

The service utilises an integrated IT system which is critical to ensure a safe discharge process, to reinforce failsafe processes and to ensure reliable reporting. The benefits of using an integrated IT platform are:

- Ability to look up patients details from the NHS spine ensure correct patient input
- Direct discharge to a named practice to ensure that patients are not lost to follow-up
- The reporting of patients who failed to engage with the service or failed to attend their appointment
- Ability to upload the Medisoft surgical summary sheet directly to the IT platform to limit the admin burden and ensure that the Optometrist is providing with all the required information
- Full report received for each patient to enable the reporting to the National Ophthalmology Database (NOD)

This service is now live across 6 hospitals in England and over 1800 primary care optometry sites.

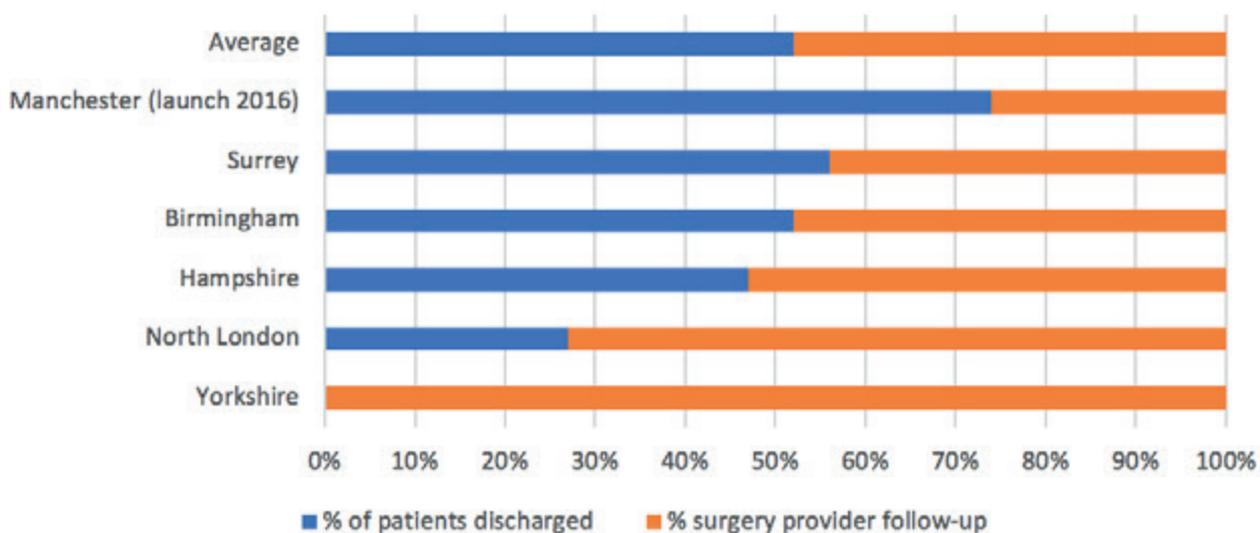
The Manchester post-operative care service, which was mobilised in 2016, is now close to the target of 80% discharge.

The services launched in April 2019 across the 5 remaining hospitals have, largely due to the impact of the COVID pandemic, had differing speed of mobilisation. The number of practices providing post-operative follow up has risen from 600 in 2019 to over 1800 in November 2021, and this number continues to grow.

The surgical provider has worked very closely with the Local Optical Committees alongside the provider company to ensure good service coverage enabling easy access for patients.



## % of patients discharged for primary care optometry post cataract assessment



The service launches in the new hospital site (Newcastle) in Nov 2021.

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## Outcomes

The service has been well received by patients with a patient satisfaction survey finding that 99% of patients rated the service as good or very good. (Sample 1790 patients)

Mr Javad Moayedi, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon and NHS Medical Director for Optegra, shared his thoughts on the many advantages of post-op checks being carried out in the community following cataract surgery:

“There are many advantages to working in this way. For patients, there is less travel which is not only convenient and timesaving for them individually, but also results in lower carbon emission which benefits the environment.”

Less than 1% of patients discharged need further care due to a complication. Minor postoperative complications such as dry eyes/irritation are managed within the primary care service. Data indicates that primary care optometry report refractive outcomes and information in 90% of cases, which is subsequently reported to NOD.



## Conclusion

To date there been over 15,000 post-operative assessments carried out in primary care via the arrangement outlined in this study.

The service ensures that patients are seen in a convenient location, by a suitably qualified professional with full outcome data reporting including reporting of NOD data set as recommended by NICE NG 775. This enables capacity to be released in other parts of the system whilst keeping patient safety and quality at the centre of provision.

The hospital sites have the potential to deliver the capacity for an additional 3,000 new patient appointments per annum working at 80% discharge and involving all surgical sites, facilitating patient access to cataract surgery, and enabling the redeployment of hospital staff to assess patient with other ocular pathology, reducing the risk of sight loss. This rate is close to being achieved in the Manchester area.

The hospital Ophthalmology team and patients give excellent feedback on the service provided by primary care optometrists with Optegra's patient satisfaction survey finding that 99% of patients experience of the overall service was rated good or very good. (Sample 1790 patients).

The collaboration has led to a high-quality service with a good or very good patient feedback, while meeting the aims of the NHS Long term plan, increasing productivity to avert the impact of aging population and the COVID-19 pandemic on waiting times for cataract surgery.

This service is also in place with other ISP cataract surgery providers providing similar level of benefit to the system.