

Local access policy

Owner	Catherine Needham Andrew Needham
Publication Date	March 2026
Review Date	March 2027
Version	2
Note	To be viewed in conjunction with the MCA and DOL policy

Introduction

This policy discusses how Eyecare medical manages patient referrals, appointments, waiting lists and treatment.

This is to ensure timely treatment based on clinical priority and reduce waiting times which is not only a clinical necessity but a patient's right.

Wet Age Related Macula Degeneration is a rapidly blinding condition but if treated promptly can be arrested and vision saved. Speed matters to starting treatment and continuing regular treatments titrated to the individual patient requirements. Eyecare medical (ECM) are committed to delivering rapid safe and effective retinal care for patients in Cheshire and Merseyside, Derbyshire and surrounding areas in the NorthWest.

Referral pathway

ECM utilise a rapid referral pathway to ensure the rapid assessment of patients without intermediary appointments. This involves the direct referral by optometrists to our dedicated macula clinics.

Referrals should be made within 1 working day to our service in accordance with NICE guidance. All referrals are triaged by a consultant medical retinal specialist and those accepted are graded and given either appointment within 1 week or sooner according to clinical priority.

By using the National Access policy applied to Eyecare Medical services we aim to ensure a patient access programme is available for rapid care and effective followup in a timely manner. Optometrists use a secure email using a specific electronic template to refer to our department.

We have 100% achievement of NICE guidance that requires patients to be seen in the macula clinic and to have had treatment within 2 weeks of referral when required.

Clinical presentation

Patients present with new onset of blurred or distorted vision or rapid visual loss with macula fluid, haemorrhage or exudate on imaging or clinically.

One stop clinics

In accordance with local policies we offer all assessment, diagnosis and treatment at the same time for not only new patients but also all follow-up appointments. This allows prompt rapid effective treatment that is convenient and quick.

Community care

Our community based clinics in Macclesfield, Northwich and Eastham, Wirral allow easy access away from main hospitals providing services closer to home with ample free parking and good local transport networks.

Injection protocol:

Wet AMD is treated with intravitreal injections of biologics against new blood vessel growth inside the eye.

We use a treat and extend regime targeted and directed by individual patient characteristics to optimise care and minimize unnecessary treatment. After 3 initial monthly loading doses injection intervals are increased 2 to 4 weekly to 4 months when the decision is often made to monitor and treat when necessary rather than in advance.

Appointments

Further appointments are made before leaving the clinic to ensure no break in continuity of care. ECM adopt a non discriminatory approach amongst service users.

Cancellations/discharges

After a cancellation the patient is contacted by phone or post to arrange a further appointment. If a patient cancels an appointment consecutively three times then clinical advice will be sought before deciding on a further offer. If discharged the patient will be referred back to their referrer and GP notified accordingly.