



Chair: Dr Chris Davey
Secretary: Raj Billoo

24th September 2020

Good Afternoon,

I trust that you are well and managing to cope in these challenging times.

You will be aware that the contract for our enhanced services is due to end at the end of this month. For most practices in the area the Enhanced Services contract encompasses Referral Refinement, OHTMS, Choice Cataract referral and MECS.

The Minor Eye Conditions Service (MECS) was introduced to our area in June of last year. I hope that you have found the scheme a worthwhile addition to your practice services. As you know from communications towards the end of last year it was decided that this scheme would not be renewed at the end of its contract in September 2020.

Earlier this week the Chair of Bradford LOC, Dr Chris Davey and Ravi Naru met with representatives from the CCG. They confirmed that the MECS scheme would not be renewed. However because of the current Covid pandemic, they would like it to be replaced by the Covid Urgent EyeCare Service (CUES). This service has been implemented across other areas of the country, including Leeds a few months ago.

CUES has similarities to MECS, but also some distinct differences which I will go into more detail about over the coming weeks. I've provided a link to the College of Optometrists website which goes through CUES in some detail. Please note however that there may be variations in how the scheme will be implemented locally in Bradford and Craven.

The CCG have told us there will be an approximate 3 month transition period from MECS to CUES. This will give time to allow the service specification to be finalised with due consideration for our local needs and population, a contract to be setup with the Primary Eyecare Company (who optometry contractors will then sub-contract to), GP's and pharmacists to be updated, and new associated software to be implemented. This will also avoid a sudden cessation of the MECS scheme.

In this interim period your practice can continue to claim for MECS appointments but please try to discourage patients that would not be eligible for CUES. The main reason that MECS is to be decommissioned was due to the vast number of episodes that were relatively minor and hence would not have troubled the HES anyway. Information regarding the new inclusion criteria will be sent out next week.

The other enhanced services, OHTMS, referral refinement, and direct cataract referral were also on the same contract. The ultimate intention is to renew these, again with a single contract between CCG and PEC (with optometry contractors then subcontracting to the PEC) However it seems sensible to see how the CUES contract pans out before committing other services to the same contracting process. Hence the CCG are happy to simply extend current contracts for 12-18 months for the time being.

I'm sure many of you have many questions regarding all this, such as the remuneration, role of independent prescribing etc. These questions and more will be answered in communications over the coming weeks and months. Please do have a look at the information on the College website as this may answer many of the most likely questions.

<https://www.college-optometrists.org/the-college/media-hub/news-listing/nhs-england-covid-19-urgent-eyecare-service-cues.html>

On behalf of Bradford LOC, I would like to thank everyone that has participated in the MECS scheme and other enhanced services. I hope and believe CUES will be just as valuable to both you and your patients.

We will of course be in touch as soon as we have more information to disseminate.

Kind Regards

Raj Billoo

Secretary Bradford LOC