

To: Gloucestershire performers and contractors

Dear colleagues,

Subject: Reminder of NHS Patient Choice for Cataract Surgery

As part of our ongoing commitment to ensuring quality patient care, we would like to remind you about the importance of providing patients with a meaningful choice regarding their cataract surgery options.

Patients have the right to choose from a variety of providers, including NHS trusts and independent service providers. This choice is crucial in ensuring that patients receive care that best suits their needs and preferences

Please ensure the following when discussing cataract surgery referrals:

- **Inform** patients about all available providers, including both NHS trusts and independent services.
- **Support** patients in making an informed choice by providing objective information on waiting times, distance to provider and transport options, clinical needs, quality of service and patient feedback/preference.
- **Document** the choice discussion in the patient record to maintain transparency and adherence to best practices.

Also please be reminded of the following:

- 1) When making a decision to refer a patient for NHS services, it must be done without regard to its own financial interest and ensure that patient choice conversations are carried out. This is confirmed by the General Optical Council Joint Statement on Conflict of Interest, which sets out the Council's expectation that professionals should avoid, declare and manage actual or potential conflicts of interest across healthcare settings.
- 2) The legal right to a choice of 5 providers applies to referrals made by optometrists as well as GPs (as described in section 3 of the NHS Choice Framework and set out in legislation). The General Ophthalmic Contract requires optometrists to "comply with all relevant legislation and have regard to all relevant guidance issued by NHS England or the Secretary of State".

3) The provider obligations in the GOS contract include a specific contractual requirement to ensure patients are not misled about the availability of services.

Thank you for your on-going support in ensuring best practice standards are applied for the benefit of all Gloucestershire patients.

Yours faithfully,

Gloucestershire LOC

April 2025



<https://www.college-optometrists.org/clinical-guidance/clinical-files/july-2022-case-on-ensuring-you-provide-patients-wi>

<https://www.fodo.com/members/guidance/category-1/patient-choice-england>

[NHS England » Patient choice guidance](#)