

Update on Cataract Pathway Waiting Times

South East London ICB has introduced minimum waiting times within the low-complexity cataract pathway delivered by Independent Sector Providers (ISPs), such as CHEC, Spa Medica, and ACES.

The mandated minimum timeframes are:

- At least 8 weeks from referral to first clinic appointment
- At least 8 weeks from first clinic appointment to date of surgery

The only exception is where surgery is considered clinically appropriate and safe to undertake on the same day as initial assessment.

This means that, when referring patients for cataract surgery to an ISP, patients should be advised that the overall wait from referral to surgery will usually be a **minimum of 16 weeks**.

Post-operative follow-up arrangements remain unchanged and should continue in line with the established cataract follow-up pathway.

Over recent years, increased cataract surgery capacity has led to a large rise in the number of low-complexity cataract procedures being carried out. This has increased spending in this area and reduced the funding available for services with greater clinical need, contributing to longer waits in other sub-specialties. The aim is therefore to slow the rate of low-complex cataract activity while still meeting national waiting time standards and maintaining patient choice.