

At a Glance

- Using practice level data obtained by LOCs to improve primary care pathways and services
- Demonstrating the effectiveness of a Glaucoma Enhanced Case Finding (ECF) Service
- Comparing referral activity in areas with and without an ECF service
- Proving an ECF service decreases the number of first appointment activities per Trust
- Supporting the case for the System wide commissioning of Glaucoma ECF

Background

The Black Country ICS consists of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton, with four LOCs and four NHS Trust Eye Hospitals.

A Glaucoma Enhanced Referral Service (GERS) which is a form of Glaucoma Enhanced Case Finding (ECF) service was introduced in Wolverhampton in 2019 that shows, on average, 50% of patients are deflected from being referred to the Hospital Eye Service (HES). Despite constant lobbying from the LOCs this service has not been adopted across the whole of the Black Country footprint.

In 2024, there was a system wide implementation of an Eyecare electronic Referral Service (EeRS) provided by the EeRS platform. All four system trusts have implemented EeRS and 85% of Optometric practices in the region are signed up to use EeRS. The introduction of the EeRS platform has made available accurate data on the number of Glaucoma referrals to Trusts.

This review of EeRS and Glaucoma ECF data from 1 October 2024 to 31 December 2024 aims to understand glaucoma referral patterns and volumes, to help determine if expanding ECF to Dudley, Sandwell, and Walsall would reduce referrals, freeing up hospital resources, and shorten hospital waiting lists.

The Data Analysis

Data was taken from the EeRS Referral platform and the Opera management system of the Glaucoma ECF service, covering the period from 1 October to 31 December 2024.

Glaucoma Referrals Via EeRS

Summary of all the referrals via the new EeRS platform from Primary Care Optometry Practices to Black Country Trusts over the period solely for suspicion of glaucoma.

NHS Trust	Total No. of referrals	No. of Glaucoma Referrals	Percentage
Sandwell	920	178	24.8%
Dudley	920	248	26.9%
Walsall	467	128	27.4%
Wolverhampton	926	91	9.83%

Glaucoma Referrals from Glaucoma ECF

Over the same period ECF data shows the number of patients seen in the Wolverhampton ECF service that would have been referred to the Trust if the service did not exist = 167.

Total Numbers of Suspect Glaucoma

Adding EeRS and ECF data shows the total number of patients suspected of having glaucoma.

The total number of patients with suspected Glaucoma in Wolverhampton was 91 from EeRS and 167 from ECF, making a total of 258.

Glaucoma ECF Outcomes and Hospital Activity

Of the 167 patients seen in Glaucoma ECF, 90 were deflected and discharged from the service, resulting in a 54% discharge rate.

The number of suspect glaucoma patients referred to the Wolverhampton Trust from ECF = 77.

To calculate the total number of patients referred to the Royal Wolverhampton glaucoma clinic for suspect Glaucoma the EeRs and ECF referral number are totalled.

91 EeRS referrals plus 77 ECF referrals = Total 168 patients referred for Glaucoma.

Results and Outcomes

NHS Trust	Total No. of referrals	No. of Glaucoma Referrals	Percentage
Sandwell	717	178	24.83%
Dudley	920	248	26.96%
Walsall	467	128	27.41%
Wolverhampton	1003	168	16.75%
Totals	3107	722	23.24%

- 16.75% Referral rate for suspect Glaucoma to Wolverhampton
- Significantly lower than any other Trust
- Suspect Glaucoma referrals are being managed within primary care within the locally commissioned Glaucoma ECF service
- Adoption of ECF to the other parts of the system would have an immediate and similar impact upon volumes of suspect glaucoma referrals being sent to the other hospital trusts

The table below shows the potential impact on the number of glaucoma referrals to each Trust assuming the ECF service was introduced across the Black Country.

	Sandwell	Dudley	Walsall	Total
Total Number of referrals	717	920	467	2104
Total Number of Glaucoma referrals	178	248	128	554
Current Referral Rate (%)	24.83%	26.96%	27.41%	
No of referrals if rate reduced to 16.75% by Glaucoma ECF	120	154	78	352
Referrals Saved per quarter	58	94	50	202
Likely Percentage reduction on activity	8.1%	10.2%	10.7%	9.6%

- 202 first appointments saved per quarter
- Over 800 first appointments saved per year
- Does not include data for any follow up appointments that patients being monitored at HES before discharge may require

Conclusion

Referral data from Glaucoma ECF and EeRS shows the introduction of the Glaucoma Enhanced Case-Finding Service, following the LOCSU pathway, across the system will decrease the number of first appointment activities per Trust by an average of 9.6%, an expected saving of over 800 first appointments across the Trusts per year.

ECF referrals contain a comprehensive data set, enabling Trusts to make informed decisions about patients at first attendance, streamlining care pathways and potentially reducing further appointments at HES. Since suspect glaucoma referrals often require multiple eye clinic appointments due to the need for various tests and monitoring to confirm the presence or absence of glaucoma, the cumulative activity savings for glaucoma clinics would facilitate a more rapid reduction in waiting time lists.

The data strongly supports the proposal to commission Glaucoma ECF across the whole of the Black Country in reducing referrals, freeing up hospital resources, and shortening waiting lists.

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Further LOC case studies can be found here

