Primary Eyecare

Eye Care Navigation Service

‘Streamlining Eye Care Referrals for a better Patient Experience’

AUGUST 2025

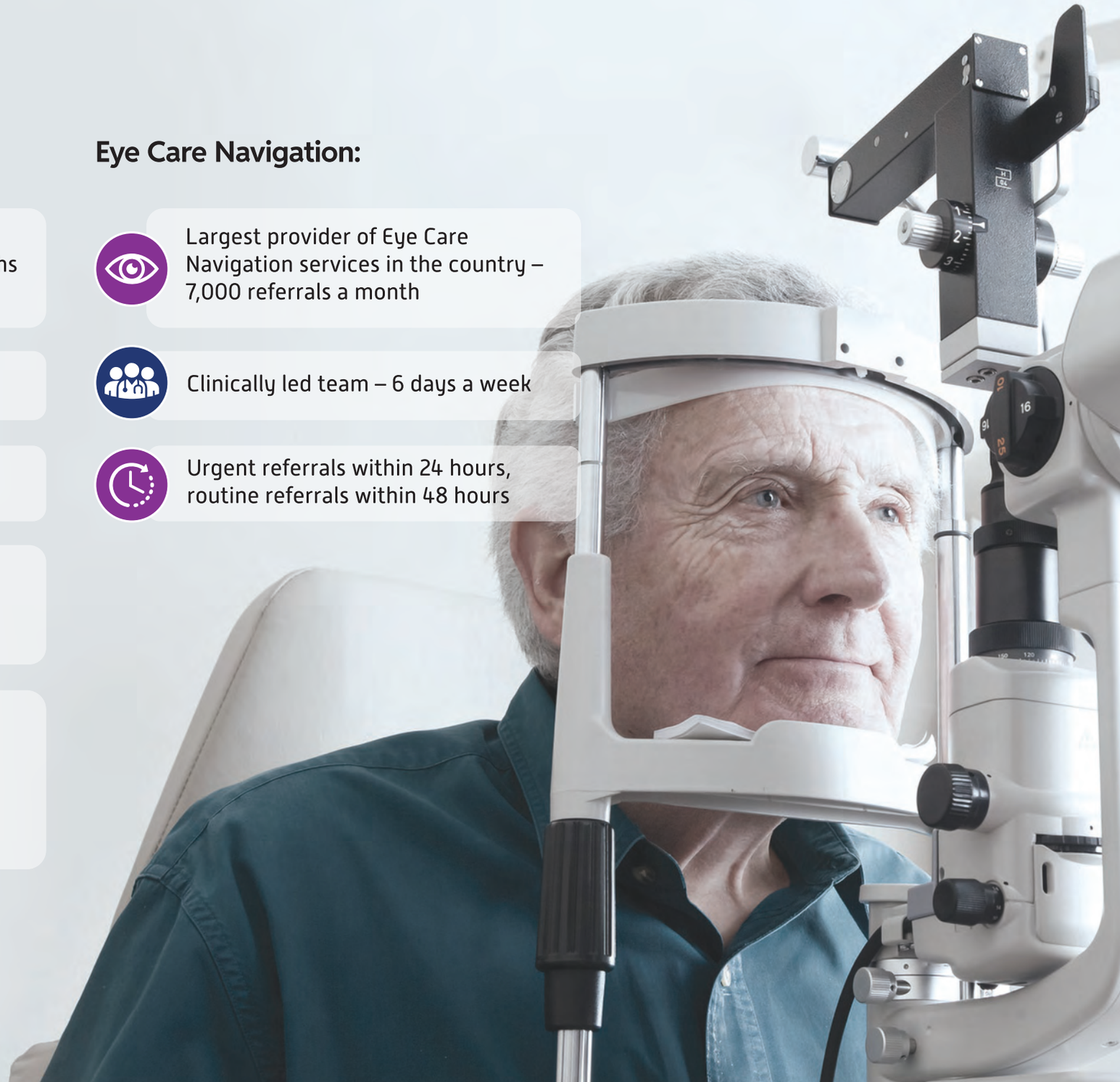
About

Primary Eyecare Services:

- Provided over 800,000 patient appointments in the last 12 months across all services
- CQC registered
- Not for profit
- Primary Care Provider at scale utilising a network of 3,000 practices across 30 of the 42 ICBs
- Ophthalmology nationally provides 7.5 million outpatient appointments a year, the highest of any sub-speciality in the NHS, with increasing demand

Eye Care Navigation:

- Largest provider of Eye Care Navigation services in the country – 7,000 referrals a month
- Clinically led team – 6 days a week
- Urgent referrals within 24 hours, routine referrals within 48 hours



Eye Care Navigation Service

The Eye Care Navigation Service is a clinically led, digitally-enabled, single point of access for ophthalmology that transforms how patients access urgent and routine eye care. This streamlined referral service ensures patients are seen by the right professional, in the right setting, at the right time.

Key Features:

Clinically led triage
by experienced optometrists

Digital referral platform
to streamline case handling and reduce administrative burden

Patient choice
right person, right place, right time

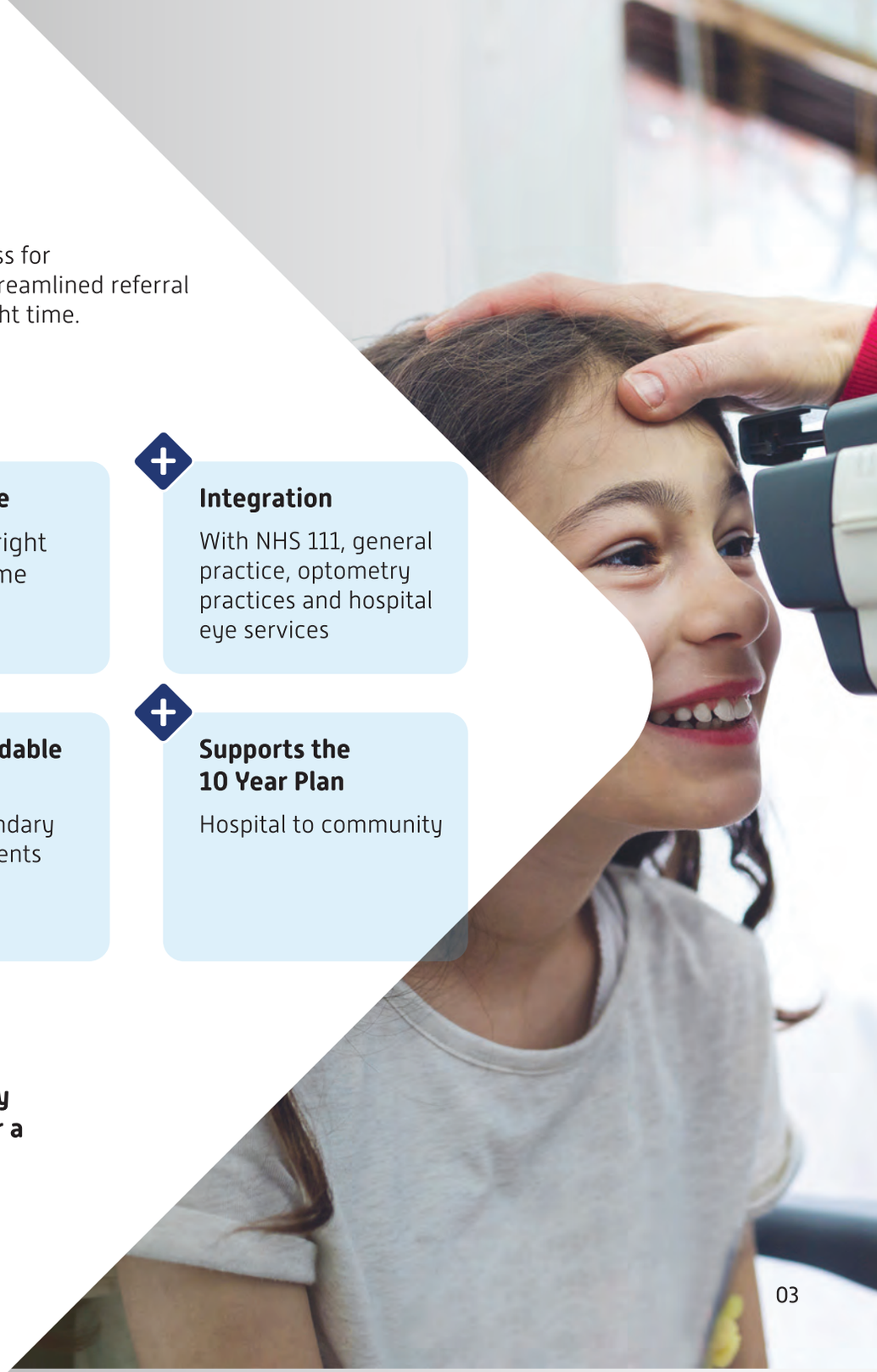
Integration
With NHS 111, general practice, optometry practices and hospital eye services

Data reporting and clinical audit
for continuous quality improvement

Rapid access
to urgent care through Community Urgent Eyecare Service (CUES) and other community pathways

Reduced avoidable referrals
releasing secondary care appointments

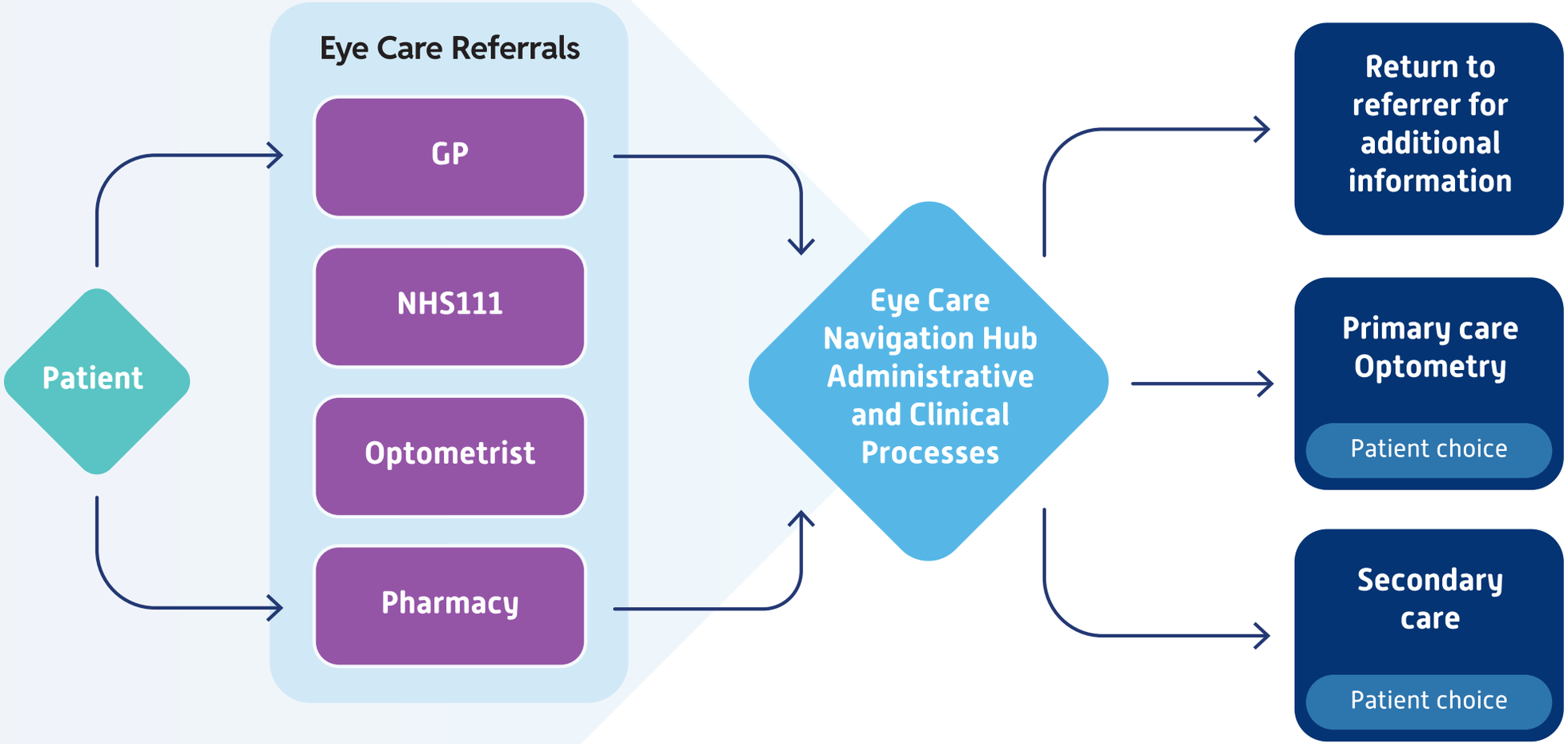
Supports the 10 Year Plan
Hospital to community



> **There is wide recognition that some patients who currently attend hospital eye services could be managed in the community by primary care optometrists who have access to excellent equipment and offer a high level of expertise in their practices.**
>
> – Jayne Mason, Mid and South Essex ICB

The Process

1. Digital solutions run throughout the process
2. Patient Support runs throughout the process



Clinical Triage

- Referrals triaged within 24 hours
- Screened to ensure all required information is included
- Identifies and redirects referrals that could be seen quickly in locally commissioned primary care service e.g. Enhanced glaucoma case finding services or CUES
- Supports improving referral quality
- Assigns secondary care ophthalmology referrals into the correct clinic with appropriate urgency

Who is Triaging?

- Team of experienced optometrists who deliver clinical triage under the leadership of the Clinical Lead for triage and consultant ophthalmologist
- Live audit of outcomes (with feedback and monitoring of outliers)
- Regular clinical training sessions delivered by consultant ophthalmologist and peer review
- Quality assurance program to support team and ensure standards are met

Outcomes

34,000
referrals analysed across five regions

21.7%
deflected to commissioned primary optometry services (34% CUES, 47% Glaucoma, 16% Cataracts, 1% Children's)

9.4%
of referrals were returned to referrer requesting more information or advice and guidance given

68.9%
proceeded to secondary care, with adjustments made to clinic type or urgency where needed

49%
reduction in carbon emissions by diverting patients to a locally commissioned optometry service

Reporting/Data Provision

Primary Eyecare Services offers commissioners a comprehensive and high-quality data suite designed to support strategic decision-making, service optimisation and system-wide transformation. Our Eye Care Navigation model is underpinned by a robust reporting infrastructure, providing actionable intelligence that helps commissioners understand demand, monitor performance and identify opportunities for improvement.

Tailored KPI reports based on needs and pressures

Break down of key demographics

Allocation to sub speciality clinic

Future services audit to support community commissioning

Primary care deflection details

Patient Choice data

Health inequalities metrics

Referral return rates and reasons

Statistics for travel related carbon emissions

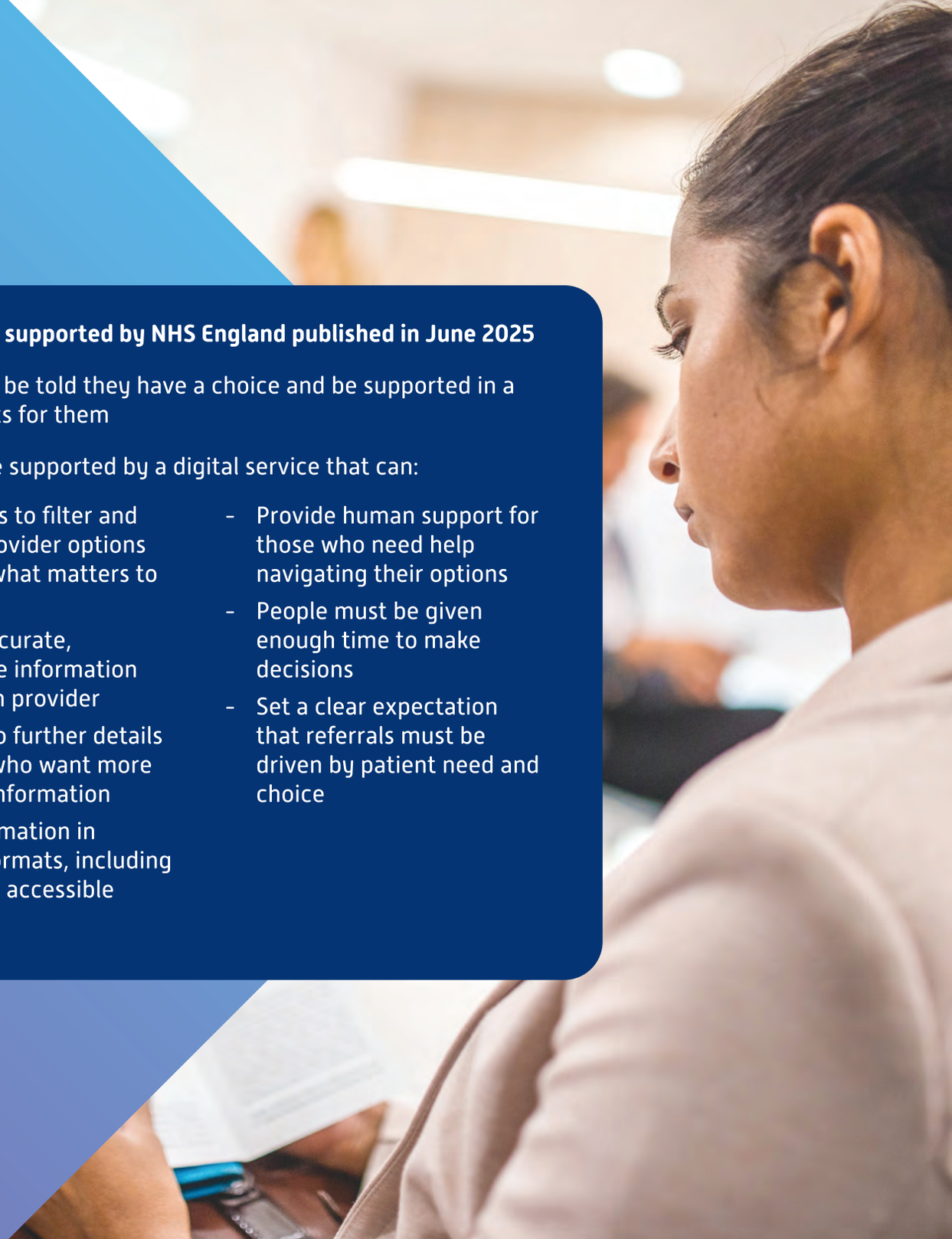
Data enables better understanding and monitoring of patient flow

Patient Choice

- Patients are provided with a unique online link to choose from a range of local providers
- Online 'Find a Hospital tool' available to support patients making choice on cataract providers (distance, CQC info, waiting times and complication rates displayed)
- Focus on timely, personalised support, digitally in line with national guidance (see right)
- A dedicated phone line is available for patients who may have questions or need support in making their choice, ensuring accessible and personalised assistance

National guidance supported by NHS England published in June 2025

- Patients must be told they have a choice and be supported in a way that works for them
- This should be supported by a digital service that can:
  - Allow users to filter and explore provider options based on what matters to them
  - Provide accurate, up-to-date information about each provider
  - Signpost to further details for those who want more in-depth information
  - Offer information in multiple formats, including offline and accessible versions
  - Provide human support for those who need help navigating their options
  - People must be given enough time to make decisions
  - Set a clear expectation that referrals must be driven by patient need and choice



Case Studies

Mid and South Essex
NHS Foundation Trust

- Collaboration with Integrated Care Board (ICB), Trust and Local Optical Committee (LOC) – significant backlog of patients
- Eye Care Navigation Service processed 20,000 referrals in a year. 30% diverted to primary care services

> **Being seen outside of hospital was positive. No waiting time and great facilities.**
>
> – Patient feedback

> **Working with Primary Eyecare Services and our local LOC has enabled optometrists to connect with consultant ophthalmologists to support them in managing patients and avoiding unnecessary referrals to hospital.**
>
> – Jayne Mason, NHS Mid & South Essex ICB

> **The service has allowed us to effectively manage patients by identifying their appropriate clinical pathway while also providing choice for patients. The result is a reduction in unnecessary referrals.**
>
> – Julie Lander, Mid & Essex NHS FT

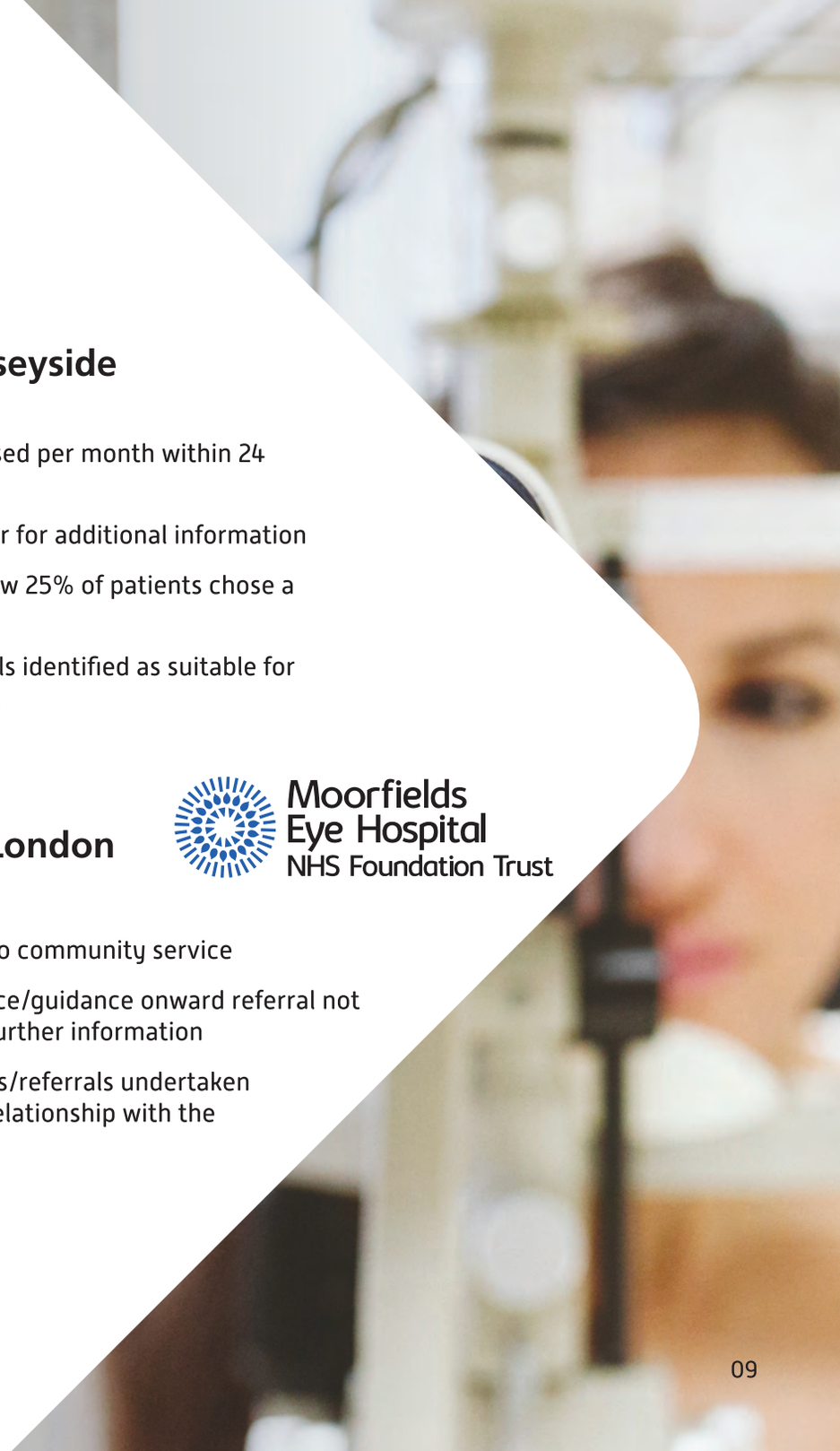
Cheshire and Merseyside

- 2,100 referrals processed per month within 24 hours
- 5% returned to referrer for additional information
- Independent choice saw 25% of patients chose a different provider
- 40% glaucoma referrals identified as suitable for community optometry

NHS South West London
Integrated Care Board

Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

- 28% of referrals sent to community service
- 3% returned with advice/guidance onward referral not needed. 7% required further information
- Active audit of services/referrals undertaken with a close working relationship with the clinical lead



Impact and Benefits

For the Patient

- Access to appropriate eye care in local service
- Early diagnosis and direction to appropriate service
- Less travel time, time off work and related costs (for patients or their carers)

For Commissioners

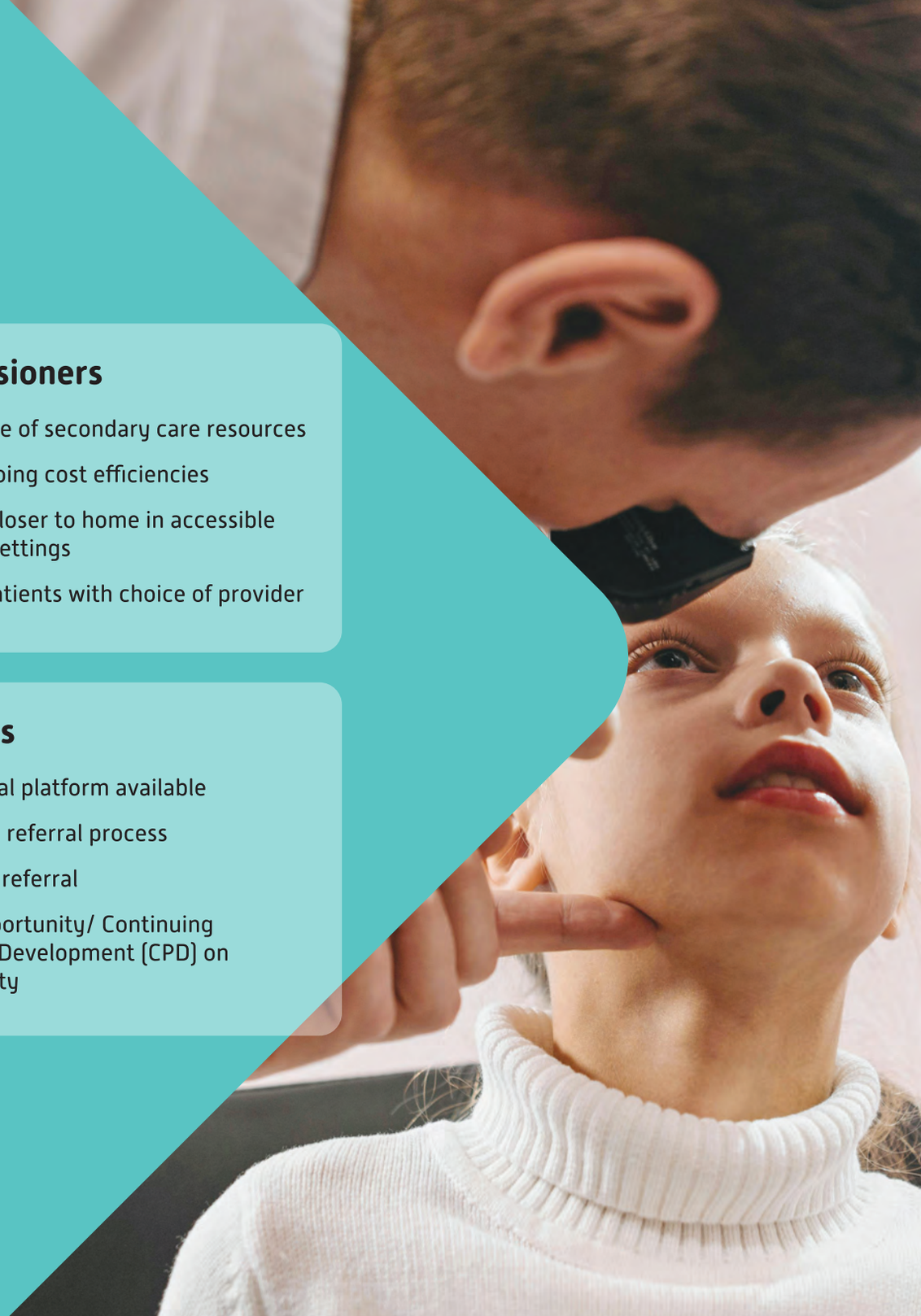
- Optimised use of secondary care resources
- Delivers ongoing cost efficiencies
- Brings care closer to home in accessible community settings
- Empowers patients with choice of provider

For Hospital Eye Services and Ophthalmologists

- Fewer inappropriate referrals
- Improved communication between primary and secondary care
- Prioritisation of referrals
- Better utilisation of community services
- All referrals entering secondary care electronically

For Referrers

- Digital referral platform available
- Standardised referral process
- Feedback on referral
- Learning opportunity/ Continuing Professional Development (CPD) on referral quality



Meet the Team

Helen Haslett
Clinical Lead Triage

As a qualified Optometrist for 20+ years, I am responsible for providing clinical and strategic support for the triage aspect of services, as well as auditing and providing a point of contact for commissioners/practices and LOC chairs.

Lisa Gibson
Clinical Director

I am proud of our Eye Care Navigation Service – from the outset, partnership working and engagement have been at the forefront of our approach. The innovations delivered have improved patient outcomes and supported pressures being faced by elective services.

Laura Walker
Senior Operations Manager

As a Senior Operations Manager, I am responsible for the strategic and operational oversight of the organisations core service areas. Eye Care Navigation has continued to develop as a centralised access point for referrals – reducing burden on clinical teams and improving outcomes for patients.

Working with you in Partnership

Partnership:

- Digital feedback on individual referrals and accessibility for practices to interact with triage team/lead
- Trust led working group with consultant involvement to further develop evidence-based pathways

Engagement:

- Engagement events - Sharing outcomes with optometry alongside the Local Optical Committee
- Interactive CPD to support referral quality / improvement
- Engagement with GPs via time to learn sessions

> **The LOC has worked with Primary Eyecare Services to offer CPD events for all practitioners within our area which is targeted around specific referral trends – this benefit alone is really useful as we are able to target practitioners who may not have attended our general CPD events.**
>
> – Emma Spofforth, Essex LOC

Primary Eyecare

Please contact the Primary Eyecare Services Head Office:

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