

3 March 2026

Retina Clinics (VMRC) in Ophthalmology Services

I am carrying out research on the operation of Virtual Medical Retina Clinics (VMRC) in Ophthalmology services in the UK. I wish to apply under the UK Freedom of Information Act (2000) for:

- **Copies of the Standard Operating Procedures, working instructions or clinical governance documents used by Belfast HSC Trust in the operation of the Virtual Medical Retina Clinics.**
- Medical Retina virtual clinics are held at the Macular Service for the following conditions – Age Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) and Retinal Vein Occlusion (RVO).

This is an enhanced triage model – a referral is received for potential AMD or RVO diagnosis and the patient is invited to attend an imaging only clinic. A Consultant Ophthalmologist remotely reviews retinal images from OPTOS or OCT diagnostic imaging. If a diagnosis is confirmed, the Consultant will triage either Routine or Urgent and place the patient on a waiting list for consultation and / or treatment.

- Diabetic Eye Screening Service will invite routine patients for retinal screening on a two yearly basis. Images are processed via an enhanced reading model, stage 1 to 3; the third and final retinopathy grade is determined by a Consultant Ophthalmologist. Where mild proliferative disease is detected, via retinal imaging, the patient is assigned to digital surveillance and invited on a three, six or nine-month basis. Should disease progress during surveillance the patient will be referred to the Hospital Eye Service for treatment and enhanced monitoring.
- **I would also appreciate if you would send me copies of all templates of letters used by the VMRC with regard to each diagnosis identified at assessment, particularly for Age-Related Macular Degeneration and Diabetic Retinopathy, when communicating the results of the assessment to patients.**

Standardised letter templates for virtual clinics are attached in a separate document – Attachment 1. Each letter template will detail the outcome of the virtual clinic, indicating to the patient if follow up is required.

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- **Could you also tell me if patients with any stage of AMD are advised about AREDS2 supplements?**

AREDS2 letter attached in separate document – Attachment 2.

The Macular Service is currently developing a patient advice leaflet, in collaboration with the Strategic Planning and Performance Group and the Public Health Agency.

At present, we issue a Nutrition Eye Health Advice leaflet produced by the Northern Ireland Macular Society. Copy of the leaflet attached in separate document – Attachment 3.