

Procedure funded subject to Audit

Policy Statement TP4: Cataract removal in adults – threshold for surgery

Date of Issue: February 2010

Ratified and adopted: April 2013

Cataract surgery is only routinely commissioned for patients who, after correction (e.g. with glasses), have a visual acuity of 6/12 or worse in their cataract-affected eye.

Cataracts are a common condition of later life, affecting the lens of the eye. If left untreated, cataracts can cause a gradual loss of clarity of vision, which may have a significant impact on the quality of life of many elderly people. Currently the only effective treatment is surgical removal and replacement of the affected lens. Cataract surgery is the most commonly performed operation in the UK.

In setting out criteria for eligibility for cataract surgery, NHS Berkshire West recognises that measurements of visual acuity do not reflect accurately the degree of visual disability patients may experience as a result of cataracts. The level of visual acuity that an individual requires to function without altering their lifestyle varies. However, a visual acuity of 6/12 or better [Snellen] / 0.30 [LogMAR] usually allows a person to function without significant visual difficulties.

In the light of the policy, referrals for or decision to offer cataract surgery should not be based simply on the presence of a cataract. Cataract surgery should not normally be performed solely for the purpose of correcting longstanding pre-existing myopia or hypermetropia.

1. Exceptional circumstances may be considered where there is evidence of significant health impairment and there is also evidence of the intervention improving health status.
2. This policy will be reviewed in the light of new evidence or guidance from NICE.
3. Further information on policy statements is available from <http://www.fundingrequests.cscsu.nhs.uk/>