

Community Dermatology in mid and south Essex – Patient Information

Your skin acts as a first line of defence, helping to shield your body from harmful bacteria, viruses, and environmental damage. Because the skin often reflects what is happening internally, noticeable changes can sometimes point to underlying health issues. This makes ongoing awareness and care essential.

Specialist dermatologists are trained to assess, diagnose, and manage thousands of skin conditions. At CHEC, our clinical team provides expert treatment for a broad range of concerns, including skin cancers, inflammatory skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis, acne-related disorders, and conditions affecting the hair, nails, and skin caused by fungal infections.

Our Dermatology Services

If you observe persistent or unusual changes to your skin, you should arrange an appointment with your GP for assessment. Where a dermatology referral is appropriate, your GP can refer you to CHEC, ensuring you are seen by our highly skilled dermatology specialists.

Patient Advice & Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Dermatology Care in mid and south Essex

What is community dermatology?

Community dermatology is an NHS service that helps adults with skin conditions closer to home. It includes specialist assessments, treatment, and advice without always needing a hospital appointment.

From 1 February 2026, all adult dermatology referrals in Mid and South Essex are managed through CHEC's Single Point of Access (SPOA) to make sure patients are seen by the right specialist as quickly as possible.

Who are CHEC?

CHEC (Community Health and Eyecare) is an NHS healthcare provider that delivers specialist community services across England. Working in partnership with the NHS, CHEC provides high-quality care closer to patients' homes, delivered by experienced clinicians and fully integrated with NHS pathways to ensure safe, timely, and coordinated treatment.

What are the benefits of CHEC delivering community dermatology services?

CHEC works in partnership with the NHS and 24 Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) across England to provide high-quality community health services. This approach helps patients be seen more quickly, while ensuring care is delivered by experienced specialists.

CHEC services are fully integrated with NHS pathways, meaning your care is coordinated seamlessly and continues smoothly if hospital treatment is needed.

Conditions the Service Can Help With

What skin conditions are covered?

The team sees a wide range of dermatological conditions. Your GP will assess if the community dermatology service is suitable for you.

Some conditions may need specialist hospital care - the service will arrange this if required.

Are urgent suspected skin cancers included?

Yes. All adult urgent suspected skin cancer referrals are handled through this service.

If your GP suspects you may have a skin cancer, you will be referred to CHEC and your referral will be prioritised within one day.

You may be required to have a photograph taken - this is called teledermatology. This photograph will be reviewed by the consultant, and they will discuss next steps with you.

If a hospital appointment is needed, this will be arranged quickly with the local NHS Trust.

Who can use this service?

You can use this service if you:

- Are aged 16 or over, and
- Are registered with a GP in mid and south Essex, or live in the area even if you do not have a GP.

Who cannot use this service?

This service is not suitable for:

- Children under 16
- Cosmetic treatments (such as tattoo removal or scar revision)
- Non-skin related conditions

Your GP will advise you if another service is more appropriate.

Getting Referred

How do I get referred to a dermatologist?

If you are worried about a skin problem, you should first see your GP. If they feel specialist input is needed, they will refer you electronically to the Mid and South Essex Community Dermatology Service provided by CHEC.

You cannot refer yourself to this service.

Can my GP still refer me to hospital dermatology?

No. From 1 February 2026, all adult dermatology referrals, including urgent suspected skin cancer referrals, must go through the community dermatology Single Point of Access.

If hospital care is needed, the service will offer you a choice and arrange this for you.

What happens after my GP refers me?

Once your referral is received:

A specialist dermatology clinician reviews it quickly.

Urgent suspected cancer referrals are reviewed within 1 working day.

Routine referrals are reviewed within 2 working days.

You will be guided to the most appropriate care, which may include:

- A virtual (online) skin assessment
- A face-to-face appointment
- Referral to hospital dermatology if needed
- Virtual & Face-to-Face Appointments

Will I need to attend an appointment in person?

Not always. Many patients are first assessed using telehealth, which means:

- You complete a short questionnaire
- You send photos of your skin problem (with support if needed)
- A consultant dermatologist reviews everything remotely

This often allows faster diagnosis and treatment.

Telehealth

What is telehealth?

Telehealth in dermatology, often called teledermatology, is a way for you to have skin concerns—such as rashes, new moles, or lesions—assessed by a specialist without needing to travel to a hospital for an initial consultation.

In the UK, this is now a standard part of many NHS and private pathways to ensure patients with potentially serious conditions are seen as quickly as possible.

How does telehealth work?

There are two main ways teledermatology is delivered:

1. **Virtual Assessment:** High-quality digital photos of your skin are taken and sent securely to a consultant dermatologist. They review the images alongside your medical history and provide a diagnosis or management plan.

2. **Telephone Consultations:** You speak with a dermatologist in real-time via telephone. This is often used for discussing treatment plans for ongoing conditions like acne or eczema.

Why is telehealth used?

Telehealth is used as it offers the following benefits to patients:

- **Speed:** It significantly reduces waiting times. In some areas, what used to take weeks for an in-person appointment can now be reviewed in just a few days.
- **Convenience:** You can often have the photos taken at your local GP surgery or a community hub, or even upload them yourself from home, saving a trip to a distant hospital.
- **Prioritisation:** It allows specialists to "triage" cases. If a lesion looks suspicious, they can fast-track you for an urgent biopsy or surgery immediately.

What if I can't take or upload photos?

Support is available. If needed, you may be:

- Helped to upload images
- Asked to attend a community imaging hub
- Offered a face-to-face appointment instead

What happens after a virtual assessment?

A consultant dermatologist will:

- Review your information and images
- Make a diagnosis where possible
- Create a treatment plan
- Prescribe medication if needed

Both you and your GP will receive the outcome and next steps.

Treatment & Follow-Up

Will I be discharged back to my GP?

In many cases, yes. After assessment and treatment:

- You may be discharged back to your GP with a clear care plan
- Your GP will continue prescribing if needed
- Some patients may have follow-up appointments if clinically required

Can I request a follow-up if my condition changes?

In some situations, patient-initiated follow-up may be offered. This means you can contact the service again if agreed symptoms return or worsen.

Will all my treatment take place at CHEC?

Not necessarily. CHEC will carefully review your referral and decide the most appropriate place for your care. Many patients can be treated by CHEC, but if your condition would be better managed by a hospital specialist, your care will be referred on to the NHS Trust to ensure you receive the right treatment at the right time.

Will I get help to manage my skin condition?

Yes. Self-care and shared decision-making are a key part of the service. You may receive:

- Advice and guidance
- Written or digital care plans
- Signposting to wellbeing and support services
- Education on managing your own skin condition

How are medicines prescribed?

If you need medication, the clinician may:

- Send an electronic prescription (EPS) to your nominated pharmacy, or
- Write to your GP if ongoing prescriptions are needed.

Clinic Locations

Where are face-to-face appointments held?

If you need to be seen in person, you will be offered a choice of community clinics across Mid and South Essex, including locations in:

- Rayleigh
- Benfleet
- Billericay
- Braintree
- Brentwood
- Southend-on-Sea
- Grays
- Westcliff-on-Sea

Appointments are arranged at locations as close to home as possible.

Contact & Opening Times

When is the service open?

Monday to Friday, 8:00am – 6:00pm

How can I contact the dermatology service?

Phone: 0344 264 4160

Email: dermatology.ent1@nhs.net

You can use these details if you have questions about appointments, referrals, or letters.

Communication & Safety

Will my GP be kept informed?

Yes. After your assessment:

- Your GP will receive a full clinical letter
- You will also receive a summary

This usually happens within three working days

What if I need hospital treatment?

If specialist hospital care is required at any point, the community dermatology team will refer you directly to the appropriate NHS hospital service.

You do not need to go back to your GP to arrange this.

What if I'm already on a waiting list?

If you were previously waiting for dermatology care, your referral will be safely transferred to the new system so you don't lose your place.