
South Glamorgan Community Health Council

Accessing NHS Eye Care Service in Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan

April 2022



www.southglamorganchc.wales

Accessible formats

This report is also available in Welsh.

If you would like this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us.

You can download it from our website or ask for a copy by contacting our office.

Contents

About the CHCs	3
Background & introduction	4
What we did	6
Who we are hearing from	8
What we heard	9
Learning from what we heard	23
Thanks	25
Feedback	26
Contact details	27

About the Community Health Councils (CHCs)

CHCs are the independent watchdog of the National Health Service (NHS) within Wales. CHCs encourage and support people to have a voice in the design and delivery of NHS services.

CHCs work with the NHS, inspection and regulatory bodies. CHCs provide an important link between those who plan and deliver NHS services, those who inspect and regulate it and those who use it.

CHCs hear from the public in many different ways. Before the coronavirus pandemic, CHCs regularly visited NHS services to hear from people while they were receiving care and treatment. CHCs also heard from people at local community events, and through community representatives and groups.

Since the coronavirus pandemic, CHCs have focused on engaging with people in different ways.

This includes surveys, apps, videoconferencing and social media to hear from people directly about their views and experiences of NHS services as well as through community groups.

There are 7 CHCs in Wales. Each one represents the “patient and public” voice in a different part of Wales.

Introduction & Background

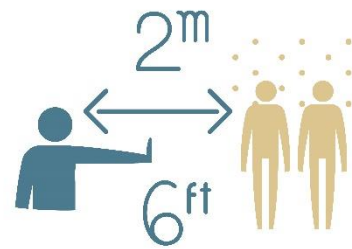
The South Glamorgan Community Health Council strives to hear from patients and the public across all demographics, communities, and groups within Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

As well as requesting general feedback from the public on matters concerning their healthcare, the CHC also run specific, targeted campaigns for information and feedback from patients with specific health conditions or disabilities, or on specific services within the NHS, in order to ensure we hear from all groups of society in regards to their healthcare provision.

In this instance, the CHC wanted to hear directly from patients who had accessed NHS Primary Care Eye Care services, about their experiences in Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan.

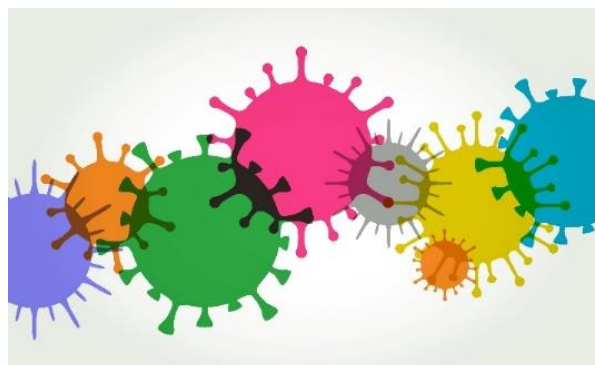


In March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic caused unimaginable disruption to all aspects of everyday life, including access to Healthcare services.



Government restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic, around social distancing, PPE and infection control, as well as increased workforce pressures caused by sickness and self-isolation requirements, resulted in a reduction in capacity of services across the NHS. This in turn has led to increased waiting list numbers and extended delays to appointments and treatment for patients within the NHS system.

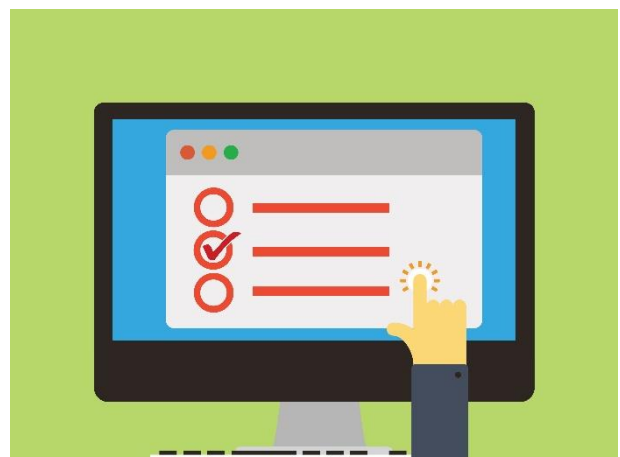
As the NHS moves from its 'Emergency Response' phase into a 'Recovery' stage following the pandemic, the CHC recognises the importance of gathering patient feedback on NHS services. This includes feedback on delays and the consequences of these delays, with a view to making recommendations to the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board on how to improve the experience from a patient point of view, if appropriate to do so.



What we did

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic restrictions, the South Glamorgan CHC has been unable to carry out physical scrutiny visits to NHS Services across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan as we would under normal circumstances. As a result, we have been required to adapt the way we connect with patients and the public across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, in order to gather their views and experiences of accessing NHS Services.

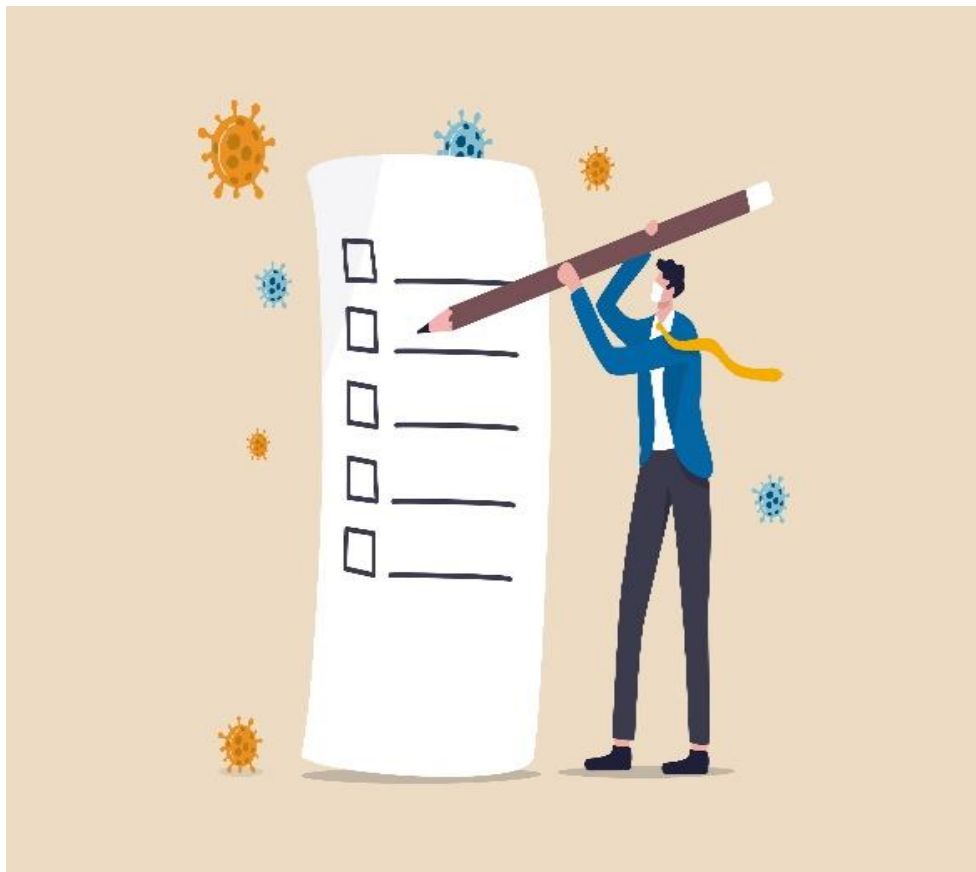
The South Glamorgan CHC devised and published an online survey to gain feedback from patients around their experiences when accessing NHS Eye Care services in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.



The survey was listed on our website, and publicised through our Facebook and Twitter social media channels. Details of the survey were also included within our regular stakeholder briefings. The survey was available for completion in both English and Welsh.

The survey was available online for completion from 11th January 2022 to 7th April 2022 and asked respondents to provide information around the following:

- ❖ Referral pathway.
- ❖ Type of appointment
- ❖ Patient satisfaction and experience.
- ❖ Waiting times
- ❖ Effects of delays
- ❖ Suggestions for service improvement.



Who we are hearing from

The CHC survey was open to patients who had any experience of accessing NHS Eye Care Services in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

The CHC received a total of 143 completed online surveys, although not all respondents answered all questions.

141 (99%)
respondents
chose to complete
the English
language version
of our survey.

2 (1%)
respondents chose
to complete the
Welsh language
version of our
survey.

136 (95%)
respondents had
accessed NHS Eye
Care services
within the last 12
months



What we heard

At a glance....

98 (74%) respondents saw an Optician for a routine eye test	26 (20%) respondents saw an Optician due to an emergency eye concern.	24 (17%) respondents were awaiting further treatment
126 (95%) respondents contacted their Optician in the first instance for their issue	130 (99%) respondents received a face to face consultation	127 (95%) respondents rated their consultation experience positively



Patient Pathway

In order to allow the CHC to identify the chronology of the patient comments we have received, and follow the patient experience of accessing NHS Eye Care services over a period of time, the first question of our survey asked respondents to confirm whether they have seen an Optician within the last 12 months.



136 (95%) respondents confirmed they had visited an Optician within the last months.

7 (5%) respondents confirmed they had not seen an Optician within the last 12 months.



We also questioned respondents on their reason for seeing an Optician.

98 (74%) respondents saw their Optician for a routine eye test.

1 (>1%) respondent was signposted to their Optician by others. This respondent provided additional information

around this and confirmed they had been signposted to their Optician by the '*Diabetes Eye Check Service*'.

26 (20%) respondents saw their Optician due to an emergency eye concern.

8 (6%) respondents reported seeing their Optician for a reason other than those listed above.



For those who answered '*other*' the following reasons for contacting their Optician were given:

- ❖ Follow up
- ❖ Replacement glasses following breakage.
- ❖ Retina photos
- ❖ Contact lens check
- ❖ Low sight assessment and Cataract referral.
- ❖ Noticed a change in vision
- ❖ To request an eye test following increased screen time at work and suffering headaches.



We then asked respondents to provide information on whether the Optician was the first service they contacted in regards to their health concern, and if not, who did they contact in the first instance.



126 (95%) respondents confirmed the Optician was their first contact with regards to their issue.

6 (5%) respondents confirmed the Optician had not been their first contact with regards to their issue.



In regards to the 6 respondents who contacted other services prior to their Optician, they provided the following information on who they had contacted prior to their Optician.

- ❖ CAV UHB Ophthalmology UHW
- ❖ GP
- ❖ Pharmacist

Appointments

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, alternative types of appointments have been introduced across the NHS. In order to protect patients and staff, telephone and video



consultations were offered by some NHS services, in cases where they feel it is appropriate to do so. This is in an attempt to reduce unnecessary footfall in places where NHS Services are being provided.

The CHC wanted to gauge the ratio between the types of appointments that people have been receiving.

● Telephone consultation	1
● Video consultation	0
● Face to face consultation	130



130 (99%) respondents received a face to face consultation

1 (1%) respondent received a telephone consultation.

0 respondents reported receiving an online, video consultation



The CHC asked the survey respondents to rate their consultation experience.



127 (95%) respondents rated their experience positively, with **96** (72%) rating their experience as '*Excellent*'

6 (5%) respondents rated their experience as negative, with **2** (1.5%) respondents rating their experience as '*Very poor*'

● Excellent	96
● Very good	21
● Good	10
● Poor	4
● Very poor	2



Further information provided by those respondents who rated their consultation positively, offered high praise for staff in regards to their attitude, behaviour, professionalism, knowledge and communication. Speed and efficiency in both obtaining appointments and the way appointments themselves were carried out, was noted by a number of respondents. Others wanted to highlight the excellent care that they had received.

It was reassuring to hear from patients that Eye Care services appear to be running as they were before the Covid-19 Pandemic, with the exception of face masks and other required Covid-safe practices.

[Please note we have removed names of organisations from the text]

'Optician was excellent and spent long time assessing my eyes, I gave a complex prescription and they took extra time to work on improving my vision'

'very quick appointment on Saturday morning. Quick and efficient'

'I woke up with completely blurred vision in one eye. [The Opticians] on Albany Rd agreed to see me immediately. Their care was first class, professional, reassuring and just brilliant. They also phoned the eye hospital to ensure their treatment plan was correct. I can only say they were outstanding in their care.'

'Full face to face eye examination- felt safe, and easy to get an appointment'

'Tests clearly explained. Didn't feel rushed when choosing glasses'

'Kind, informative, covid aware, polite, reassuring... Brilliant experience. 😊'

'Thorough. Gentle. Informative. Professional'

'Staff made me feel safe with covid situation. Very thorough eye exam.'

'Friendly and in depth eye examination'

'Very quick appointment on Saturday morning. Quick and efficient'

'Tests clearly explained. Didn't feel rushed when choosing glasses'

'Very thorough. Service was exactly the same as pre restrictions. Just we wore masks.'

'Very positive experience. Offered a good range of dates and times. Very professional service.'

'Full eye examination, with appropriate Covid-19 protections. No waiting time, highly efficient and reassuring service'

'Had very quick appointments and excellent follow up'

For those patients who rated their experience negatively, a number of different reasons were given to further explain their ratings.



Referrals were referenced as an issue for a number of patients, one patient noted difficulties with their appointment due to the requirement to wear a face mask and two other patients explained they had difficulty in obtaining an appointment.

It was disappointing to note that a few patients felt their concerns were dismissed, or that the Optician lacked patience with them. Whilst one patient left mid-appointment due to the length of wait to see an Optician whilst at the practice.

'2nd cataract procedure was then 12months overdue. Unable to spec to a clinician - suspect that my having been outsourced for first cataract procedure was a factor in this. Now 2years overdue and almost 3years since original referral in March 2019.'

'[The Opticians in] Llanishen Cardiff, waited 1.15 HR to be seen, had diagnostic test and then waited another 50 minutes for optician , walked out'

'Referred to hospital for further tests but I am still waiting nearly 9 months later..'

'Difficult to get appointment.'

'[Optician] dismissed my concerns about my glaucoma issues and my eye high pressure.'

'The optometrist wasn't experienced enough to help me so he said he'd consult his colleagues before my appointment two weeks later. He, I believe, forgot to consult and palmed me off. I'm going elsewhere for a second opinion.'

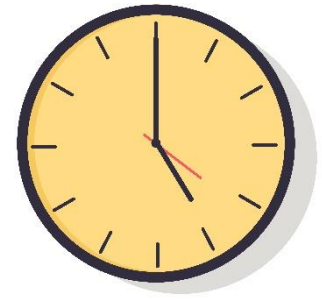
'Mask on so glasses steamed up and was unable to see clearly. Mask on so unable to try on new frames successfully. Unable to see with lenses after pick up. New lenses took an extra week.'

'I was already feeling stressed about going into a face to face environment, I found the optician to lack patience with me and made no attempt to help me relax..'

'I was told I was being referred for a hospital appointment but after about 6 weeks had no acknowledgement no response from Opticians when I enquired'

Waiting for Treatment

We questioned survey respondents on whether they are waiting for further treatment and the waiting times they are currently experiencing.



24 (17%) respondents confirmed they were awaiting further treatment.

114 (83%) respondents informed us they were not waiting for any further treatment.



Of the 24 respondents who are awaiting further treatment, 12 (50%) respondents confirmed they had been waiting up to 3 months so far.

3 (13%) respondents have been waiting for 7-9 months.

2 (8%) respondents have been waiting for 10-12 months.

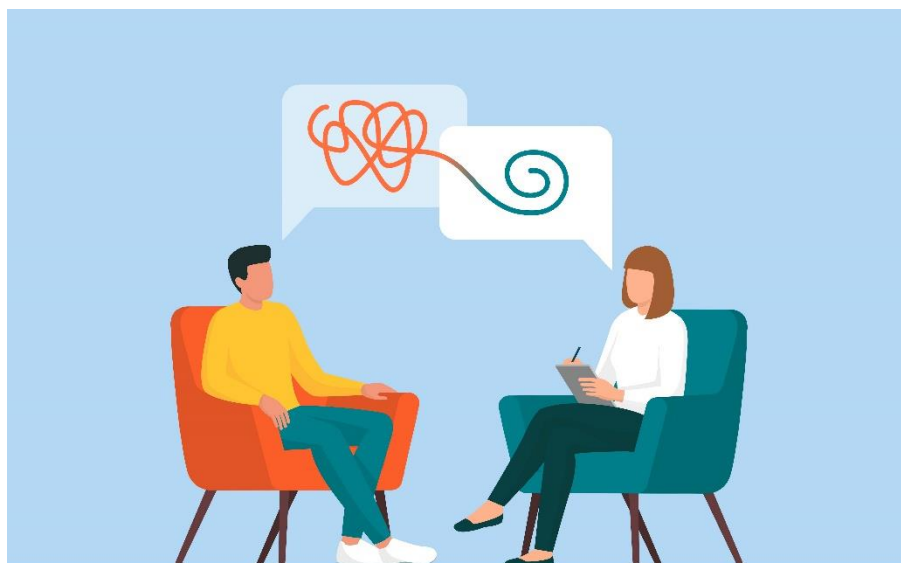
It was very disappointing to note that **7** (29%) respondents have waited for treatment, for over 12 months so far.

The CHC recognises the importance of gaining feedback from patients on a treatment waiting list. We asked patients to describe how waiting for treatment has affected them.



Patients informed us how they are suffering from deteriorating eyesight, rendering every-day tasks such as reading and walking very difficult or impossible. Other patients reported suffering from headaches, watering, dry and sore eyes.

As the CHC expected, a number of patients took the time to explain how their mental health has suffered due to waiting for treatment. Patients reported increased levels of stress and anxiety, with one patient noting how they did not '*feel listened to or that the Opticians approach wasn't person centred*'.



'My macular degeneration and cataract make reading impossible and I have to be very careful when walking'

'A great deal of stress as my night vision problems aren't getting any better'

'Been waiting over 2 years to be seen by a consultant in local hospital, my eyesight have got so bad that I now wear glasses for driving and my reading prescription also changed'

'It's stressful.'

'Eye is not improving and I am getting frequent headaches.'

'Anxiety and stress due to the uncertainty of my degenerative condition. I haven't felt listened to nor their approach was person centred.'

'Headaches from double vision.'

'Anxious.'

'Whilst the first procedure was life-changing, the debilitating effect of glare on the untreated eye negatively affects many aspects on day to day life..'

Service Improvement

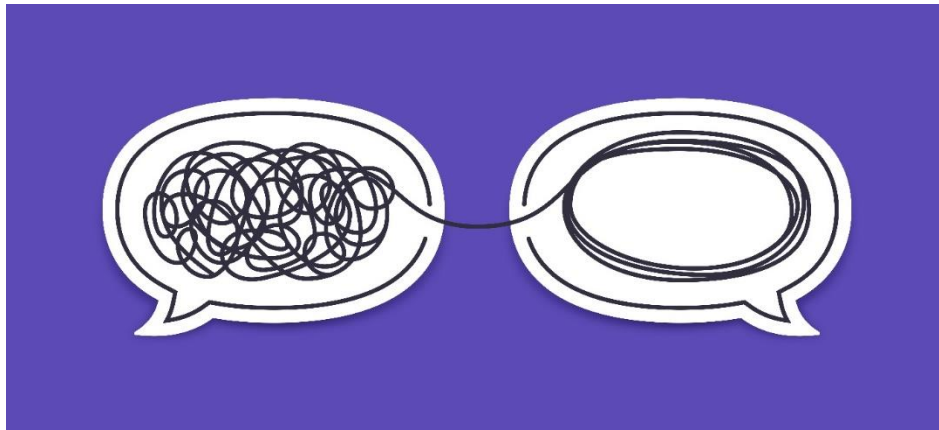
One of the most important questions the CHC asks in all our surveys, is for any suggestions as to how the experience can be improved from a patient perspective.



Patients provided the following improvement suggestions for consideration.

- ❖ Improve information provided to patients around their condition and treatment plan.
- ❖ Improve communication between different branches of the NHS involved in the patients care.
- ❖ Ensure patients do not feel rushed during their appointment and while choosing frames.
- ❖ Include a full eye scan within the cost of a regular eye test.
- ❖ Employ more Staff





Learning from what we heard

The results of our survey show that in the vast majority of cases, patients are very happy with the Eye Care services they are receiving from the NHS Optician.

Patients had high praise to share for staff and their professionalism, as well as their ease in obtaining an appointment on the whole.

The Health Board have been working on improved communications to the public, around who is the most appropriate Clinician to deal with a specific health issue. This information does seem to be having an impact as only a very small number of patients contacted another service within the NHS before contacting their Optician.

Patients' suggestions for improvement are mostly based around improving information and communication. Firstly, between Opticians and patients, ensuring that patients are receiving adequate information around their condition and treatment plans, and secondly, between Opticians and other healthcare services in relation to referrals.

The CHC was reassured to note that patients liken current access, appointments and treatment to that which was available prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic, with the exception of the required Covid-safe procedures such as face masks.

Thanks

We thank everyone who took the time to share their views and experiences with us about their health and care services and to share their ideas.

We hope the feedback people have taken time to share influences healthcare services to recognise and value what they do well – and take action where they need to as quickly as they can to make things better.

Feedback

We'd love to hear what you think about this publication, and any suggestions about how we could have improved it, so we can use this to make our future work better.

This report is available in Welsh and English.



Contact details



CIC De Morgannwg / South Glamorgan CHC
Canolfan Fusnes Pro Copy (Cefn)/ Pro Copy
Business Centre (Rear)
Parc Ty Glas
Llanishen
Caerdydd / Cardiff
CF14 5DU



02920 750112



SouthGlam.chiefofficer@waleschc.org.uk



www.southglamorganchc.wales



www.facebook.com/SouthGlamCHC



www.twitter.com/SouthGlamCHC

If you write to us in Welsh, we will answer in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in responding to your correspondence.

We welcome telephone calls in Welsh.

South Glamorgan Community Health Council