



Association of
Optometrists

Cut the patient backlog in Wales

Community optometry is ready to end the eye care crisis



We are facing a health emergency. Hospitals are overrun, GPs are struggling, and the NHS is collapsing under patient need. The Welsh Government has shown its commitment to eye health in 2023, laying down regulations and a new funding model to enable patients to access timely care and tackle the backlog. But further action is needed to address systemic issues in the NHS, and there are unintended consequences to the Government's actions that will have a significant impact on some of the most vulnerable patients in Wales.



Adam Sampson
Chief Executive
Association of Optometrists

End the eye care crisis in the UK

What patients are saying...

I was diagnosed over two years ago, and I am still waiting for recommended treatment.

I feel unimportant, as if nobody cares if my sight gets worse.

The staff say "see you in six weeks" but it doesn't happen.

I feel left behind and that nothing is happening to help me.

I watch for the post every day in the hope an appointment will arrive.

150,000 people

waiting for an ophthalmology appointment in Wales*

*Welsh Government, Stats Wales NHS Hospital Waiting Times. July 2023.

A crisis in numbers



2 in 10 people on NHS waiting lists in Wales are waiting for an ophthalmology appointment



148,641 people are waiting for an ophthalmology appointment in Wales¹



20,546 patients waiting over a year for an ophthalmology appointment in Wales²



Nearly half of patients (47%) report a decline or **loss in vision** while waiting³



41% of patients report being **frightened** of losing their vision entirely²



30% feel **abandoned** by the NHS or authorities¹



21% say they are **struggling** to do day-to-day tasks like cooking, cleaning, reading and their job²



Reducing the prevalence of eye conditions by just 1% a year across the UK could **save £9.5 billion** by 2050⁴



What we're calling for

1

Work with the Association of Optometrists, and the sector, to ensure investment in all areas of primary care optometry

2

Increase the NHS voucher value to help ensure those people who rely on the voucher can offset against rising costs and have equitable access to eye care

3

Support the optometry sector in extending the scope of community eye care services and prescribing powers so more patients get the care they need, closer to home.

Why act now

- ➔ Every patient in Wales can receive high quality, specialist eye care that's affordable, when they need it
- ➔ More patients can be seen, at the right time, in their community – improving health outcomes
- ➔ Hospital eye departments can focus on patients who need to be seen by an ophthalmologist – reducing the backlog.

Fair access to sight saving appointments


Thousands of people need a hospital eye appointment that could save their sight and the number is only set to grow with an ageing population. Too many are being forced to wait, struggling with an undiagnosed or untreated condition, losing vision that is completely preventable, and often irreversible.

It doesn't have to be this way. Optometrists up and down the country are trained and ready to help if only we take action and solve the crisis in UK eye care. The situation will only get worse, and the message is clear. #SightWontWait

Optometrists

Optometrists are eye care professionals who test sight, identify disease and provide treatment for certain eye conditions. They are community-based: there are around 7000 primary care optical practices (commonly known as opticians) across the UK, as well as in hospitals.

It is optometrists who supply eye wear prescriptions. However, optometrists are qualified and equipped to do far more NHS work than they carry out. Many have additional, higher qualifications including the ability to prescribe medications and even those without higher qualifications have an extensive portfolio of skills that are currently underutilised.

 For more information and how to get involved, visit

www.aop.org.uk/sightwontwait

The Association of Optometrists (AOP) is the voice of the optical profession, representing over 80% of practising optometrists. The AOP elevates the work of its members, safeguards their interests, and champions eye health across the UK. For more information visit www.aop.org.uk



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