



Ein cyf/Our ref: VG/0035/19

Mohammad Asghar AM
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

12 November 2019

Dear Mohammad,

At Business Questions on the 22 November 2019, Rebecca Evans suggested that I write to you, providing an update on the implementation of the new eye care measure.

As Rebecca highlighted to you the introduction of this measure was welcomed by the RNIB in response to the potential harm that those patients on a waiting list may suffer if they are not seen in a timely manner. When introducing the measure, I did signal that performance may take some time to stabilise before improving as there is a lot of work for health boards to do concerning the allocation of target review dates and the health risk factor (HRF). Once this is completed (health boards have agreed that this will be done for all patients by December 2019) then I expect performance to improve.

As you are aware since April 2019, new guidelines have been implemented that require hospital eye services to have procedures in place to ensure that all patients (both new and follow up) receive their assessment or treatment by the most suitable person within a clinically appropriate time. This means that those high risk patients, who need to be seen quickly due to their condition, should experience fewer delays.

I am delighted to report that Powys Teaching Health Board has been reaching the 95% target since May 2019 and continue to do so. I am also aware that the majority of health boards are currently not reaching the targets set. All have in place plans to improve performance over the coming months. There has been extensive work undertaken by the Welsh Government and the health boards to ensure that patients are seen within clinically safe waiting times. £3.3 million has been made available to health boards to support the implementation of the measure. I have been very clear that the money is to be spent on essential activity including the provision of eye care services in community settings. This also includes the introduction of virtual clinics where a multidisciplinary approach can be applied, thereby allowing multiple clinicians to diagnose, treat and discharge patients in a timely manner. Since implementation the number of patients without an allocated HRF has fallen from 55,283 in September 2018 to 3,981 in August 2019. Thus ensuring that patients with the highest risk of harm and loss of sight are seen as a priority.

I expect the health boards to swiftly implement the plans they have set out.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Gohebiaeth.Vaughan.Gething@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Vaughan.Gething@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vaughan Gething". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Vaughan Gething AC/AM

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services