

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) ar [dyfodol ymarfer cyffredinol yng Nghymru](#)

This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) consultation on [the future of general practice in Wales](#)

GP44: Ymateb gan: Optometreg Cymru | Response from: Optometry Wales

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## **Optometry Wales Written Response to the Health & Social Care Committee's inquiry into the future of general practice in Wales.**

Optometry Wales is the umbrella professional body for all community optometrists, dispensing opticians and optometric practices in Wales with our main function to represent the profession at all levels in Wales. Optometry Wales negotiates on behalf of the statutory bodies (the Regional Optical Committees) with Welsh Government and NHS Wales in respect of national NHS services provided by optometry in primary care.

Optometry Wales is pleased to provide a written response to the Health and Social Care Committee inquiry into general practice in Wales.

**The patient experience of general practice, including equitable access to care, effective management of patient demand, the quality of care, and public trust in the services provided.**

The optometry profession truly values and trusts the GP services in Wales and appreciates the collaborative relationships that have evolved for the benefit of patient care.

As a clear demonstration of GP practices effectively managing patient demand GP practices have embraced the new optometry contract in Wales by redirecting all patients with eye problems to contact their optometry practice as the first port of call for all eye problems.

However, it would be helpful if all GP practices could manage patient expectations in that patients will be triaged over the telephone by the optometry practice and will be offered an appointment at an appropriate time (depending on the urgency of their eye condition) which may not necessarily be straightaway.

**Opportunities to improve general practice to make it fit for the future and take a more preventative approach to care.**

A fully digital approach is crucial to successful integrated and multi-professional care for patients. Optometry Wales is frustrated by the lack of Digital solutions for the optometry profession as it hinders patient transfer between secondary care and primary care but also hinders patient transfer within primary care. The digital infrastructure for primary care contractors should be able to fully facilitate easy transfer of patient care between the different primary care professions, including both the referral of patients and the transfer of patient information.

## **The general practice workforce**

Optometry Wales is alarmed at workforce reports around GP practices. The optometry profession relies heavily on our GP colleagues to co-manage patients particularly when eye health issues are related to a patient's general health. Whilst the optometry profession now manages the majority of eye problems that present to optometry practices, patients present with health issues that require often urgent assessment from their GP practice. Insufficient workforce within GP practices will risk the safe management for these patients requiring urgent assessments.

If patients are unable to have their general health issues managed and monitored in a timely manner e.g. diabetes, hypertension, then this will increase their eye health complications (diabetic retinopathy, hypertensive retinopathy in the eye) which will add a significant burden to optometry practices and across the whole of NHS Wales.