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Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref

Peter Fox MS
Chair
Health and Social Care Committee

seneddhealth@senedd.wales

26 March 2026

Dear Peter,

I am writing to provide an update about progress with the Digital Eye Care Programme.

Significant progress has been made towards the national rollout of the eye care electronic patient record – OpenEyes – and the electronic referral system – OPERAi. These systems are at the heart to modernising eye care services, enabling consistent digital referrals, improving patient safety, and supporting care closer to home.

All health boards are in an advanced stage of deploying OpenEyes, with several already achieving full or near-full implementation of all ophthalmic sub-specialties. Work to enable WGOS levels 4 and 5 optometrist connectivity is progressing alongside this. Health boards have also met the March deadline to onboard optometrists to OPERAi, establishing a single national referral platform which will replace paper-based processes and strengthen triage across Wales.

A detailed breakdown of progress by health board and subspecialty is set out in the annex. I will also publish a written statement to set out the national position.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
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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.

Annex A - Update on the Digital Eye Care Programme

Progress by component

1. National Electronic Patient Record (OpenEyes)

Health boards are rolling out OpenEyes using phased approaches aligned to local capacity, workforce readiness and service configuration. The pace of progress reflects sustained engagement from clinical and digital teams and provides a strong foundation for extending digital access into community optometry.

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board – Deployment of the glaucoma module in secondary care ophthalmology clinics started on 23 March. Roll-out of all remaining subspecialties will take place over the next seven weeks concluding in the week commencing 4 May. Connectivity for WGOS Level 4 and 5 optometrists will start once the ophthalmology rollout has been completed.

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board – The glaucoma module is scheduled to go live from 30 March. Phased rollout of further subspecialties will continue through to October 2026. Timelines for WGOS Level 4 and 5 connectivity are under development, supported by ongoing IT and service planning.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board - The glaucoma module is live, with deployment across all remaining subspecialties planned to complete by 31 March. Planning for WGOS Level 4 and 5 connectivity is underway.

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board – OpenEyes is fully deployed across all ophthalmic subspecialties and WGOS Level 4 and 5 connectivity is live.

Hywel Dda University Health Board – Initial deployment of two sub-specialty modules in secondary care ophthalmology clinics will start on 30 March. Phased rollout of all subspecialties is expected to be completed by August 2026. Timelines for WGOS Level 4 and 5 connectivity are being finalised.

Powys Teaching Health Board - Initial deployment of four subspecialties in one secondary care site will start in April 2026, following preparatory work. Phased rollout of all subspecialties, alongside WGOS Level 4 and 5 primary care connectivity, is planned to conclude by March 2027.

Swansea Bay University Health Board – OpenEyes is fully deployed across all subspecialties. Primary care optometry connectivity for WGOS Levels 4 and 5 will be implemented in parallel with the live digital referral pathway, with completion confirmed for 25 May.

2. National Electronic Referral System (OPERAi)

All health boards have worked to meet the 31 March deadline for onboarding optometrists to OPERAi, establishing a consistent national digital referral platform for ophthalmology. This represents a significant step change from paper-based systems and provides a firm basis for improving referral quality and triage efficiency.

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board is the national pilot site and will be the first to use OPERAi for live referral activity. Initial live referrals will commence by 30 March via an interim email end-point, with a fully integrated digital referral pathway expected to be in place by 1 May.

Cardiff and Vale, Swansea Bay and Hywel Dda university health boards have confirmed the ophthalmology process mapping will be completed by 4 May, with fully integrated referral pathways operational by 25 May.

Aneurin Bevan, Cwm Taf Morgannwg, and Powys Teaching Health Board have confirmed ophthalmology process mapping will be completed by 6 June, with fully integrated digital referral pathways planned to be live by 25 June, subject to final validation.