

Ophthalmology Services

(Eye Health Needs Assessment)

Summary of feedback on Care Opinion platform

03 August 2020 - 31 March 2023

CONTENT

1.0	Purpose	3
2.0	Background	3
3.0	Context	3
4.0	Summary of Stories	5
5.0	Next Steps	13
6.0	Reference	17

If you require this report in an alternative format or printed version please contact thelma.swann@hscni.net

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this briefing paper is to demonstrate how the current Care Opinion database can be used to inform the Health and Social Care system on the experiences of service users, families and carers who use **Ophthalmology Services** across Northern Ireland. The following information reflects on stories published via Care Opinion from **03 August 2020 to 31 March 2023**.

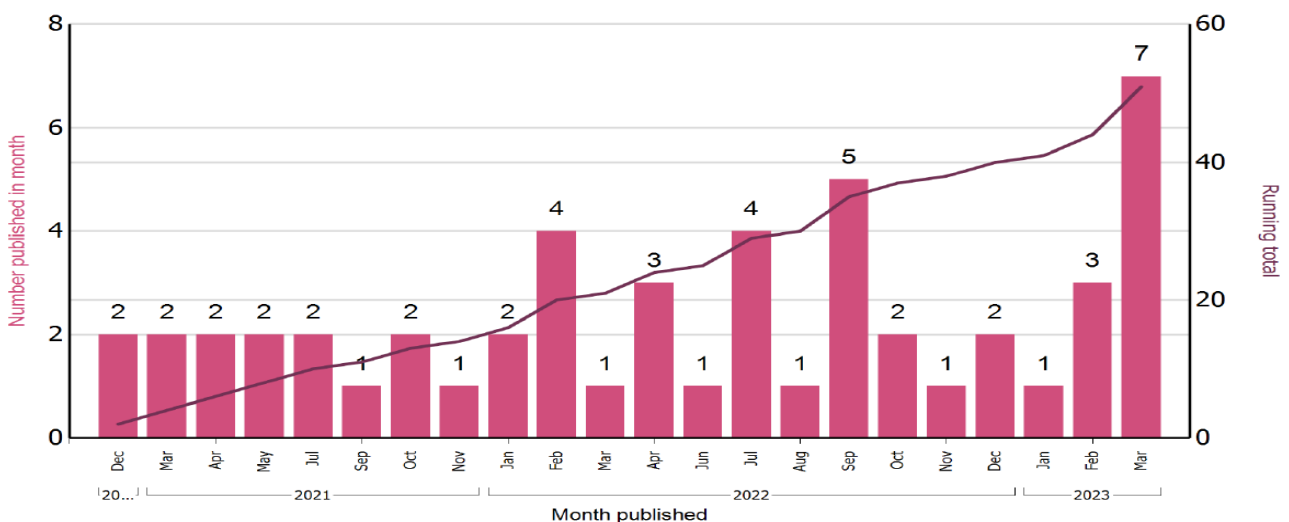
2.0 BACKGROUND

Commissioned by the Department of Health (DoH) the Online User Feedback Service (OUFS), Care Opinion was launched in Northern Ireland on 03 August 2020. This service provides an open and transparent platform to give service users, families and carers the opportunity to share feedback on their experiences of any service within Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland (HSCNI). The Care Opinion platform enables services to engage with the author of the stories through a two-way feedback mechanism. This platform supports feedback to be shared safely as stories are independently moderated prior to publication on the website (www.careopinion.org.uk).

3.0 CONTEXT

In total **51** stories have been shared on Care Opinion which relate to Ophthalmology Services. Figure 1 displays the number of stories published per month since the launch of Care Opinion on 03 August 2020 up until 31 March 2023.

Figure 1: Number of stories submitted each month on Care Opinion

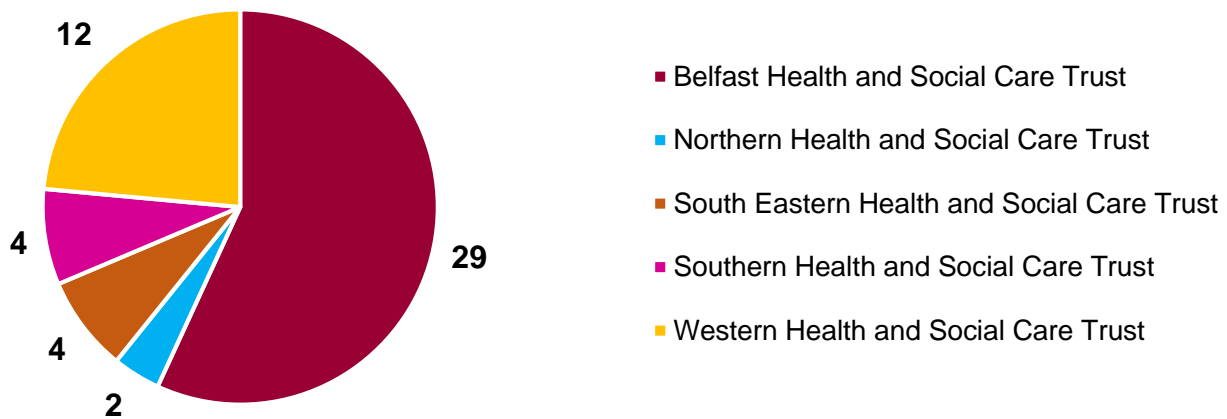


The methods used to submit these stories were:

- Website - 92% (n=47)
- Telephone number - 4% (n=2)
- Kiosk – 2% (n=1)
- Leaflet - 2% (n=1)

These stories have been submitted from across all Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland as outlined in Figure 2. It is recognised 13 stories relate to the Regional Eye Emergency Department based in Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

Figure 2. Number of stories per organisation



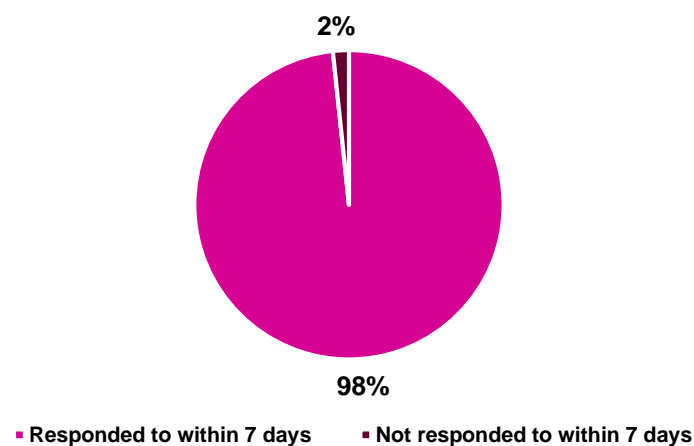
Authors are asked to identify if they are a patient/service user, relative or carer etc. The responses are shown in Table 1. The majority of stories have been submitted from the perspective of the patient/service user (n=30, 59%).

Table 1. Which term best describes you?

Authors	Number	Percentage (correct to closest whole denominator)
Patient/service User	30	59
Parent/Guardian	13	25
Staff member (posting on behalf of patient/service user)	3	6
Carer	3	6
Relative	2	4

A unique function of Care Opinion is the two way feedback mechanism to ensure authors receive a response from the service. In line with research, stories should be responded to within 7 days from publication. This indicates to the author that services have engaged with the feedback (Bains et al 2018). Figure 4 represents the responsiveness of Ophthalmology Services in relation to feedback via Care Opinion. 98% (n=50) responded within the 7 day timeframe which reflects a commitment by the service to meaningful engagement with the stories shared.

Figure 3. Percentage of stories relating to Ophthalmology Services responded to within 7 days



Areas of development

There have been **2 changes made and 1 change planned** by services as a direct result of engaging with the stories as detailed in the links below.

Changes made includes :

1. Change to policy in relation to carers support

"...Thank you for highlighting this. It has allowed the Eye Casualty team to review their policy regarding essential carers accompanying patients within the department. The team now ensure that each patient is asked if their carer is essential at the time of arrival..."

[Visiting eye casualty | Care Opinion](#)

2. Staff training to support communication with children requiring additional support

"...I am very sorry about the choice of words used by a member of staff to your son during a recent appointment which had such a negative impact on your clinic experience. I will ensure that all support staff to the Paediatric Ophthalmology Service will now undertake an available training course on Children's Emotional and Additional Health Needs which will be completed by February 2021..." [Eye Clinic | Care Opinion](#)

Change planned includes:

1. Service Provision

“...I can advise you that we are working to resume the eye screening service in the Royal Victoria Hospital and I will ensure you are offered an appointment there which will be nearer your location...”

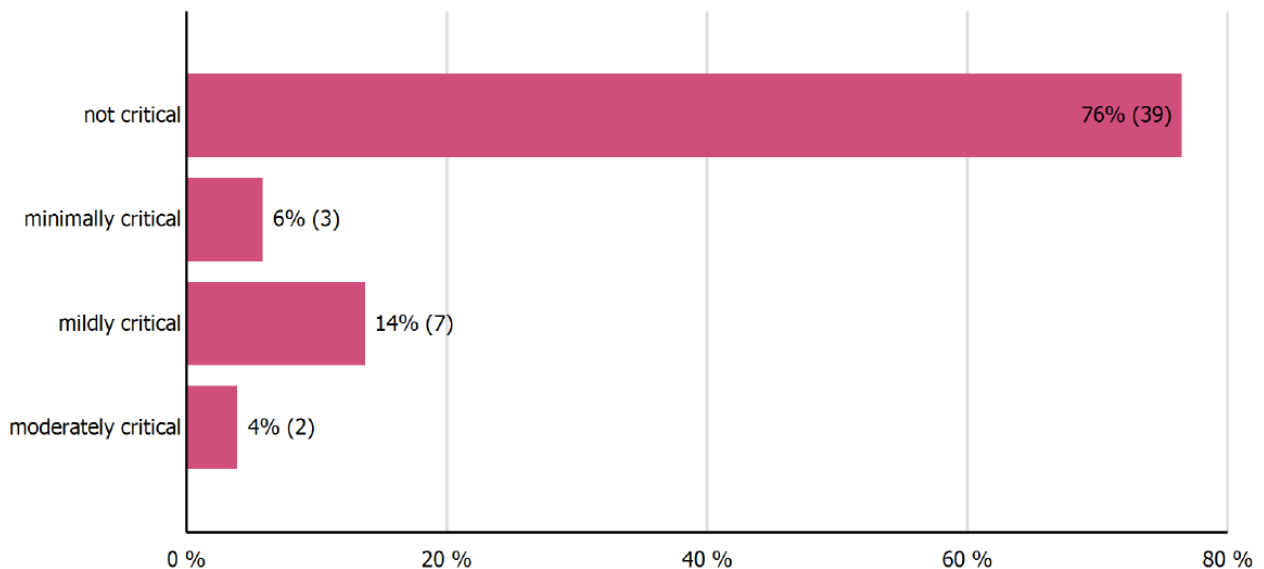
[No diabetic eye screening in west Belfast | Care Opinion](#)

4.0 SUMMARY OF STORIES

4.1 Criticality Scores

Care Opinion is built upon the concept of “what’s your story” and supports the author to highlight what matters most to them using their own words. As part of the analysis through Care Opinion each story is assigned a criticality score by an independent moderator to highlight the level of critique included in the story. Figure 4 illustrates the scores for the **51** stories submitted relating to Ophthalmology Services. The majority of stories (n=39, 76%) have been assigned a “not critical” score which indicates a wholly positive experience.

Figure 4. Criticality rating of stories submitted on Care Opinion relating to Ophthalmology Services



NB: criticality scores are assigned by moderators (not the public) to stories to support our alerting service. They are assigned *per story* not *per service*, so may reflect criticism of services other than your own. We provide them here purely for information, with these caveats in mind.

The definition of criticality scores is summarised in Appendix 1 and supports an overview of the main content of the stories. Learning from the critical stories is included in Section 4.3.

4.2 Summary Questions

The stories are also summarised through three supporting questions included on the platform: -

1. What was good about your experience?
2. What could have improved your experience?
3. What are your feelings and emotions relating to your story?

Responses relating to Ophthalmology Services are summarised in Table 3 and further illustrated in the word clouds within Appendix 2.

Table 3. Tags to describe experience on Care Opinion relating to Ophthalmology Services

<i>What's good?</i>		<i>What could be improved?</i>		<i>Feelings</i>	
staff	16	communication	2	thank you	16
friendly	9	staff attitude	2	reassured	8
Care	6	appointment letter	1	impressed	5
efficient	5	badly treated	1	at ease	4
helpful	5	car parking	1	grateful	4
professional	5	delays	1	relaxed	4
professionalism	5	difficult	1	Thankful	4
explanations	4	empathy	1	disappointed	3
communication	3	health deteriorating	1	angry	2
kind	3	ignorant	1	anxious	2
reassuring	3	included	1	calm	2
understanding	3	inconvenienced	1	happy	2
went smoothly	3	inefficient	1	important	2

4.3 Thematic Analysis

Framing each story with the lens of “what is matters to you” the following themes have been identified in the narrative. The values of Health and Social Care and Standards for Patient Client Experience (respect, privacy & dignity, communication, attitude and behaviour) are also echoed in the themes. Each theme is illustrated using quotes directly from the story to ensure the voices of the stories are heard. Names have been removed from each quote and replaced with a letter to support anonymity. It is also important to highlight that the themes are not mutually exclusive and a number of themes can be identified within the quotes.

4.3.1 Standard of Care

"...I had very little pain during the surgery and have had none since then. I can't imagine the level of skill needed to perform such a delicate procedure on such a sensitive part of the body – it seems miraculous to a layman like me. The care I have received from Miss K, Dr R, Dr M, and all the nurses and receptionists at the Shankill Centre and the Downe Hospital has been consistently excellent and I am deeply grateful to them all. It is all the more remarkable that our NHS staff can deliver this level of care during a pandemic emergency..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/83033>

"...I would like to thank Nursing Sister S, for looking after me so well, and making it so straightforward for me to receive care at the Eye Casualty whilst also being covid positive. I would also like to thank the receptionist for looking after me when I arrived, and for Healthcare Assistant, S for going to the Pharmacy on my behalf to collect my medications. I got excellent care from the SHO who saw me (wish I could remember his name!). He never complained in any way about having to wear all the PPE and took his time to assess me thoroughly and explain everything. It was such an impressive service and excellent care..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/955168>

4.3.2 Professional Approach of Staff

"...I had an eye appointment at the Ophthalmology and Macular Unit, Fairview 2 of the Mater Hospital, Belfast. The staff responsible for applying the Covid restrictions were proficient and courteous and social distancing was manifestly being observed. All of the nursing staff were pleasant in their approach and it was obvious that the management of the clinic had clearly designated roles and responsibilities of each nurse, for example, as each eyesight testing bay immediately became available another patient and nurse was waiting to use the vacant spaces therein. The doctor with whom I had my appointment was pleasant and meticulous in the examination of my eyes; she also explained the outcome understandably. The fact that I arrived at 9:00 am and was departing the building at 9:50 am speaks volumes as to the skilful and effective manner in which this unit was operating. Thank you and congratulations to all concerned for making my appointment such a pleasant and positive experience.."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/882324>

"...My mum had her first cataract surgery in December 2021 in South Tyrone Hospital in the SHSCT and her second eye surgery in April 2022. Prof W and his team were outstanding in their professionalism and putting mum at ease during the procedures. The team were all so friendly and helpful. Special thanks to nurse D who looked after mum yesterday. Mums surgery was a complete success and today her world is bright and clear vision. Thank you!..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/928601>

4.3.3 Empathy and Understanding

"...I had to attend eye casualty and following this, the macular clinic in Fairview. Despite very high anxiety and concern, I was reassured to receive exemplary, very professional care from all the staff I have encountered in both eye casualty and the macular clinic. I was reassured and have total faith in my treatment plan, developed by Dr V. I would like to say thankyou to all the staff including reception, nursing and care staff, scanners , photographers and doctors..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/917248>

"...My wife was attending Downe Hospital for her second cataract surgery which was 100% successful. I had gone out to feed a stray cat in the morning and fell on the frost breaking my glasses and cutting my eye. My wife was telling nurse M while at her cataract surgery about my fall and the cut to my eye, the nurse went out of her way to call me to tell me to come to reception and

to go to Urgent Care Centre. A nurse met me at the door of the hospital. I would highly praise the nurse who contacted me for going above and beyond and for her kindness which was beyond reproach... I would like to forward my thanks to Nurse M , the lady doctor and staff at UCC for their treatment and kindness I received which was excellent..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/829241>

"...My child became unwell just after Christmas with Peri Orbital Cellulitis and was admitted to Antrim hospital, but required specialist ophthalmology input from RVH. They were very scared attending a different hospital but the wonderful staff really put us at ease. The nursing staff in particular were amongst the best I've come across and I myself have been a nurse for 20 years. They really went the extra mile to put a terrified child's fears at bay. One nurse in particular made a special superhero cape for their teddy out of Spider-Man stickers and that simple action made such a difference. The medical staff were excellent too and really explained everything very well and ensured that my child would be followed up post discharge from hospital. I just want to thank the team for their care and professionalism as what was an extremely stressful time for us as a family..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/907001>

4.3.4 Efficiency

"...Having been told by an optician that there would be a 4 year wait for an outpatient appointment regarding a cataract, my 90 year old father was delighted to receive an appointment within about 4 months or perhaps less. Clearly this was part of a waiting list initiative. He was phoned a few days before the appointment and this was followed up by a letter with a few instructions, predominantly Covid related. My father was more than happy with the service received and looks forward to having both cataracts removed in the not too distant future..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/865536>

"...Recently diagnosed with glaucoma and had first visit to Glaucoma Clinic at Shankill Wellbeing & treatment Centre in Belfast in June. I had a very smooth transition through all the tests and after approx. two hours came out, all examinations completed. Since then I have been contacted by Sr H and received information booklets from the Clinic Liaison Officer to ensure I was managing my treatment satisfactorily. As a former Nurse Specialist I have been very impressed with the care and concern given to me, especially in these days..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/885028>

4.3.5 Responsiveness to concerns

"...I just wanted to feedback on the very positive experience which I had earlier today. I needed to reschedule an Optometry Clinic appointment due to a dodgy car, so I contacted the number given on the appointment letter. The phone was answered immediately by a lovely staff member called L. She was extremely helpful and proactive in rescheduling my appointment. I was struck that, although it was just passed 8:00 a.m. L manner was bright, enthusiastic and helpful. A real ambassador for the Trust..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/913139>

"...At Christmas Time 2020 I began to be increasingly distracted by an irritation in the right-hand corner of my right eye. I remembered that Mr F had mentioned that a suture had been intentionally left in that eye at the time the corneal graft was carried out (Jan. 17) and it might be might advisable to have it taken out at some time... Phoned Ms K Sec. and explained my problem. She phoned back with an appointment date one week hence (in spite of Covid restrictions)..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/836164>

4.3.6 Engaging with the Service User

"...Sadly mum was diagnosed with secondary cancer to her skull, lung and bowel coming from a cancerous lesion on her neck. She will always live with double vision now and subsequently for the past 6 weeks we have had multiple appointments to help manage this- I would like to thank C in Orthoptics, Magherafelt who took time to listen to mums concerns and recognised she didn't fully understand the severity of her diagnosis. He talked to her in a way she understood and brought humour into the assessment..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/847308>

"...Excellent service received from all staff but especially Dr W. He spent time and interacted well with son. He was patient and ensured my son understand all that was happening before he acted. My son was nervous about attending but all went very smoothly. Thank you to all the staff in eye casualty..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/934464>

4.3.7 Impact upon Service User's Wellbeing

"...During the review meeting the Consultant, having examined my eyes, gave me the bad news and the good news. Firstly on my blind right eye: that nothing could be done to recover sight in it but I would need to maintain it correctly, potting drops in it as prescribed and seeking help promptly if there seemed to be any change in its condition. Secondly on my left eye the good news was that it was generally in good condition and the cataract in it was definitely mature enough to be removed safely and that the Consultant would be happy to do the operation, scheduling it as a priority in the Clinic's work list. I was delighted to be able to look forward to a New Year when I could drive again, read, watch television and begin to redevelop a social life. The Clinic was as good as its word: they conducted the operation in January, they were clearly well experienced and everything went very smoothly, they had me in and out of the theatre in around half an hour, sitting up, looking around seeing things with a clarity I hadn't enjoyed for years..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/836164>

Only a small proportion of stories have a criticality rating of 2 or above. The following highlights the main issues identified specifically within these stories.

4.3.8 Lack of empathy and patience (specific to supporting a child)

"...My son (4 years old) attends a number of different eye clinics and appointments. We recently attended his optometry appointment in Roe Valley Hospital so that he could have his prescription checked. My son finds bright lights very difficult when his glasses are removed and so the situation was very difficult for him. He became very distressed and tearful and I was so disappointed by how he and I were dealt with by the optometrist. I appreciate that there are other patients to be seen but we were treated with little to no empathy and very little patience. The appointment could not continue and we left both feeling fairly traumatised and not at all supported. My son left terrified and I left feeling that I was to blame for his behaviour.... Today we were made to feel that he is the only child that behaves like this and I was made to feel like a terrible parent as he would not cooperate. We were both deeply upset by the experience, and I am already anxious of how the next appointment will go. I feel that some training, empathy or indeed some basic understanding of how both my son and I feel would go a long way. Perhaps a telephone call prior to his appointment to find out a little about my son, his likes, dislikes, anything in particular he is scared of regarding his eye appointments could have gone a long way. It may not have made a difference but it could have also made a huge difference..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/997032>

"...My son has several difficulties, a severe learning disability, ADHD & Williams Syndrome, a genetic disorder. Hospital appointments are challenging & I phoned the day before spoke to someone on Level 8B & was called back which was very helpful to prepare my son for this appointment. We have many different Hospital appointments but this was our first at this one. Part of the appointment today involved going to Level 8A for pictures of his eye's. I feel they need to ensure all staff members have skills in dealing with children, especially children with additional needs. The first staff member we saw on 8A tried to take the pictures & was unsuccessful so called for another staff member. The first staff member continually asked my son not to touch this, not to touch that, explaining how expensive the machines are & that he would break them & that he needed to sit still. Focusing on what you do not want him to do does not help this type of situation & expecting him to do something he is not capable of is a bit unfair. The second staff member had a totally different more child-friendly approach, as did all the other staff we dealt with. Our appointment lasted almost 3 hours overall between Level 8A & 8B..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/809840>

4.3.9 Management of COVID-19 regulations

"...I arrived this morning after getting an urgent appointment from the opticians, due to problems with Glaucoma testing. Upon my arrival, I was met by a nurse, standing at the end of the corridor, who questioned me about my exemption card from wearing a face mask. I was informed I must wear one or a face shield. I explained I did not need to as I had shown, they then said they will need to speak to the consultant. Shortly afterwards, two more nurses arrived with the first one and one began to question me, saying I must wear a mask, have I had my vaccines, did I bring proof of having them, what exactly was my reason for not wearing a mask? I explained, that at the opticians, where I got my test done, I was told I did not require to wear one, not only to the fact, it would be almost impossible to carry out the test with one on, but because I was exempt, as I clearly showed. I tried to explain, I would need to leave before wearing one. I also explained my reasons of not wishing to wear a mask, to which one of the staff passed a rude comment, sniggered, then walked away. I have never been treated like this in hospital before, and I've been in almost 25 times in the last year due to family illness. I was left with no choice, but to walk away, and now potentially risk any further damage to my eyes, not knowing what to do. I've paid into the system all my life and feel, especially by this one nurse, I've been treated very badly. I've been asked questions, which under the government's own site, was not allowed. Not happy at all!..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/880247>

"...I attended eye casualty as I developed orbital myositis in my eye. The first time I attended, I was told that my carer would not be allowed in and have to wait outside. I noticed people that came in after me had their carer with them. I was also made to wait for over an hour after my appointment time to be seen. The second time I came up, the same happened. I was told that only one person is allowed in, but they allowed my carer in with me this time. When we went into the waiting room there was around 5 patients with their carers or family members present. I find that I am being treated differently due to being a young person. If you are going to state a policy then you should make sure that policy is kept to for everyone, and only the people that actually need a carer or family member should be allowed in. I believe this needs to be talked about and new policies put in place to treat people with the same respect all the time, not based on age or anything else..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/990150>

4.3.10 Challenging attitude and Behaviour

"...I phoned the RVH eye casualty on Monday, and what I got was a rant from the receptionist that I should not have been phoning them, I tried to explain that previously I had been instructed by my optician, macular clinic and only last week my GP also instructed me if things with my sight deteriorated I was to go to eye casualty, all I got repeated in my ear was that I should not have been phoning them, they just weren't listening to my explanation and that I had an information sheet from the macular clinic with their number on it! I eventually got my message to sink in that I needed to be

seen urgently as my sight had got progressively worse since I seen my GP in a face to face appointment. I was given the impression that they didn't want to see any patients. I eventually got an appointment, but I feel if the hospital has a problem with other health professionals they should raise the issue with them rather than taking it out on the patient..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/932205>

"...I was advised to attend the Eye Casualty Department this morning. I wrongly made my way to Eye Outpatients Department where I was met by a member of staff who was less than helpful. They didn't appear to be busy but gave the impression that my presence was a real inconvenience. They took my details and when I advised I had been referred from my optician they rolled their eyes and said that I wasn't in the right place. I felt they were rude and ignorant and when I asked where it was I should be, they advised I follow the signs..."

<https://www.careopinion.org.uk/959199>

5.0 NEXT STEPS

The analysis presented in this paper is based upon the stories shared from 03 August 2020 to 31 March 2023. It is anticipated the following actions will support Ophthalmology Services within Health and Social Care Trusts to continue to demonstrate their commitment to listen and learn from the experience of service users, families and carers through Care Opinion:

- 1- Embed the concept of Care Opinion in Ophthalmology Services through training led by Trust PCE Facilitator and opportunities through Care Opinion - this includes Care Opinion awareness training and responder training.
- 2- Consider the development of a Care Opinion campaign within each organisation to reflect the journey through Ophthalmology Services. Coordinated by Regional PCE team (PHA) and supported by Trust PCE Facilitators bespoke invitation links and promotional material can be designed. This supports services to invite feedback at defined stages of the service users' journey and facilitate regional analysis.
- 3- Identification of subscription members within regional forums to receive regular Care Opinion digests on Ophthalmology Services and undertake thematic analysis of the stories with the support of the Regional PCE team within the Public Health Agency (PHA).
- 4- Learning presented from stories on Care Opinion can support quality improvement initiatives relating to Ophthalmology Services alongside other sources of experience.

Appendix 1:

Definition of criticality scores assigned by Care Opinion moderators

Score	Definition	n=51
0	Not Critical: Entirely positive or neutral postings with no hint of criticality.	39
1	Minimally Critical: Mention of dissatisfaction with non-clinical non-personal aspects of care, typically “facilities” issues such as food, parking, or waiting.	3
2	Mildly Critical: More specific but still mild criticism, which may also include non-clinical but interpersonal issues such as attitude of staff, compassion, politeness. This might include the timely nature of the service whether in hospital or in the community where it has caused distress, e.g. carers not turning up on time	7
3	Moderately Critical: Criticism which may include alleged shortcomings in clinical or non-clinical aspects of care, the Author may not say what the effect of these are. Also includes serious comments about facilities: ‘never cleaned’; and where people’s essential basic care needs are not being met, e.g. inadequate nutrition and hydration, development of bedsores	2
4	Strongly Critical: Serious criticisms of specific unnamed staff or groups of staff, or of clinical or other care or facilities. This might have had very serious consequences for physical or emotional health. These will be described by the Author. There might also have been social consequences that have increased the risk or vulnerability of an individual	0
5	Severely Critical: Posting alleges or describes actions or events which may be illegal, grossly negligent, or allege serious misconduct by named members of staff or organisations	0

Question 3. “What are your feelings and emotions relating to your story”?



6.0 References

Baines, R., Donovan, J., Regan de Bere, S, Archer, J. and Jones, R (2018) Responding effectively to adult mental health patient feedback in an online environment: A coproduced framework. *Health Expectations* 21 (5) DOI Open Access
<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/11239>

For further information contact:

Regional Lead for Patient Client Experience - Linda Craig

 linda.craig3@hscni.net

Project Lead for Online User Feedback Service – Thelma Swann

 thelma.swann@hscni.net

Care Opinion Initiative is managed by-
Regional Lead for Patient Client Experience (PCE): Mrs Linda Craig; linda.craig3@hscni.net
Deputy Director (Head of AHP, PPI & PCE) - Michelle Tennyson



Public Health
Agency

Produced by the Public Health Agency,
4th Floor, 12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS. Tel: 0300 555 0114 (local rate)
www.publichealth.hscni.net