

The Wales Vision Forum Signposting Service.

Now that OPERAi is running throughout Wales, all optometrists now have the facility to refer WGOS patients into third sector support via the Wales Vision Forum Signposting Service. By indicating the patient's support needs in OPERAi and selecting the Third Sector Referral option, the signposting service will be able to put together a package of suggestions for your patient to obtain further support beyond the eye clinic, such as from their local society for blind and partially sighted people.

The Wales Vision Forum is an informal group of sight loss charities in Wales, including some UK-wide organisations, and is managed by Wales Council of the Blind (WCB). The forum members range from condition-specific organisations to local societies and clubs delivering support in designated parts of Wales. This means that the WVF Signposting Service is a shared responsibility involving third sector service providers of all kinds. By representing as much of the provision available as possible on our database *Perspectif*, we are able to offer the widest choice of support possible to your patients.

What kinds of support do we mean?

Your patient may be in need of telephone befriending - if they live alone for instance - or might be an active person who wishes to take part in sports and recreations adapted for people with sight loss. Some may be showing signs of low mood and would benefit from emotional support. They may simply want more information about their condition or are worried about retaining their jobs. This will ideally be noted in your referral, and the WVF Signposting Service can find the support the patient needs and have a conversation with them to agree a way forward.

The conversation.

We have already found that our phone call with the patient or their carer is essential in preparing them for the suggestions we send to them. It lays the ground for a follow-up call to see if they've been able to make contact with

the organisations, or if they've chosen not to. We are able to make referrals on their behalf if necessary.

The verbal feedback from patients has so far been encouraging. Some express their thanks merely for being contacted and having a chance to talk about their lifestyle and interests.

'I was delighted to see the Jubilee Trust on your list of possible things to explore. Thank you for all the info you gave me, and we will have a good look at it.'

What about referring to Rehabilitation Specialists?

It's important for optometrists to note that this service does not replace referrals for rehabilitation services. The WVF Signposting service does not normally make *referrals* generally - but experience so far is steering us towards being more proactive on behalf of the patient in some cases. But we do not intend to make referrals into rehabilitation services - that still remains the role of the Low Vision practitioner under WGOS 3. So, if you agree with your patient that rehabilitation from a Vision Rehabilitation Specialist is needed, you should **select the option within OPERAi to send the referral to the relevant VRS team.**

The Third Sector referral option.

For additional support, however, you must select the Third Sector option in OPERAi. That way the WVF service will contact the patient to discuss the kinds of support or activities they would like and signpost accordingly.

After we have contacted your patient and sent information out to them, we use OPERAi to feed back to the optometrist so that you are informed of the various support options we agreed. This enables you to take them into account in your own follow-up conversations with your patient.

So, we at WCB encourage you all to make use of the Third Sector referral option in OPERAi so that the WVF Signposting Service can make a positive

impact on people's wellbeing by directing them to the kinds of support that they desperately need.

To find out more about the **Wales Vision Forum** go to <https://walesvisionforum.org.uk>.

Perspecif - the database of services that WVF Signposting uses is available at <https://perspectif.org.uk>

If you have any questions about the **WVF Signposting Service**, please contact WCB via support@walesvisionforum.org.uk or telephone 029 20 473954.