GIG CYMRU NHS WALES | Partneriaeth Cydwasanaethau Shared Services Partnership

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Private & Confidential

By Email Only:

E-bost/Email:
AllWales.Alerts@wales.nhs.uk

Dyddiad / Date: 12/10/2026

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to invite you to take part in a research study exploring 'barriers and enablers for children accessing the Low Vision Service Wales (LVSW)'. This study is sponsored and funded by Wales Council of the Blind.

As a professional involved in the care and support of children with vision impairment, your insight is essential. We are conducting a series of online focus groups to understand how well the LVSW meets children's needs and to identify opportunities to improve access.

What participation involves

* **One online focus group (Microsoft Teams)**
* **Duration: up to 1.5 hours**
* **Groups will include a mix of professionals (e.g., ophthalmologists, optometrists, dispensing opticians, orthoptists, QTVIs, habilitation officers, vision rehabilitation specialists, third?sector colleagues)**
* **Sessions will be recorded for transcription; all data will be anonymised**

Why your contribution matters

Despite the number of children in Wales living with vision impairment, fewer than 100 access the LVSW each year. Understanding the reasons behind this disparity is crucial for ensuring equitable access to support and rehabilitation.

Attached to this email are the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form, which provide full details. If you would like to take part, please return the signed consent form and indicate your availability for the focus groups by clicking the link below.

Childrens Access to LVSW focus group selection – Fill in form
https://forms.cloud.microsoft/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=uChWuyjjgkCoVkM8ntyPrtjyPpjjZg9AlWL9LE271lBUNjdYVVZTR0tMTEVaUFQxM1NLUUU4TkZOUi4u

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the study, please feel free to contact me directly.

Thank you for considering this invitation. Your expertise would be greatly valued.

Kind regards,
Dr Rebecca John
Chief Investigator
National Clinical Lead for Wales General Ophthalmic Services
Email: Rebecca.john20@wales.nhs.uk<mailto:Rebecca.john20@wales.nhs.uk>
Tel: 07812 141769

This alert has been cascaded to the following:

All Wales Low Vision Practitioners
All Wales Optometry Admin
All Wales Ophthalmic Practices
All Wales Ophthalmic Advisors

NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (**Velindre University NHS Trust)**

Participant Consent Form

Study Title:
Identification of barriers and enablers for children accessing a national primary care optometric vision rehabilitation service: An explorative qualitative study.

IRAS ID: 360469
Sponsor: Wales Council of the Blind
Chief Investigator: Dr Rebecca John
Funder: Wales Council of the Blind (via Powell Family Foundation

Research Study: Focus Groups

1. Study Information

Please read each statement carefully.
If you agree, **initial each box**.

1.1 Understanding the Study

☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet (V1.2, dated 02/09/2026) for this study.

☐ I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers.
☐ I understand the purpose of the study and what my participation involves.

1.2 Voluntary Participation

☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary.
☐ I may withdraw at any time without giving a reason.
☐ I understand that data collected up to the point of withdrawal will be retained unless I request its removal.

1.3 Focus Group Procedures

☐ I understand that the focus group will take place online via Microsoft Teams and will last up to 1.5 hours.
☐ I understand that the session will be audio/video recorded to allow accurate transcription.

1.4 Use of Data

☐ I understand that recordings will be stored securely and deleted once transcription is complete.
☐ I understand that my name will not appear in transcripts, reports, or publications.
☐ I give permission for anonymised quotations to be used in publications, presentations, and reports arising from this research.

1.5 Confidentiality and Data Protection

- ☐ I understand that all information collected about me will be kept strictly confidential and handled in accordance with GDPR (2018), the Data Protection Act (2018), and Velindre University NHS Trust policies.
- ☐ I understand that identifiable information (e.g., consent form, contact details) will be stored separately from research data.
- ☐ I understand that authorised individuals from Velindre University NHS Trust may review study data for audit or monitoring purposes.

1.6 Risks and Support

- ☐ I understand that discussing professional experiences may occasionally cause discomfort.
- ☐ I may pause, take a break, or stop participating at any time.
- ☐ I understand that if safeguarding concerns arise, these will be managed according to NHS Trust procedures.

1.7 Future Contact

- ☐ I agree to be contacted regarding scheduling of the focus group(Optional).
- ☐ I would like to receive a summary of the study findings.

1.8 Agreement to Participate

- ☐ I agree to take part in this study.

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2. Participant Details

Full Name: _____
Professional Role: _____
Organisation / Health Board: _____
Email: _____
Telephone (optional): _____

Signature: _____
Date: ____ / ____ / _____

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3. Researcher Declaration

I confirm that the participant has been provided with the Participant Information Sheet and has had the opportunity to ask questions before giving consent.

Name: Dr Rebecca John
Role: Chief Investigator
Signature: _____
Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Patient Information Sheet

Study title: Identification of barriers and enablers for children accessing a national primary care optometric vision rehabilitation service: An explorative qualitative study.

Invitation and Brief Summary

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others, if you wish.

This study aims to explore professionals' views on the barriers and facilitators for children's access to the Low Vision Service Wales (LVSW) and interventions which may facilitate access to the LVSW for children with vision impairment.
The findings will help shape development of services and support for children living with vison impairment, and for the practitioners who support them.

Everyone involved in this study will keep your data safe and secure. We will also follow all privacy rules.

At the end of the study, we will save some of the data in case we need to check it AND/OR for future research.

We will make sure no-one can work out who you are from the reports we write.

What's involved?

The background and purpose of the research

The optical low vision care in Wales is provided in its entirety through the Low Vision Service Wales (LVSW) within primary care. The LVSW is a national, community based rehabilitative service which around 10,000 people with a vision impairment access each year. The aim is to maintain a person's independence through provision of advice, low vision aids (LVAs) and holistic support. People of all ages are able to access the service

In Wales, around 1,100 children are certified as Sight Impaired, or Severely Sight Impaired, circa 1600 are supported by Qualified Teachers for the Visually Impaired and circa 600 by habilitation specialists. Despite this, the numbers of children seen within the LVSW remain remarkable low at less than 100 per year, this is at odds with the numbers of children known to be living with vision impairment and being supported for their vision impairment by other professionals.

The aim is to gather insights from professionals involved in the care of children with vision impairment to identify the challenges and opportunities in facilitating access to the LVSW and to recommend potential interventions that could enhance service delivery.

What would taking part involve?

Taking part in the study is voluntary. You will need to read documents and give consent to take part and will have opportunities to ask questions about the study.

If you agree to be involved, you will be invited to attend an online focus group (delivered via Teams) which will consist of 6-12 participants. The focus group will last around 60-90 mins. The researcher will use the Microsoft Teams recording function to record the interview, recordings will be stored securely and deleted once transcription is complete. You may opt to be camera on or off for the duration of the meeting. In addition, they may also make some notes concerning things that you say.

You can ask the researcher to stop the recording at any time, and you can excuse yourself from the focus group at any time.

The researcher will ask you some questions about your thoughts, feelings and experience of supporting children with vision impairment. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to. You can ask to take a break or leave the focus group at any time without giving a reason.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There will be no direct advantages or benefits to you from taking part, but your contribution will help us understand developments required to support children who live with vision impairment.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

We do not envisage any disadvantages or risks in taking part, however we recognise that discussing your own personal experiences may cause you concern. If you feel this way at any point in the focus group, please let the researcher know and take a break from participating, rejoining only when and if you feel comfortable to do so. If you do feel concern about any of the topics raised, you will be able to speak to a member of the research team about this, who can also tell you about further sources of support.

What happens if I would like to withdraw from the study?

If you would like to withdraw from the study, you may do so at any point in time without the need to provide a reason.

If you do intend to withdraw from the research project, please contact a member of the research team to facilitate this:

Email: Rebecca.john20@wales.nhs.uk (07812141769)

What if there is a problem?

Any complaint or concerns about the way you have been dealt with during the study should be brought to the attention of the research team.

If you feel that your concerns are not handled to your satisfaction, then further help may be sought

- by contacting the Study Sponsor, Wales Council of the Blind: E-mail: Owen@wcb-ccd.org.uk
- by contacting the Concerns Department at Velindre Cancer Centre: Executive Director of Nursing and Quality, Trust Headquarters, 2 Charnwood Court, Heol Billingsley, Parc Nantgarw, Cardiff, CF15 7QZ, Tel: 02920 196161 Email: handlingconcernsvelindre@wales.nhs.uk
- by emailing: Putting Things Right Velindre Trust website: https://velindre.nhs.wales/raising-concerns-and-complaints/

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The findings will be written up for publication in a scientific journal. The results may also be presented at scientific meetings, or in talks at academic institutions. Results will always be presented in such a way that data from individual volunteers cannot be identified. Participants names will not appear in

transcripts, reports, or publications but anonymised quotations may be used in publications, presentations, and reports arising from this research.

How will we use information about you?

We will need to use information from you for this research project

This information will include

- Your name
- Your contact details
- Your profession

People who do not need to know who you are will not be able to see your name or contact details. Your data will have a code number instead

Wales Council of the Blind is the sponsor of this research.

Velindre University NHS Trust is responsible for looking after your information. We will not share your information related to this research project with any other organisations.

We will keep all information about you safe and secure by;

- All information collected will be kept strictly confidential and handled in accordance with GDPR (2018), the Data Protection Act (2018), and Velindre University NHS Trust policies.
- Identifiable information (e.g., consent form, contact details) will be stored separately from research data and authorised individuals from Velindre University NHS Trust may review study data for audit or monitoring purposes.

International transfers

Your data will not be shared outside the UK

How will we use information about you after the study ends?

Once we have finished the study, we will keep some of the data so we can check the results. We will write our reports in a way that no-one can work out that you took part in the study.

We will keep your study data for a maximum of 15 years. The study data will then be fully anonymised and securely archived or destroyed.

What are your choices about how your information is used?

- you can stop being part of the study at any time, without giving a reason, but we will keep information about you that we already have.
- you have the right to ask us to access, remove, change or delete data we hold about you for the purposes of the study. You can also object to our processing of your data. We might not always be able to do this if it means we cannot use your data to do the research. If so, we will tell you why we cannot do this

Where can you find out more about how your information is used?

- You can find out more about how we use your information: by contacting the HRA through the link: **www.hra.nhs.uk/patientdataandresearch**
- by viewing the Velindre policies for data protection: https://nhswales365.sharepoint.com/sites/VEL_Intranet/SitePages/Information-Governance.aspx
- by asking one of the research team
- by contacting the Sponsor, Wales Council of the Blind: owen@wcb-ccd.org.uk
- by sending an email to Ian.Bevan@wales.nhs.uk [Velindre Data Protection Officer]

Who is funding the research?

The research is funded by Wales Council of the Blind

Participant Reimbursement

There is no payment for taking part