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supporting blind and
partially sighted people

National Assembly for Wales
[Health and Social Care Committee](#)

[Follow-up inquiry on the contribution of community pharmacy to health services](#)

Evidence from Optometry Wales and RNIB Cymru – CP 4

Optometry Wales and RNIB Cymru’s response to the Health and Social Care Committee follow-up inquiry into the contribution of community pharmacy to health services

1. Summary

1.1 Optometry Wales and RNIB Cymru are pleased to respond to this inquiry into the contribution of community pharmacy to health services. Community pharmacies are extremely well placed to provide people with information about the importance of regular eye examinations and how they can 'look after their eyes'. In this response we highlight the role of community pharmacies in the Look After Your Eyes campaign, run in July 2013. Our partnership with Community Pharmacy Wales on this campaign was a powerful one, with demonstrable impact, and one which we hope to continue.

2. About RNIB Cymru and Optometry Wales

2.1 RNIB Cymru is Wales’ largest sight loss charity. We provide support, advice and information to people living with sight loss across Wales, as well as campaigning for improvements to services and raising awareness of eye health and the issues facing blind and partially sighted people.

2.2 Optometry Wales is the professional, umbrella organisation for all primary care optometric practices across Wales, Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians. Optometry Wales is committed to excellence in eye care.



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3. The Look After Your Eyes campaign

3.1 We note that the Committee previously recommended the consistent participation of community pharmacies across Wales for public health campaigns, whether national or local. Thus we would like to highlight the positive contribution of Community Pharmacy to the Look After Your Eyes campaign, which ran during July 2013, and had measurable impact. This campaign was the second national community pharmacy public health campaign of 2013/14, the main purpose of which was to provide people seeking advice on eye care with information on how they can maintain healthy eyes and reduce their risk of sight loss by adopting a healthier lifestyle.

3.2 The campaign, which ran across all seven health boards, was organised by Public Health Wales, Community Pharmacy Wales and RNIB Cymru. It targeted people visiting community pharmacies to increase their awareness of a range eye health issues and to signpost patients to their local accredited optometrist. The campaign offered an opportunity to:

- provide advice on lifestyle changes which reduce the risk of sight loss;
- remind people of the importance of having a regular eye examination;
- conduct medicine use reviews (MURs) with people using medicines for eye conditions such as glaucoma or ocular hypertension;
- encourage signposting of patients that are seeking treatment for more complicated eye conditions to a local accredited Welsh Eye Care Service (WECS) Optometrist.

3.3 As part of the campaign, RNIB Cymru provided pharmacists across Wales with leaflets and posters on eye health, and worked with Public Health Wales to provide pharmacists with CPD resources on eye health.

3.4 An evaluation of the campaign provided evidence of the positive impact of community pharmacies. A report evaluating the campaign showed that it prompted pharmacists to undertake 1,933 MURs with people using medicines for eye conditions. It also found that pharmacists were more likely to identify and correct

problems with the way people use their medicines in these MURs than they were during MURS in general.

3.5 As part of the evaluation report, a number of pharmacies provided qualitative and quantitative information about interventions made during the campaign. Reports indicated that pharmacists referred 348 people for an NHS eye examination and 83 people to WECS during the campaign period. These included:

- a child with acute eye infection herpes who was referred to an optometrist who then diagnosed herpes simplex infection. The child was subsequently referred to hospital;
- a patient seeking advice on hayfever, who reported unilateral symptoms and pain in their eye and was referred to a WECS optometrist who identified ulcer in the left eye, which was then treated;
- a patient with eye pain and visual disturbance who was referred to a WECS optometrist and subsequently diagnosed with choroidal neovascularization;
- a patient with irritable eye which was then identified as an abrasion on referral to a WECS optometrist;
- a patient presenting with a burst blood vessel, pain and blurred vision, particularly when looking towards the right. On referral to a WECS optometrist the patient was found to have a subconjunctival haemorrhage with reduced acuity due to a refractive error.

3.6 The campaign also received favourable media coverage in both the pharmaceutical and ophthalmic professional press, with reports suggesting that inter-professional working between optometrists and pharmacists may have improved as a result of the campaign, and enthusiasm from both professions to work more closely in the future. The campaign has also led the Wales Optometry Postgraduate Education Centre (WOPEC) to deliver training to all pharmacists and pharmacy technicians across Wales. The training has been well received and will hopefully lead to an increased awareness of roles within the primary care health environment.

3.7 In summary, the Look After Your Eyes campaign demonstrates how community pharmacies can have a critical role in health



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promotion, through their direct involvement with individuals accessing their services. We hope to continue to work with Community Pharmacy Wales in future on similar initiatives.

4. Further information:

4.1 We hope that this response is helpful in conducting the follow-up inquiry. If you require any further information, please contact: Tess Saunders, Policy and Campaigns Officer for RNIB Cymru,

[REDACTED]

Sali Davis, Chief Executive, Optometry Wales, [REDACTED]

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