

AOI 2018 CHILDREN'S EYE-CARE & CATARACT SURVEY REPORT

Sight for life, vision for the future

A greater role for Optometrists in public eye-care can greatly improve public eye health in Ireland and place it on a sustainable footing into the future including to:

Solve unacceptable waiting lists

Increase early detection

Improve patient outcomes

Improve access

Reduce costs

Put in place a model to respond to an aging and increasing population.

Survey completed by members of the Association of Optometrists Ireland (via email) April 2018.

CALL TO ACTION for TDs and Senators:

Call on the Minister for Health to –

- Roll out a national scheme to allow children who do not need medical or surgical management to be examined in the community by Optometrists.
- Roll out the award-winning *Sligo Cataract Scheme* across the country with Optometrists and Hospital Eye Departments working together.

Association of Optometrists Ireland,
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T: (01) 4538850 E: info@aoi.ie
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Report for Cork East Constituency

CHILDREN'S EYE-CARE

Good vision is essential for children to participate and benefit from education. The early years of visual development are key to ensuring that children do not have developmental problems that will restrict their ability to achieve their potential. Children's eyesight develops from birth and as children grow so quickly, so can their eyesight change rapidly.

While a small number of children do develop serious conditions that require medical intervention and supervision, the majority who develop issues with their sight can be managed with a regular eye examination and the prescribing of spectacles. However, early identification and management of children at risk of lazy eye (amblyopia) and squint (strabismus) is compromised by the volume of children who simply need spectacles waiting on the current waiting lists for service. In addition, the HSE has made a decision to abolish the 6th Class vision screening and has not yet put in place a national policy to replace this.

- According to the survey children in your constituency are waiting up to **24 months** to access the Community Ophthalmic Physician (COP); when a majority of these cases could be dealt with by Optometrists enabling children with more serious problems to be seen sooner and more frequently by the COP.
- In your constituency the 6th Class screening **has been abolished**; and at the moment there is **no alternative** in place.

CATARACT SURGERY

Cataract surgery is a life-changing procedure that can restore the sight of elderly people giving them back their independence and reducing the cost of preventable sight loss on the exchequer, families and carers. After surgery all patients need a post-op review to make sure that the eye is healthy and vision acceptable. The majority of people who have cataract surgery do not have complications. In the award-winning *Sligo Cataract Scheme* these people were examined in the community by Optometrists at the same time as their appointment to get new glasses, which is also needed after cataract surgery. Combining these two appointments in the community saves money – and allows people who need to see the Doctor in the hospital quicker access (as the waiting list is not blocked by people who are essentially healthy).

- According to the survey, people in your constituency who are referred to the Hospital Eye Service due to cataract wait on average **48 months** between being referred due to reduced vision and having the surgery to restore sight.
- People in your constituency who can afford to pay for private care wait on average **3 months** for the same operation.

What is an optometrist; and who are the Association of Optometrists Ireland (AOI)?

Sight for life, vision for the future



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- optical practices in Ireland with AOI members working on behalf of the public.

Formerly known as an 'optician' or 'ophthalmic optician' the term now used internationally is 'OPTOMETRIST'.

Pronounced: "op- tom- eh- trist"

"Optometrist" is a protected title in Irish law.

Founded in 1905, the AOI has been driving standards in Irish eye-care for over century.



"Optometry - is a healthcare profession that is autonomous, educated, and regulated (licensed / registered), and optometrists are the primary healthcare practitioners of the eye and visual system who provide comprehensive eye and vision care, which includes refraction and dispensing, detection / diagnosis and management of disease in the eye, and the rehabilitation of conditions of the visual system."

As defined by the WHO (World Health Organisation) / World Council of Optometry.

For more information contact the Association of Optometrists Ireland

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The AOI is the professional body representing individual optical professionals in Ireland. Founded in 1905, the Association has been the voice of the profession for over a century. AOI members carry out over a million eye-examinations each year- to medical card holders (GMS), to those entitled through the treatment benefit (PRSI) and to private patients. Continuing Professional Development is a key area that the AOI serves both its members and the public ensuring that the highest quality of care is delivered to the Irish public. As an organisation, the AOI has been at the forefront of efforts to modernise the delivery of eye-care in Ireland. For example, initiatives such as the *Sligo Cataract Scheme*; compulsory CPD for members prior to it being a statutory requirement; the AOI Certificates in Paediatrics, Retinal Health Screening, Anterior Segment Disease & Glaucoma; plus partnering with WOPEC* to facilitate the modern scope of practice of an optometrist. To qualify as an optometrist, you must first complete a 4 yr B.Sc. (Hons) Degree and then successfully complete the Professional Qualifying Examinations (or international equivalent) before you are entitled to apply for registration with CORU to practice and use the title of 'optometrist'.

*Wales Optometry Postgraduate Education Centre

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Average wait for cataract surgery
via public service
28 months

Average wait for children
via public service
15 months

Shortest wait for cataract surgery –
public service (Sligo-Leitrim)

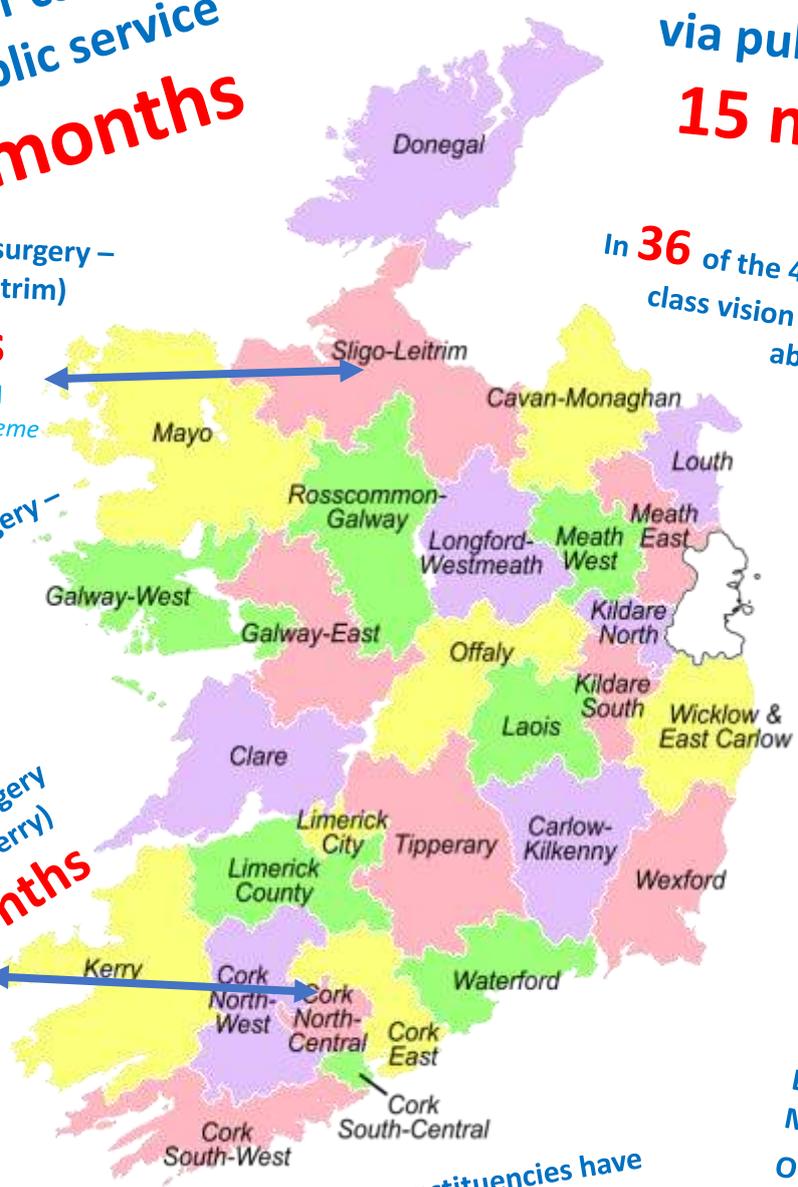
15 months

As a result of the award
winning *Sligo Cataract Scheme*

In **36** of the 40 constituencies the 6th
class vision screening has been
abandoned

Average wait for cataract surgery –
when paid privately
3 months

Longest wait for cataract surgery
– public service (Cork / Kerry)
up to 60 months
(5yrs)



Only in **9** of the 40 constituencies have
arrangements been put in place to look after
children aged over 8 with routine vision problems

Cork East, Cork South-
Central, Dublin Bay North,
Dublin Central, Dublin
Mid-West, Dublin South-
Central, Kildare South,
Laois, Limerick County,
Meath East, Meath West,
Offaly – **children's
waiting list longer
than 18 months**

Does your local HSE office authorise applications
from children aged 12-16 who have their own
medical card?

In **19** of the 40 constituencies
children aged 12-16 fall between the
cracks in the system.

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The 'school eye-care' scheme finishes at age 12.
The 'adult' medical card scheme starts at 16 leaving a gap for 12-16 year olds.
It is up to local HSE offices to decide if these children will have entitlements.

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In your constituency of Cork East

CHILDREN'S EYE-CARE

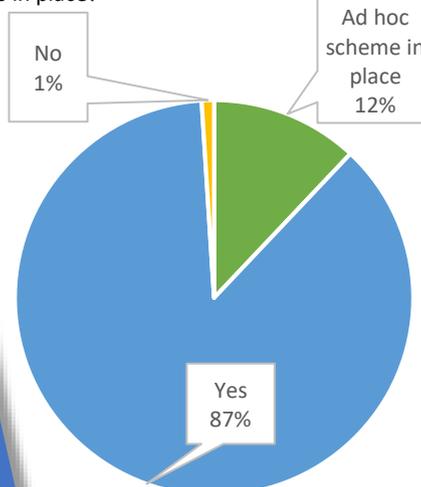
- Children who are referred to HSE Eye Clinics must wait **24 months** before they have an eye examination which could be carried out immediately by Optometrists in the community.
- Has the children's sixth class vision screening been abandoned in Cork East? **Yes.**
- Has the HSE put an arrangement in place to deal with children affected by this decision? **No alternative.**

CATARACT SURGERY

- For people with cataract they must wait **48 months** between referral due to reduced vision caused by cataract and having surgery to restore sight.
- Where someone can afford to pay for private care they wait **3 months** for the same operation.

Questions posed to AOI members in relation to measures to relieve the pressure on an overburdened health service?

Would you be willing to carry out eye examinations on children over 8 yrs old who have been discharged from the local community eye clinic, if an arrangement is / was in place?



If a version of the award winning *Sligo Cataract Scheme* was available to patients in your area, would you be willing to participate by providing post-operative review of uncomplicated patients and completing the hospital electronic patient record?

