

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals

NHS Trust

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Mr Manjit Singh
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20 December 2010

Dear Mr Singh

Thank you for your letter of 29 October about waiting times for the Glaucoma Service. This was received in my office on 29 November.

Ophthalmology services are provided at three of our hospital sites including the Birmingham & Midland Eye Centre at City Hospital. We also provide Ophthalmology at four community venues in South Birmingham at GP surgeries

The average waiting time for a new ophthalmic hospital appointment is 4 weeks but for Glaucoma patients this currently is 3.5 weeks.

NHS waiting times are monitored on an 18 week clock, which requires providers like ourselves to manage the patient waiting time within 18 weeks i.e. the date from which the patient is referred to the first definitive treatment, which may be a course of drugs, an outpatient intervention or a surgical procedure.

We aim to triage (i.e. determine relative priority) all referrals whether they are from a GP or Optician within 48 hours and these are generally marked as 'urgent', 'soon' or 'routine' which may affect the date of appointment when capacity is tight.

There is a separate monitoring service for all glaucoma patients whether they are low, complex or high risk. The monitoring system tracks all patients waiting for new and follow up appointments. The purpose of the system is to ensure that all glaucoma patients are seen at appropriate waiting times. The system enables us to track non attendance and follow this up and track hospital rescheduled appointments which can occur due to unavoidable absences e.g. sickness.

I appreciate that the above description of our service may be at odds with the experience you describe in your letter. Without knowing the identity of the patient concerned, it is difficult to investigate further, but I would be happy to do so if they would like to contact me direct.

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