



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol  
Bae Abertawe  
Swansea Bay University  
Health Board

Cadeirydd/Chair: **Emma Woollett**  
Prif Weithredwr/Chief Executive: **Mark Hackett**

**gofalu am ein gilydd, cydweithio, gwella bob amser**  
**caring for each other, working together, always improving**

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg. Atebir gohebiaeth Gymraeg yn y Gymraeg, ac ni fydd hyn yn arwain at oedi. We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English. Welsh language correspondence will be replied to in Welsh, and this will not lead to a delay.

## **Cais Rhyddid Gwybodaeth / Freedom of Information request** **Ein Cyf / Our Ref: 23-F-031**

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused huge disruption to NHS services, not just in Swansea Bay but across the UK.

As with all health organisations, during the first and subsequent waves we suspended non-emergency services and appointments so our hospitals did not become overwhelmed while we cared for those seriously ill with the virus. Inevitably this has affected waiting times as it has done with all other health boards.

Clearly this was not something any of us would have wanted and we were extremely conscious of the potential consequences for patients.

Since the start of the pandemic we have continued to care for those requiring urgent treatment, and following the pandemic we reintroduced most of our services and have done our best to keep disruption to a minimum throughout the subsequent waves, often with change in place to protect patients and staff, but continuing to provide as much planned care as possible.

Our hard-working staff have supported this by coming up with innovative solutions to protect services, adapt services to continue recognising the existence of the virus and introduce new ones specifically as a result of the virus – there are numerous examples on our website.

The Health Board, with the support of funding from Welsh Government, has invested heavily in reducing waiting in times in Ophthalmology and in particular cataracts. Through a combination of insourcing additional activity and the establishment of an additional day case theatre in Singleton, dedicated to Ophthalmology, waiting times have reduced significantly.

### **You asked:**

#### **1. From my research it would appear that the first appointment following a referral from a GP or medical practitioner is 19 weeks. Can you confirm that?**

Pre-covid, SBUHB's waiting time for new routine cataract referrals from an



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Swansea Bay University Health Board is the operational name of Swansea Bay University Local Health Board

Optometrist, GP or medical practitioner was within 26 weeks. The current Welsh Government target is that no new routine referrals will be waiting for their first appointment for over 52 weeks by June 2023; the Health Board has achieved this target and the longest wait for an outpatient appointment is around 45 weeks, however the waiting times for a cataract appointment is in general significantly shorter.

**2. And that following the referral, the average waiting time until the operation to takes place, is another 20 weeks. Is that right? Making a overall average waiting time of 40 weeks.**

Pre covid, SBUHB average waiting time from referral to treatment was 36 weeks. The current Welsh Government target is 99% of patients are waiting less than 104 weeks to be treated by March 2024.

It is predicted that no Ophthalmology patients will be waiting over 104 weeks by the end of December 2023 and that all cataract patients will be waiting less than 36 weeks by the end of March 2024.

