

£4m investment to transform eye care in Wales

Speaking at the All Wales National Eye Care Conference in Cardiff today (17 September) Mr Gething said the money will transform services to ensure patients are diagnosed and treated more quickly.

Decisions about exactly how the £4m will be allocated will be taken by the Welsh Government following advice from an independent panel and could potentially include the expansion of existing community based treatment centres, additional training for medical staff to treat a greater range of patients and other activities to support sustainable services.

The service changes will support the introduction of a new performance measure to be introduced later this month, based on patient's clinical need. Wales will be the first UK nation to introduce a measure of this kind for eye care patients alongside the existing referral to treatment target.

The changes are being introduced following consultation with ophthalmologists and RNIB about the best way to ensure eye patients are seen and treated in good time.

Mr Gething said: "Regular sight tests and early diagnosis are extremely important in order to prevent and treat eye disease.

Currently nearly 107,000 people in Wales are living with sight loss and this is predicted to double by 2050. Improving access and speeding up diagnosis are vital to ensure eye care services are fit for the future.

The investment will be used to improve services to support the new performance measure for eye care services. From this month, all eye care patients in Wales will be given a maximum waiting time following referral and any ongoing reviews based on their condition and risk of harm.

We were the first government in the world to have an eye care delivery plan and are now the first in the UK to introduce a performance measure of this kind for eye care.

These changes are in line with our long term vision for the NHS in Wales to transform the way services are delivered, providing quality care closer to people's homes."