

A large, stylized teal letter 'S' logo that curves around the left side of the page, partially overlapping the background image and the dark blue footer.

Minor eye conditions- 2023

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Background

- The minor eye conditions survey was carried out across Suffolk and asked those with experience of a **minor eye condition**, who they had contacted, and what their experience had been.
- The survey took place between **July and October 2023**.
- There were 16 responses and the excellent information received gives a **snapshot** of the experience of people with minor eye conditions and how and by whom they were treated.
- All respondents were **over 16 years of age**.
- All respondents have **consulted a health professional** in the last year.

Locality, gender and ethnicity

- **Sixteen** responses were received from across Suffolk.
- The majority of respondents were White/British.
- There was one White (Irish) respondent.
- Three preferred not to say.

Ethnicity	Responses
White British	12
White Irish	1
Prefer not to say	3

Location	Responses
Babergh	1
Forest Heath	3
Ipswich	2
Mid Suffolk	2
St Edmundsbury	1
Suffolk Coastal	5
Waveney	0
No answer/not known	2

Where did they hear about the survey?

- Eight respondents (50%) heard about the survey via **Healthwatch Suffolk** website, email newsletter, and **VASP** newsletter.
- Four (25%) heard about the survey through **social media** (Twitter/X and Instagram).
- Three (19%) from a **healthcare professional**.
- One from a **relative or friend** and one gave no answer.

Where did they hear about the survey?	Respondents
Healthwatch Suffolk (HWS) website	4
VASP newsletter	3
A healthcare professional	3
Twitter	2
Email from HWS	1
A friend/relative	1
Instagram	1
No answer	1

What eye condition did they ask about, and who was consulted?

- The **eye conditions** suffered by respondents were **very varied** although flashes and floaters and ingrown eye lashes were the most common complaint (56%).

Who did you consult?	Respondents
Optician	7
GP	7
Pharmacy	1
Optician and Pharmacy	1

If Yes, who to?	Respondents
Flashes and floaters	5
Ingrown eyelashes	4
Dry, gritty uncomfortable eyes	2
Blister on eyelid	1
Red eye/eyelids	1
Painful eye Irritation, inflammation, and watery eye	2
Care home - all conditions	1

Were they referred to another professional and, if so, who?

- Nearly half (44%) of the respondents were **referred on for treatment**.
- Of these three (43%) of the respondents were referred on to a **hospital department**.
- Three (43%) were referred to **out of hours surgery**, one with mixed results.

Referred to another professional?	Yes	No
	7	9

If yes, who to?	Respondents
Out of hours	2
A&E	1
Hospital eye clinic	1
Hospital	1
Evolutio (Ipswich)	1
First out of hours, then contacted 111 then back to out of hours	1

What was their experience like?

- Of the 13 respondents who answered the question, 62% (8) of the respondents thought their experience was '**very good**' or '**good**'.
- 38% (5) commented that their experience was '**poor**' or '**very poor**'.

What was their experience like?	Respondents
Very good	6
Good	2
Poor	2
Very poor	2



Those respondents having a good experience commented:

*"Reporting for a care provider: GP advice & prescription provided. **No further referrals** made."*

"I called optician. They tried several branches nearby to get me an appointment but couldn't get one that day. This was for a first-time floater with flashes. They said I should go to A&E. I went to A&E and was sent straight over to the eye clinic. Seen within hour or so, no treatment required."

*"**Information and reassurance given.** Could not be improved - was excellent."*





Those respondents having a good experience commented:

*“Easy access, seeing my own optician and free in NHS! **Great explanation** and given informative leaflet with danger symptoms to watch for.”*

*“Specsavers where **brilliant** - fitted me in to a busy schedule, and did **thorough checks** and with a return visit to monitor.”*



6 Those with a less positive experience made comments such as:

“My eyes were feeling **really gritty and uncomfortable**. I went to the pharmacy to see what I should do and if I could get any eye drops over the counter. I was given eye drops that needed to be put in several times a day. Since then, my eyes have **not improved**, and I have **since developed a blister** on my eyelid and crusty eyes. I **wasn't provided any information** about what I should do if these eye drops did not improve my condition but I'm assuming I will wait for a GP appointment.”

“[My eye] got much worse Friday night, so I phoned a 111 GP. He said to just bathe my eye as it's conjunctivitis and would clear up on its own. However, when I saw the out of hours GP the next day, it turned out to be an ingrown eye lash, and would have got worse and even **infected**. The 111 GP gave the **wrong diagnosis and advice**.”



Those with a less positive experience made comments such as:

*"I had no issues before, but last summer I got some sand in my eye and used an Optrex eye wash which I had an allergy to. It caused dryness, swelling and itchiness. My optician said to stop using it. Six months later, it still wasn't right. My appointment at the optician got **cancelled on the day** three times. When I was finally seen they did a thorough assessment. They suggested that it was normal if I was using screens for work. But my irritation never used to be this bad. They suggested I use eye drops up to eight times per day. The drops didn't help, so went to the pharmacy who sold me different eye drops which are better, but I am **still suffering daily**.*

"I wish I was given helpful advice the first time. I'd like to know about the different treatment options. My next step will be to go to the pharmacy again and then the GP. I don't think there is much that can be done to help as it doesn't seem bad enough to keep going to see professionals. The optician says to use more drops, so I will try to continue this."



Conclusions

- The survey shows that there appears to be **no specific procedure** for those needing treatment for minor eye conditions.
- As a result, a number of different health professionals were consulted, and no respondents spoke of **information being available** for who to contact when this happens to them.
- If there was a **publicised** and **agreed NHS procedure** that could be followed and a specific professional or organisation to consult, this would help to **reduce the numbers** contacting the surgery or hospital for a minor condition - which could be better and more efficiently treated by an optician or specialist eye clinic.



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