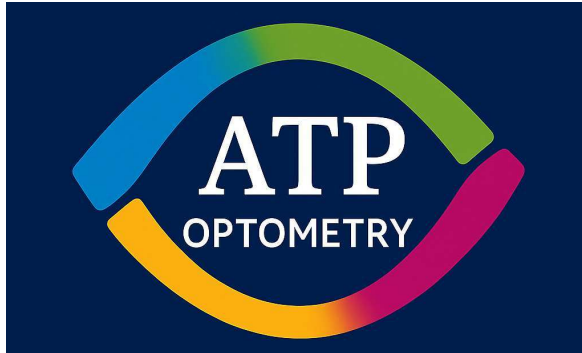


For all ATP queries please email: heiw.optometryatp@wales.nhs.uk

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HEIW, Ty Dysgu, Cefn Coed, Nantgarw, CF15 7QQ

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Spring 2025

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Empowering the Next Generation of Optometrists: HEIW Advanced Training Practices

We are excited to share an important development in the professional growth and mentorship of our optometrists in Wales. HEIW are establishing Advanced Training Practices (ATPs); a new initiative designed to increase capacity and accessibility to postgraduate clinical placements.

What Are HEIW Advanced Training Practices (ATPs)?

ATPs provide clinical placement opportunities for postgraduate optometrists, fostering professional development by offering training opportunities in community optometry practices across Wales. Utilising the wealth of expertise and knowledge within our own

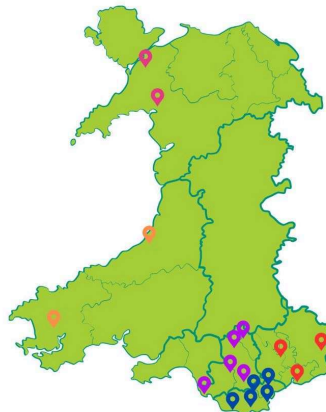
grow in leadership roles, and contribute to the continued improvement of eye care services across Wales.

They will also provide mentorship to trainees, ensuring they gain comprehensive, hands-on

profession, our aim is creating supportive environments that empower both current and future generations of optometrists to advance their skills,

clinical experience and professional guidance.

 GIG | Address a Greater Technical
Cymru (AuSIC)
NHS Health Education and
In Wales Improvement Wales (HEIW) Advanced Training Practices
(ATPs) in Wales



To date...

So far, **16** ATPs across Wales are supporting clinical placements for Independent Prescribing (IP) Optometrists.

We are actively seeking opportunities to introduce ATPs in regions where they are currently unavailable.

12 practitioners have completed placement since September 2024, and a further **41** are expected to complete over the next 12 months.

HEIW have also:

- Coordinated and organised placement plans for **40** practitioners waiting for IP placements since September 24.

IP Placement Feedback:

- *'I learned a great deal through discussions on management options with my supervisor, and he took a great deal of time to talk me through them'*
- *'I learned a huge amount from the experience of the supervisors. They were invaluable.'*

- Overall level of **confidence** in prescribing has increased from an average of **30% to 75%** during the placement period.
 - **Positive overall satisfaction** and perceived **impact on future practice** ATP (10 out of 10).
 - All students reported they were primarily **conducting patient episodes themselves** and that they encountered a wide variety of eye conditions.
-

Meet The Team:



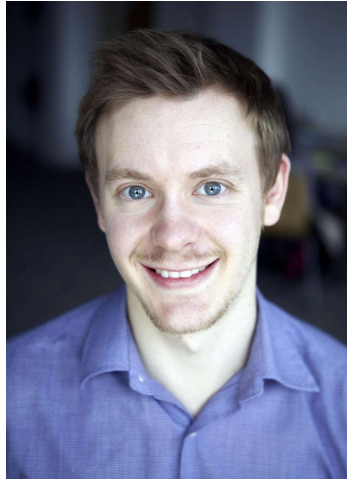
Eleanor Thomas - Optometry Placement and Education Lead

Eleanor is an experienced primary care optometrist who joined HEIW in 2023 as the Optometry Placement and Education Lead, following the completion of a Welsh Clinical Leadership Fellowship. She recently achieved a Postgraduate Certificate in Therapeutic Prescribing and is currently completing her Independent Prescribing (IP) clinical placement. Since taking on her role at HEIW, Eleanor has focused on expanding the capacity of IP placements across Wales.



Kathryn Lowry - Optometry Placement and Education Lead

Kathryn joined the HEIW team after completing a her Welsh Clinical leadership fellowship. As an Optometrist and practice owner she balances this with her role as Placement an Education Lead for HEIW Optometry team. Since beginning her role in HEIW she has worked to develop Advanced training practices across Wales.



Grant Robinson - Regional Placement Facilitator

Grant joined the team as Regional Placement Facilitator in November 2024. As an IP optometrist who also holds a Higher Certificate in Glaucoma he has first-hand experience of the route to higher qualification. Grant's primary roles at HEIW involve contributing to the ATP placement process and leading feedback activities.



Justine Davies - Regional Placement Facilitator

Justine joined HEIW in 2024 as a Regional Placement Facilitator. She is an IP optometrist who has worked in primary and secondary care. Her main role in HEIW includes organising mixed model clinical placements for Optometrists training for higher qualifications. She also runs the Support Forum for newly qualified IP optometrists; a series of 5 interactive sessions providing support and discussion to optometrists receiving their prescribing pad for the first time. She continues to work part time in her own practice near Pontypridd.

What Are The Aims Of Our ATPs?

Increased Capacity of Clinical Placements: clinical placements in community ATPs coupled with traditional Hospital placements increases accessibility to placement opportunities available, reducing the delay many optometrists may have experienced. Community based placements contribute to a well-rounded clinical experience that prepares optometrists to handle a wide range of patient needs.

Expanding Clinical Roles: ATPs will provide experienced optometrists with the chance to expand their clinical role, mentor and guide the next generation of professionals. These teaching roles will be appropriately remunerated, creating an additional pathway for optometrists to grow in their careers

Job Satisfaction: By offering opportunities for leadership, teaching, and career development, ATPs aim to increase job satisfaction, motivation, and professional fulfilment among optometrists.

Advanced Training Practice Supervisor Testimonies



[To the left: Marc Drake, ATP Supervisor of Osmond Drake.]

Marc Drake of Osmond Drake says:

'I enjoy being involved in IP training because it encourages continued self-reflection on my own practice. I enjoy training, developing and learning from the Optometrists on IP placement.'



[To the left: Claire Edwards, ATP supervisor of Specsavers Porthcawl]

Claire Edwards of Specsavers Porthcawl says:

'I found providing an ATP rewarding and lovely to give back to the profession and support optometrists through their placements.'



[To the left: On the left - Grace Lanning, Independent Prescribing Optometrist in Training, on the right - Tanya McNabb, ATP Supervisor of Vale Eyecare]

Tanya McNabb of Vale Eyecare says:

'It feels good to be able to give something back to the profession and to be involved in upskilling the Welsh Optometry Workforce.'



[To the left: On the left - ATP Supervisor, Dyfan Jones of Specsavers Porthmadog, on the right - Elan Jones, Independent Prescribing Optometrist in Training]

Dyfan Jones of Specsavers Porthmadog says:

'We've been an Advanced Training Practice for 6 months. It's been an enjoyable process which will help support the development of Independent Prescribing within Optometry in North Wales.'



[To the left: Brian Borland, ATP Supervisor of Specsavers Merthyr.]

Brian of Specsavers Merthyr says:

'Waiting for a training placement was a frustration for me so it's good to help others stuck in the backlog.'

ATP Supervisor Training Day:

HEIW recently hosted a training day dedicated to ATP supervisors, with an excellent turnout, 12 of our supervisors took part. The workshop focused on several key areas:

1. Gaining a clear understanding of the supervisor role
2. Building leadership and communication skills



3. Strengthening coaching and mentorship capabilities
4. Enhancing decision-making and problem-solving techniques
5. Promoting a culture of continuous improvement

We will continue to provide support for our ATP supervisors.

ATP supervisor's reported enjoying:

- Learning from others
 - Networking and 1:1 discussions
 - Facilitated interactions with wider group
-

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