

Herefordshire Vision Links ANNUAL REPORT 2023/2024

Staff

John Eden	(Chief Executive)
Julie Cavanagh	(Volunteer Co-ordinator)
Isobel Powell	(Resource Centre Officer)
Tom Shufflebotham	(Rehab and Mobility Officer)
Daniel Sergent	(Administration and Membership)

The organisation has a Trustee Board of 9, five of whom are Vision Impaired.

Resource Centre

Visitor numbers to the Resource Centre as the initial point of contact with the organisation remain strong, with the added strength of the Action Deafness operation alongside improving the impact of HVL amongst their client group, and bringing cross-disciplinary solutions to presenting clients. The Resource Centre provides information, advice, demonstration and sales of a wide range of aids and appliances, including kitchen, orientation and communication equipment. We offer new products from accredited suppliers, demonstrations (by suppliers) of high-value equipment - on site or at the clients home, and also refurbish and offer for re-use equipment that has been donated (eg screen readers, text to audio equipment and CCTV magnifiers). We take in donations of surplus stock from agencies - eg Torfaen CBC made a significant donation of equipment during the year from its centre in Llantarnam. We also offer replacement of renewable parts, repair and refurbishment of equipment and liaise with providers regarding viability of older items.

IT Cafe

HVL offers an IT Drop-In for users of pads/laptops and smartphones - either supporting the induction given by the supplier, or where bought remotely, demonstrating the accessibility features for the client. Following the COVID period, a number of clients moved into use of technology and needed to be inducted and trained rapidly - HVL operated the Tech Cafe as a regular event, but as demand has stabilised, the sessions are now demand-led and are usually based on referrals from the Rehab and Mobility Officer.

Clubs and Activities

- The transition of the HVL 'non-contract' provision from an organisation that does things 'to' people, to one that works 'with' people is now fully embedded in the culture of the organisation. We encourage the founding and development of 'self-organised' groups meeting the
- Increased membership of the monthly, and bi-weekly groups - there has been an injection of new members, in the craft, reading and willow weaving groups, together with particularly strong take-up of the monthly social coffee mornings, held on the Third Thursday.
- **Membership Activities** : the members of HVL enjoy a number of events exclusively for them - the Christmas and annual Barbecues being the 'mainstays' of the calendar. Together with Race-days at Hereford, Skittles and Ten-Pin Bowling, Lunch events and speakers, equipment demonstrations and trips to Sight Village and Sight and Sound Shropshire, the calendar is quite full.
- The **Braille Learners Group** has operated on a 'demand only' basis for the last year, or so, although the students on placement from the Royal National College have all had brailing skills, with some enthusiastic users, and trainees using the system during their work experience. - despite Braille being perceived, as 'old technology'. We benefitted from the donation of two brailing machines from a former teacher of the Vision Impaired, which has allowed learners to take home a machine on loan to hone their skills. We have also assisted a potential technician for brailers to gain experience stripping down and rebuilding a brailing machine!
- The quarterly 'Hard of Hearing Group' and 'BSL' groups meets in HVL on Mondays, led by the Hereford A/D hub volunteers.

Sensory Contract

- Variation in the origin of referrals to the sensory service - this is a critical development in the Rehabilitation and Mobility Activities that we undertake - it seems that the service now feels very much more 'established' as health professionals and social care teams are now referring to HVL as a matter of routine. The main sources of referral are:

Victoria Eye Unit (NHS WVT)
HC via ART Social Care Teams
Occupational Health Team
Action Deafness

BBR Optometry - bi-directional referrals NHS Low Vision Scheme)
Social Prescribers (Medical Practice-based)
H&WFR
Look-UK

Referral Volumes (formal)

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
CVI via WVT VEU	54	78	137	132	75
Professional Referrals	6	4	BBR 5 2 other	BBR 5 2 other	BBR 17 4 other

Pre-COVID, the referral levels were upwards of the 2022 and 2023 figures.

There is a significant variation across the referrals from WVT VEU between the date of consultation with an Eye Specialist and the processing and transmission of the CVI to HVL. This has an impact on the quality of the conversations we can have with patients, as the benefits of early intervention can be lost. The effect of late referrals to us can mean clients experience mental health issues, confidence problems and modify their behaviour and develop coping strategies, which may in themselves be risky.

Register of SI & SSI Persons

HVL also maintains the Register of Sight and Severely Sight Impaired Persons, and consequently has an opportunity to offer the services of our Rehab & Mobility Worker as well as other HVL services, and those of other agencies working in this area, including Herefordshire Talking News, Deaf Direct and the Low Vision Service. During the years persons were registered with HVL as SI or SSI - it is to be expected that the trajectory for applications to the register will be upwards.

We have recorded an increase in the proportion of clients recorded as SSI over SI - seemingly, delays in treatment arising from the COVID standstill have resulted in deterioration in visual acuity, and registration in the 'severe' category of sight impairment. The proportions may fall back to pre-COVID levels as hospital services return to normal.

Over the last 5 years, the proportions have been:

2019-2020	2020-2021	2022*	2023*	2024*
SI 49% / SSI 51%	SI 37% / SSI 63%	SI 39% / SSI 61%	SI 41% / SSI 59%	SI 31% / SSI 69%

* Registration recorded in 'calendar' year rather than 'contract' year

Waiting Times

HVL and Action Deafness report no waiting time for services across the disciplines.

Joint Working

HVL works in partnership with Action Deafness on a formal basis, by referral from The Victoria Eye Hospital, BBR Optometry (Low Vision Scheme), via Community Health Services and Occupational Health. We have a small number of self-referrals and the remainder for Social Work Area Teams of Herefordshire Council.

We also participate in events with Herefordshire Disability United, The HC 'Making it Real' Board, LOC, Herefordshire Healthwatch and HVOSS subject-specific forums in the sphere of Adult Social Care.

Talking News

The co-location of HTN to the HVL premises is close to completion, with production of regular editions of the TN being commenced in October. The handover from the retiring trustees of HTN is not wholly complete, with some banking arrangements yet to be finalised. A survey of existing subscribers was undertaken by our RNC placement trainee and new subscribers added to a newly created database. There

was no information in hard-copy from HTN at point of handover regarding the number and identity of subscribers....

Four new trustees have been elected, two of whom are severely sight impaired.

Look-UK

Look-UK rent an office at HVL to run administrative functions, and we are working with them to expand their operations in Herefordshire. We are keen to work on the transition from statutory education/placements into adult/tertiary education or work, including the complementary services that HVL can offer.

We benefit from having the Sensory Team based in one building, accessible through the Resource Centre - we share many clients, and it is appropriate that we are able to cross-refer internally, amongst staff who work very well together. We are able to effectively assist clients with appliances that are of benefit across both communities, particularly telephony and use of IT.

Aids and Appliances / Technology

We have successfully managed the client transition to Digital/Bluetooth hearing appliances and supporting technology - certain equipment makes sharing living space with a 'fully hearing' client more bearable - eg volume of television or audio equipment can be set very low with the use of Bluetooth feeds to hearing aids. We have installed several blue-tooth appliances in contexts where one or other party can be frustrated by the limitations of old technology. We are also able to assist clients with the accessibility software available on SMART technology - especially televisions, if the bluetooth software is installed. If not, we provide the appliance and the software - often controlled by a mobile App.

NHS Low Vision Scheme

The Low Vision Scheme includes assessment of visually impaired service users, and supply of non-digital magnifiers and other non-digital visual aids to support activities of daily living. Access to low vision services is not dependent on certification of visual impairment as people are better able to use low vision aids if they are able to access them as soon as possible. HVL refers to the LVS if the client would benefit from non-Digital equipment that would be issued free under the NHS LVS. The service is provided through BBR Optometry, Andrew Jelley (Bromyard and Tenbury), Hayward and Miller (Ledbury) and Scotts (Kington and Ross on Wye).

Feedback and Client Opinions

Clients who are dealt with through the Sensory Team are contacted around one month following completion of the care plan actions to secure feedback on the inputs made by HVL. The questionnaire is standard across all service users and covers hard and soft outcomes.

Mrs R was so impressed with Tom's visit. She gave him a firm 10/10!!

Gill very happy with Tom's visit. She is aware of HVL and will be in contact if anything changes for her.

Very happy overall with contact from HVL and Tom's input. Loves her talking books from RNIB.

Very happy with Tom's visit but has had a think about applying for AA and a BB - have let Tom know so he can make the follow up for referral for these

I spoke to Mrs G's son, Terry, as Mrs G has impaired hearing and cannot take calls very well. Terry was very impressed with Tom's home visit to his mother and will be in touch again if Mrs G needs anything else from HVL.

Mary W has not yet been registered as awaiting notification form VEU. I will email Liv to chase up. She was referred by BBR - Nick Rumney. Mary so happy and impressed with Tom's visits and has visited us in the past so knows where we are if needed in the future. So grateful for our help and products received.

Miss K has since bought a private hearing aid which is working for her very well. She did not like the NHS ones.

Tom sat with her when DWP visited to assess for AA - which she now has been awarded.

Client very happy with our service and talked very highly indeed about Tom's visit.

Declined coffee morning club at present but can still use the bus to get into town when needed.

No need for HTN as can manage printed paper.

Mrs F very happy with the USB player and now getting books from RNIB. She has purchased new, private hearing aids which she is very pleased about.

Mrs F very happy indeed with Tom's input and communication.

Mrs F would like to try HTN and coffee mornings run by HVL. Mrs F is happy to receive HTN. Happy with Tom's visit but does fall asleep during RNIB talking books! Not confident to attend coffee mornings at present but will consider them in the future.

Mrs J is very happy with service provided and thought Tom was lovely.
I have added her name to the coffee morning list and will text her monthly to remind her when they are.
She is wanting to use the bus to get to Hereford from Leominster from where she lives in a flat.
Not interested in HTN.
Has yet to contact BBR regarding Low vision assessment.

*Mr S has dry AMD but did not know what it was. I explained to him on the phone.
He does not like the sound of memory sticks for talking books so i am sending him some CDs to try.*

Very happy with Tom's visit - 10/10!

Reg as SSI.

*Has been to BBR and as a result of this, his wife is also having her eyes tested at the same place.
Very happy with Tom's visit.willow*

Volunteers

HVL enjoys the support of a large body of volunteers, who support clients in domiciliary contexts as well as at events and activities, including the craft group, reading group, braille learners group, willow weaving group, crochet group, coffee club, external visits, race meetings, skittles evenings and centre-based membership events. Volunteers provide clients with continuity of attention, particularly in rural areas, and self-organised social groups meet in Ledbury and Ross of Wye, supported by the central team at HVL.

Trustees

The Trustee Board has totally revised the whole suite of Organisational Policies, spearheaded by Glynn Bailey, who has significant experience in this area. The result is a coherent and readable policy structure that reflects best practise across the various strands of organisational activity.

There is a programme of remedial work to the building being undertaken, which should improve the environment in some areas and give assurance as to the safety and security of the premises. We are replacing a boiler from the 1970's with a new condensing boiler, for the top two floors of the premises. The boiler for the ground and first floors was renewed around 5 years ago, following failure of the previous appliance.

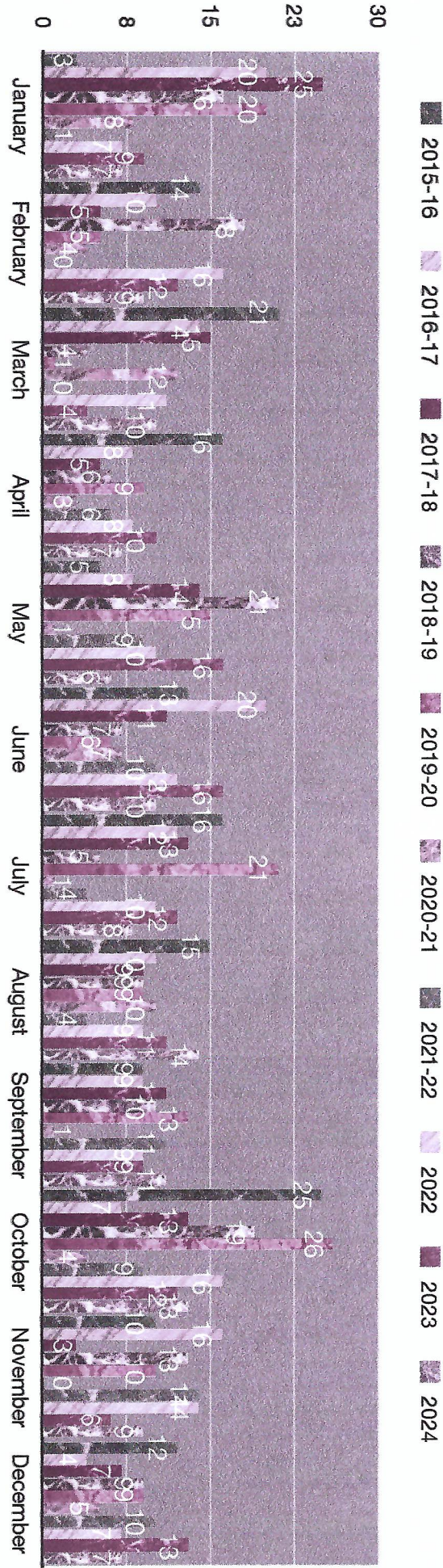
Glynn Bailey
Chair of Trustees

John Eden
Chief Executive

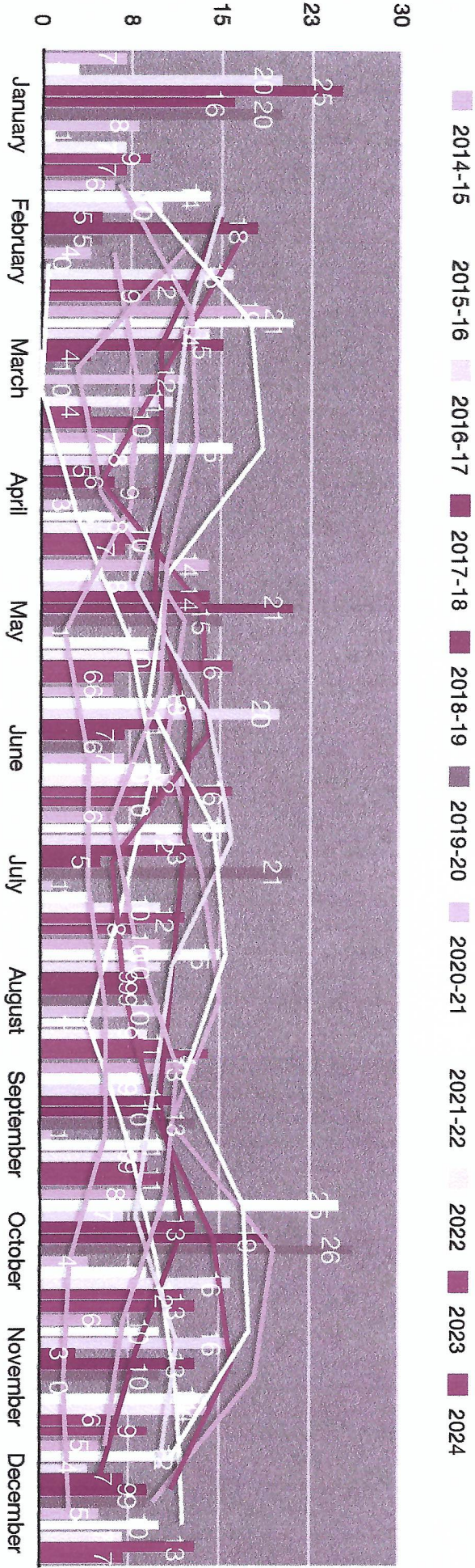
Certificates of Vision Impairment Received 2014-2024

Month	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022	2023	2024
January	7	3	20	25	16	20	8	1	7	9	7
February	6	14	10	5	18	5	4	0	16	12	9
March	19	21	14	15	4	1	12	0	11	4	10
April	7	16	8	5	6	9	3	6	8	10	7
May	14	5	8	14	21	15	1	9	10	16	6
June	6	13	20	11	7	6	7	10	12	16	10
July	6	16	12	13	5	21	1	4	10	12	8
August	10	15	10	9	9	9	10	4	9	11	14
September	13	9	9	11	10	13	1	11	9	9	11
October	8	25	7	13	19	26	4	9	16	12	13
November	6	10	16	3	13	10	0	14	14	6	9
December	5	12	4	7	9	9	5	10	7	13	7

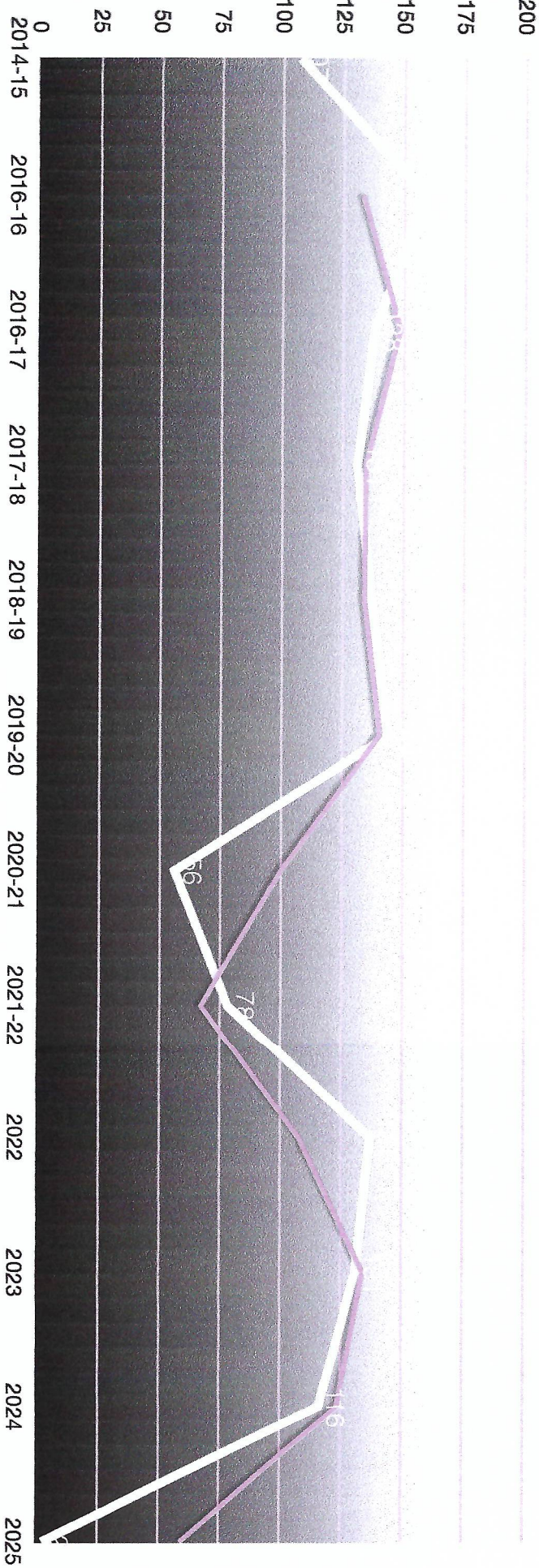
CVI Referrals - 2014-2024 (Graphic)



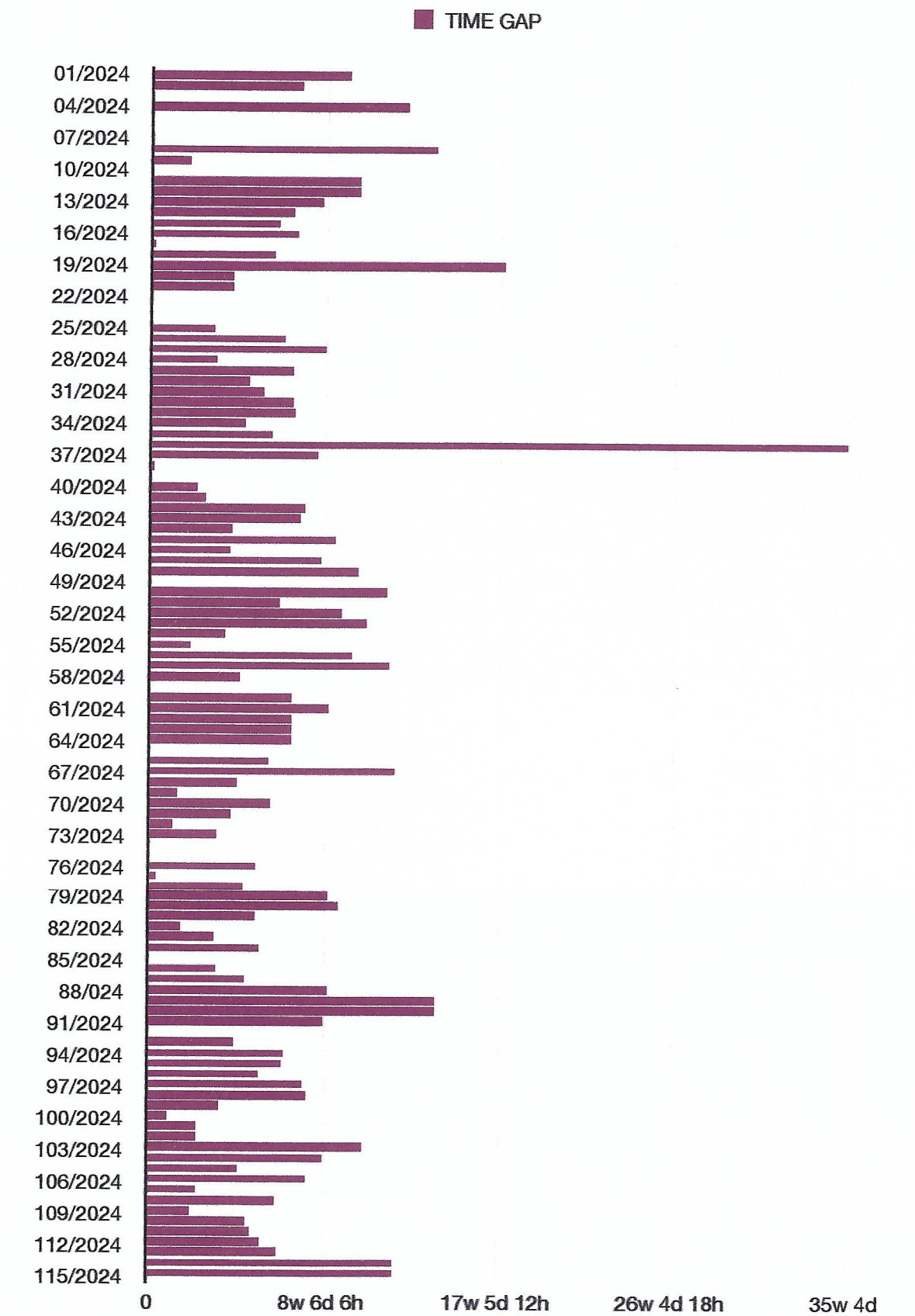
Moving Average by Month 2014-2024



Moving Average - Annual : 2014-2024



Processing times at WVT (NHS) for CVI referrals to Herefordshire Vision Links



Client Feedback

All client are telephoned and asked to give feedback across the following standard questions, including a 'score' relating to the service that has been provided, including comment upon the Care Plan drawn up between the service user and the Rehab and Mobility Service.

HVL Sensory Impairment Service Client Satisfaction and Feedback Questionnaire

Question	5*	4*	3*	2*	1*	
Were you Happy with your personal care plan and the activities and services provided with it?	23					
Where you happy that the team explained the services and have provided enough information or referred you to other organisations if relevant?	23					
Did the sensory team arrive at the appointed time that was stated?	23					
Where you satisfied with the quality of information provided to you, and do you feel better informed about the services H.V.L offer	23					
Did you receive any equipment and/or mobility aids from H.V.L	22				1	no A&A issue
Where you happy with the equipment provided? and was its use fully explained to you	23					
Do you feel that you better informed about the equipment available to you?	23					
Do you feel safer within your home as a results of the sensory team working with you	23					
Do you generally feel more confident in your mobility?	17					
Do you generally feel more independent and able to cope with daily living?	17					

Work Plan / Timescales

The Sensory Team does not have a waiting list across either discipline, currently.

Vision Impaired From date of receipt of a CVI (or next working day, if a weekend) to initial client contact is around 24-48 hours, with the fastest turnaround of CVI - domiciliary visit - assessment - issue of equipment being as low as 6 days (which inevitably includes a weekend!)

We respond to equipment returns and exchanges within 24 hours of request, and offer collection, postal delivery, free return label or client can drop items off at Vision Links. Equipment needing specialist attention (eg talking watches) can usually be turned around within 5 days, with a loan device available for the client in the meanwhile.

Hearing Impaired From date of referral, initial contact is made within 24 hours and domiciliary visit is arranged - subject to the equipment being 'in stock' we can often meet client requirements on one visit, but this very much depends on the type and age of hearing aid supplied to them (if they wear aids.)

[illegible]