

Eye Department Wayfinding

Transforming patients way-finding experience to the Eye Department

Timeline: 2022 to 2024

Key people:

Ann Marie Corcoran – Eye Department
Dr. David Keegan – Eye Department
Audrey Loosley – Eye Department
Glenn Martin – Eye Department
Karen O'Connor – Eye Department

Aoife Brady - Operations Manager
Paul Murray - Estates Department
John Reilly - Estates Department
Andrew Skinner - IMS
Colm Foley - IMS

Brian Gough - NCAD
Alan MacFarlane - Mater Transformation
Mater Transformation Team
All the Eye Department Team
All the Mater Volunteers



Challenge

Each year, over 72,000 patients attend the Mater Ophthalmology (Eye) department for outpatient and day surgery appointments. This accounts for one fifth or 16% of the total patient footfall attending the hospital.

The department has expanded significantly over time and is now split over three different locations making it challenging to navigate. Patients rely on instructions in their appointment letters and hospital signage to figure out where they should be.

Shortcomings in both of these result in patients having to ask staff multiple times for help to find their way. Many of the patients have mild to moderate visual impairments, further exacerbating the problem and increasing anxiety.

Process

This challenge was originally researched during the Mater-NCAD Design Week in 2018. Four design students interviewed staff and patients to understand their unmet needs.

They also completed a 'bodystorming' exercise, where they tried to find their way to various locations while wearing empathy glasses that mimic various eye conditions.

'I haven't any idea what Ophthalmology means'

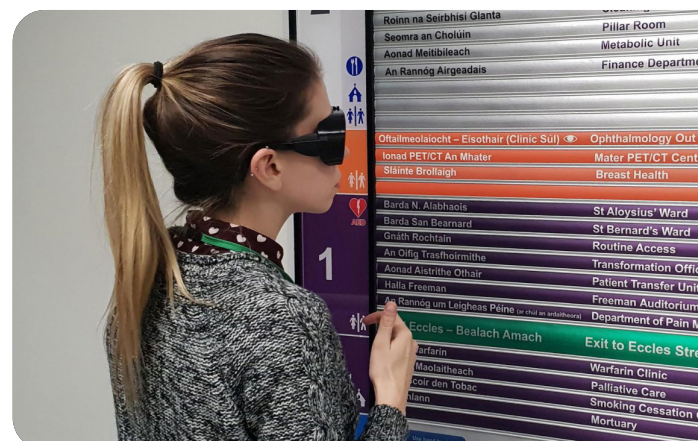
Eye department patient

'I just couldn't see on the signs where I needed to go. I asked a nurse...'

Eye department patient

'I walk outside of my office and I see lost people'

Eye department team member



The project was reignited in 2022 by the Mater Transformation and Eye Department teams, who co-designed a new way-finding system with support from Estates and IMS teams.

Based on user experience surveys with 67 patients, the team developed a solution that fits-in with the vernacular signage system while meeting the unmet needs of those with mild to moderate visual impairments.

Solution

The new way-finding system was designed around the patient journey of visiting the Eye Department at The Mater Hospital. Drawing on best-practice research from NHS and Network Rail, the team redesigned patient letters and signage.

To improve clarity and accessibility, the team introduced consistent, simplified naming (Eye Unit A, B, C and Eye Emergency), which also allowed for larger font sizes and easy to understand names — crucial for balancing the needs of visually impaired users whilst meeting the bilingual signage requirements under the Irish Language Act.

‘It was spot on’

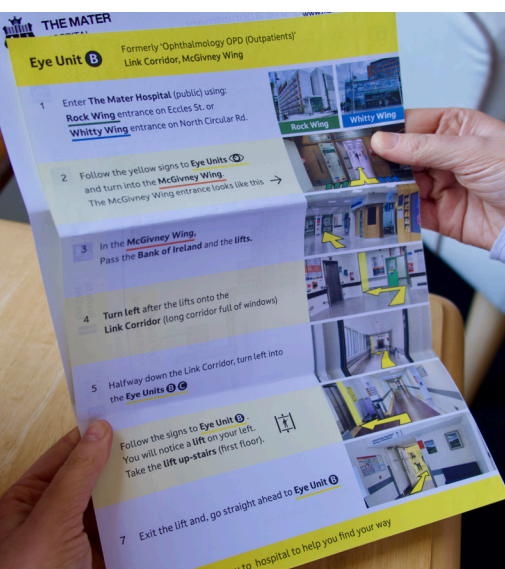
Eye department patient

‘I thought the signs where helpful, I just followed them and knew where to go’

Eye department patient

‘A nurse offered to help me find me way but I didn’t need their help because I had my map’

Eye department patient



Impact

In September of 2024, the project was fully implemented. In January 2025 surveys were repeated to measure impact (patient survey pre: n=68, post n=70, staff survey pre: n=37, post: n=38)

78%

reduction in patients finding it **difficult** to **very difficult** to **find their way to the eye department.**

Pre: (40% of patients - v. difficult or difficult)
Post: (8.5% patients - v. difficult or difficult)

31%

reduction in patients **asking staff for directions** to the Eye Department

% of patients who asked for directions (Pre: 82.6%, Post: 57.14%)

71%

of **staff** told us they are asked **less frequently for directions** since the implementation.

