

Final Project Report

A collaborative working project between Sanofi UK and The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust to develop a dedicated Gold Standard Atopic Dermatitis service and pathway that will improve patient experience, workforce, and service capacity.

1. Background

The Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust is one of the largest and busiest Acute Hospitals Trusts in the UK. The Trust provides a comprehensive range of treatments for patients with skin conditions including specialist clinics for Pediatrics, Adolescents and Skin Cancer as well as providing a minor surgery clinic and biologics service for a geographically wide area.

The Dermatology Department consists of numerous staff groups who all play a vital role in the running of the service. Their roles are unique and diverse, yet their aim is the same within Leeds Dermatology service which is to 'provide the best possible care for all Dermatology patients.

The Dermatology Service had been under significant pressure for some time. In November 2024 when this collaborative working project commenced, the Dermatology Department was performing poorly on the Referral to Treatment waiting times with only 59.4% of patients seen within 18 weeks of referral compared to NHS Operational Standard of 92%. The wait time for patients with Eczema to enter routine clinical service was 47 weeks in November 2024. There were 323 patients waiting over 52 weeks for outpatient appointment in November 2024 which was 5.9% of total waiting list.

The project focused on understanding the current referral and treatment pathways, including Homecare and Transition. The aim was to identify inefficiencies, highlight areas for improvement, and explore opportunities to free up clinical capacity, enhance the patient journey and optimise resource utilisation.

2. Project Aims and Objectives

The **aim** of the project was to develop the Eczema clinical service to provide holistic care to patients with Eczema ensuring appropriately skilled staff can provide adequate time to address educational needs of patient, psychological support, and ensuring the patient pathway is streamlined to ensure efficient progression through treatment.

The **objectives** of the project were to:

- Recruit a Band 6 Clinical Nurse Specialist and support with training and development in Dermatology and specifically Eczema.
- Map and review current Eczema Service & Workforce identifying areas of inefficiency and gaps and identify potential changes to optimise the pathway. Map and review homecare set up within the service and processes and timeframe for initiation of prescribing and process for prescription requests and follow-up with homecare for prescription delivery and identify changes to deliver improvements. As the above elements of the project are undertaken, a review of options to improve the pathway will be presented to and considered by the Project Steering Group and an action plan developed to implement agreed changes.
- Undertake a review of capacity and demand within the Eczema biologics service and review how workforce is utilised to support delivery of the service.
- Evaluate the implementation of a Clinical Nurse Specialist post and the production of a business case for Leeds Teaching Hospital to continue funding of the post.
- Develop an Options Appraisal with recommendations that can be shared with Leeds GP Federation and West Yorkshire ICB to support the development of a long-term vision for an Integrated Dermatology service.

3. Project Implementation

The project commenced in November 2024 and was completed in April 2026. The Eczema Specialist Nurse commenced in post in August 2025.

The following elements were completed:

- Recruited the Eczema Specialist Nurse recruited.
- Mapped the Eczema and Biologics pathway.
- Analyzed capacity and demand for the Eczema Specialist Nurse role.
- Established a database to record and monitor waiting times for patients to see the Eczema Specialist Nurse.
- Analysis of EASI and itch scores for patients seen in the Eczema Nurse Clinic.
- Developed with the service a patient satisfaction survey which was distributed to patients by the Eczema Specialist Nurse.
- Supported an evaluation of the implementation of the Eczema Specialist Nurse post and the production of a business case.

4. Project Outcomes

This project reviewed the AD patient pathway at Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust, mapping referral, treatment, homecare, prescribing and repeat prescribing and review pathway through interviews with clinical and management staff, with the aim of understanding patient experience, identifying gaps, issues and inefficiencies, and explored how to optimise the patient pathway.

Interviews with staff to map the current Eczema Pathway identified the following issues:

- Referral & Triage - Long waiting times regardless of disease severity (EASI score), inequalities in access for socio-economic and ethnic minority groups, unclear urgent flare identification processes, disconnected community and hospital services, and insufficient GP referral detail.
- Outpatient Clinic - 4–6 week wait for biologic initiation, patients seen by non-AD specialists, poor community-hospital integration, high patient loss rates from open appointment models, and historically lengthy timelines to advanced therapy (up to 10 years).

A patient survey was undertaken between December 2025 and February 2026 to obtain patient feedback on their experience of the Eczema Nurse Clinic. Overall, the survey indicated very high satisfaction amongst patients attending the Eczema Nurse Clinic across all areas of clinical care, communication, consultation quality, and staff interaction. Areas relating to service accessibility and contact pathways show comparatively lower confidence due to uncertainty rather than dissatisfaction. Key findings from the patient survey were:

- Exceptional staff experience: 100% of respondents reported staff were courteous and respectful.
- Strong consultation quality: 95%+ of patients felt listened to, supported, and given enough time during consultations.
- Clear communication: All respondents stated that explanations were easy to understand, and most felt confident about next steps.
- Areas for improvement: Contacting the team and receiving timely responses had more mixed results, with several patients selecting “not sure.”

An analysis of the Eczema Area and Severity Index (EASI) and itch scores for patients seen by the Eczema Nurse Specialist showed that 25% have low clinical disease but high itch. These patients are likely to be undertreated in clinical practice, and particularly if itch scores are not recorded.

The Eczema Specialist Nurse post has led to reductions in waiting times for patients to see a specialist and commence treatment. The data below shows sustained improvement in service delivery and patient access to Eczema Specialist Nurse care.

- The average waiting time has dramatically improved from GP referral to attendance at the Eczema Nurse Clinic - reducing from 329 days in October 2025 to 160 days in January 2026 which was a reduction of 169 days or 48.6%.
- The longest waiting time for patients on the waiting list for the Eczema Nurse Clinic has reduced from 58 weeks in August 2025 to 7 weeks in January 2026. This reflects the impact of the nurse role in taking patients with the longest waiting time for dermatology outpatients off the waiting list. With the longest current wait in January 2026 of only 7 weeks also suggests that the Eczema Nurse Clinic is approaching more acceptable waiting time targets.
- The majority of patients seen by the Eczema Nurse had waited beyond the waiting time target with 67.7% of patients having waited between 19-51 weeks, with an additional 17.3% waiting over a year, indicating most patients had significantly exceed the NHS 18-week standard.
- Waiting List Reduction: The active waiting list for the Eczema Nurse has been dramatically reduced from 161 patients (August) to fluctuating between 13-24 patients (January-February), showing effective list management and waiting list reduction.

- As well as speedier access for patients to see a specialist, the Eczema Nurse post has also enabled patients to commence appropriate treatment earlier. The average waiting time for patients to commence drug treatment was 28 days and 3 patients on oral treatments commenced treatment on the same day as the outpatient appointment.

The Eczema Nurse post has also contributed to the overall reductions in outpatient waiting times for patients within Dermatology Department:

- The overall waiting time for dermatology outpatients at Leeds reduced from 47 weeks in November 2024 to 41.7 weeks in January 2026. The number of patients waiting over 52 weeks for a dermatology outpatient appointment has reduced from 323 (5.9% of total waiting list) in November 2024 to 43 (0.7% of total waiting list) in January 2026. The Eczema Nurse role will have contributed to this overall reduction on over 52-week waiters which was a key performance improvement target for the Trust in 2025/26.

5. Project Benefits

The project has delivered the following benefits:

Patients:

- ✓ Improve patient experience for patients with Eczema.
- ✓ Patient access to an optimised streamlined, efficient, and effective pathway for patients with Eczema including improved access onto appropriate treatment.

NHS:

- ✓ Identification of the gaps and issues within the Eczema Nurse service and implementation of changes to build a robust Eczema Specialist Nurse clinic.
- ✓ Developed a standardised pathway for management of Eczema patients ensuring comprehensive assessment, clear and robust management plans (including both systemic and topical therapies), efficient progression through treatment to effective disease management.
- ✓ Reviewed the processes for management of Eczema patients on homecare and biologics ensuring improved timely access to treatment.
- ✓ The outcomes of this project will inform the development of a longer-term vision for an Integrated Dermatology Service between primary and secondary care across the 'whole system' with Leeds GP federation and West Yorkshire ICB.

Sanofi:

- ✓ Greater clarity of the pressure points and priorities for the dermatology service.

- ✔ Greater clarity of the gaps and problems around the Atopic Dermatitis pathway which will enable us to explore how best to support other Hospital Trusts to address these issues.
- ✔ Improved corporate reputation within Leeds Teaching Hospitals by supporting them to improve the quality of care for patients.
- ✔ Optimized patient care within the pathway and improved access has led to an increase in the total number of eligible patients on biologics (including those made by Sanofi) during the timeframe of the project.

6. Project Costs

Total project cost: £86,014 (NHS contribution £33,680; Sanofi contribution £52,334).

7. Customer Feedback;

Dr. Philip Laws, Consultant Dermatologist, The Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust

“Thanks so much to Lisa and Martin for tireless work on the atopic dermatitis project in Leeds Dermatology Unit. Developing a robust clinical service has resulted in a marked change in patient care with reduced waits and improved patient experience. The service now routinely provides a more comprehensive assessment of patients and ensures all aspects of care are addressed. Lisa and Martin were great in helping to ensure delivery of the project and supporting the outcomes which we hope to present later in the year.”