Arolygiaeth Gofal Iechyd Cymru
Healthcare Inspectorate Wales

Independent Healthcare Inspection Report (Announced)

The Retreat Skin Health & Laser Clinic, Cardigan

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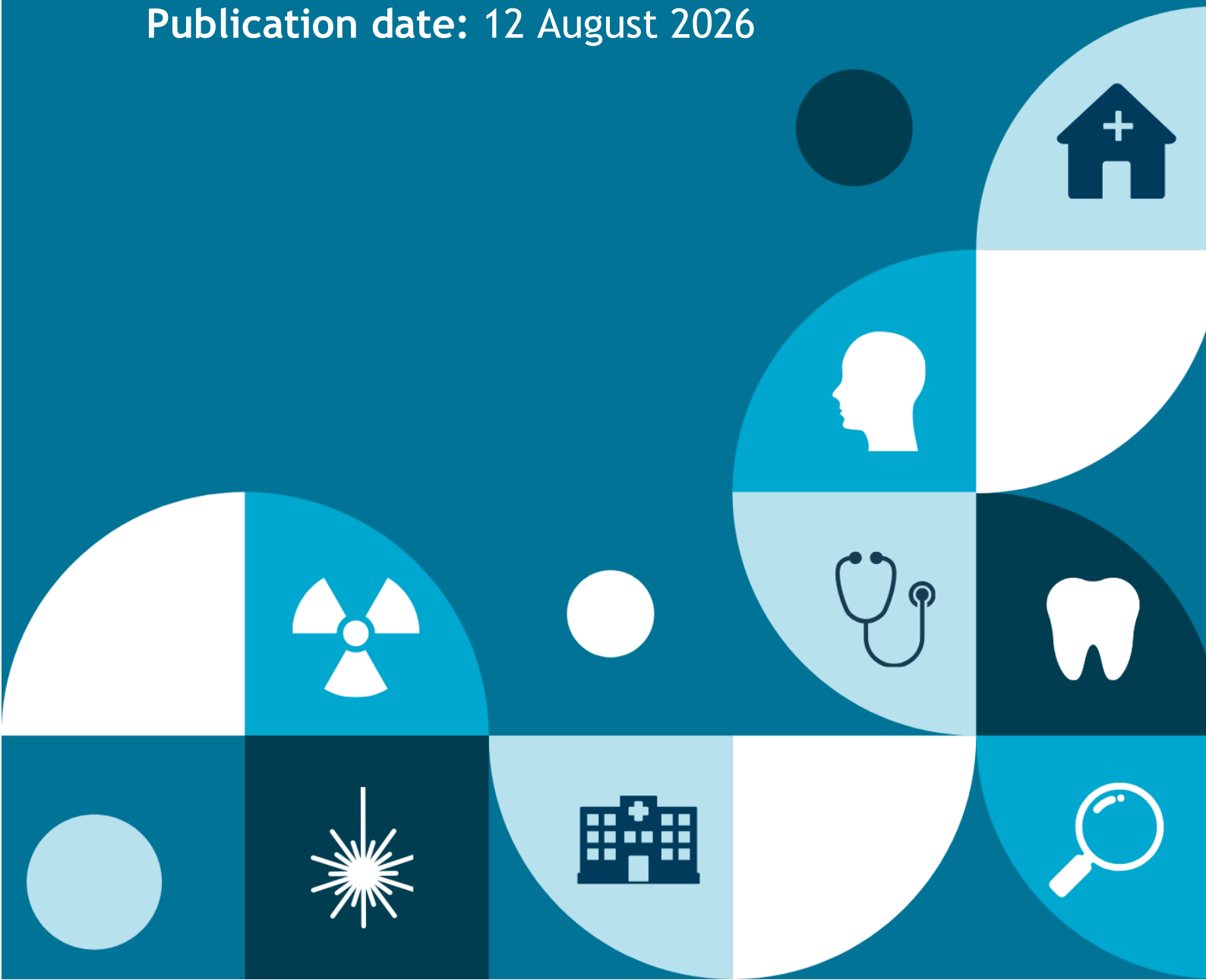

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Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) is the independent regulator and inspectorate of healthcare in Wales

Our Purpose

We check the safety and quality of healthcare across Wales.

Our Vision

A future where healthcare in Wales is safe, effective, and high-quality for everyone.

Our Values

We place people at the heart of what we do.

We are:

Independent – we are impartial, deciding what work we do and where we do it.

Objective - we are reasoned, fair and evidence driven.

Decisive - we make clear judgements and take action to improve poor standards and highlight the good practice we find.

Inclusive - we value and encourage equality and diversity through our work.

Proportionate - we are agile and we carry out our work where it matters most.

Our Priorities

Putting People First - We will focus on the biggest risks facing people and communities as they access healthcare services now and in the future.

Learning and Working Together - We will collaborate with partners to share learning and drive lasting improvements.

Investing in Our People - We will ensure our people feel supported, valued, and empowered.

Taking Action That Matters - We will take action to improve the quality and safety of healthcare for the future of Wales.

Contents

1. What we did

Full details on how we inspect the NHS and regulate independent healthcare providers in Wales can be found on our website.

Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) completed an announced inspection of The Retreat Skin Health & Laser on 14 May 2026.

The inspection was conducted by a HIW healthcare inspector.

During the inspection we invited patients or their carers to complete a questionnaire to tell us about their experience of using the service. A total of 23 were completed. We also spoke to staff working at the service during our inspection. Feedback and some of the comments we received appear throughout the report.

Where present, quotes in this publication may have been translated from their original language.

Note the inspection findings relate to the point in time that the inspection was undertaken.

2. Summary of inspection

Quality of Patient Experience

Overall summary:
We found that The Retreat Skin Health & Laser Clinic was committed to providing a positive experience for patients in a pleasant environment with friendly and professional staff.

All patients who completed a HIW questionnaire rated the service provided by the clinic as very good.

There were systems and processes in place to ensure patients were being treated with dignity and professionalism.

The clinic had effective arrangements in place to collect patient feedback through multiple channels, including anonymous options.

This is what the service did well:

- The clinic is committed to providing a positive experience for patients
- The clinic was very clean and tidy
- Staff were polite, caring and listened to patients
- The clinic had a system in place for seeking the views of patients.

Delivery of Safe and Effective Care

Overall summary:
We found that The Retreat Skin Health & Laser Clinic was meeting the relevant regulations associated with the health, safety and welfare of staff and patients.

The clinic was well maintained and equipped to provide the services and treatments they are registered to deliver. All areas were clean and free from any visible hazards.

There were good arrangements in place to ensure that the laser machine was used appropriately and safely.

Infection prevention and control (IPC) measures were in place, including an IPC policy. Cleaning schedules were followed, and personal protective equipment and hand sanitisers were readily available.

The registered manager and staff were very knowledgeable, professional and demonstrated their understanding of where and how to access advice and guidance.

We found evidence that patients were provided with safe and effective care.

This is what the service did well:

- The clinic and treatment room had been designed and finished to a good standard
- Treatment room was clean, well equipped and fit for purpose
- Patients were provided with enough information to make an informed decision about their treatment
- Patient notes were of a good standard.

Quality of Management and Leadership

Overall summary:
The Retreat Skin Health & Laser Clinic demonstrated effective governance arrangements. The service was managed by a committed registered manager, with appropriate registration and insurance documentation in place.

There were no reported incidents or complaints at the time of inspection, and appropriate systems were in place to manage concerns. Recruitment practices supported patient safety, including the use of DBS checks. Staffing levels were sufficient to meet service needs, and relevant training had been completed. However, one of the laser operators needed to renew their training in Health and Safety at Work and Equality Diversity and Human Rights.

We observed that the staff team worked very well together and were committed to providing a high standard of care for patients.

This is what we recommend the service can improve:

- One laser operator to renew training in Health and Safety at Work and Equality Diversity and Human Rights.

This is what the service did well:

- We saw certificates showing that authorised users of the laser machines had completed the Core of Knowledge training and training on how to use the laser machines
- Patient information was kept securely
- We saw that all staff worked well together as part of a team.

3. What we found

Quality of Patient Experience

Patient feedback

Before our inspection, we invited the clinic to hand out HIW questionnaires to patients to obtain their views on the service provided. In total, we received 23 responses.

All patients who completed a questionnaire rated the service provided as very good. Some of the patients did not answer all of the questions. Patient comments included:

> *"A very professional and beautifully clean setting. [Staff member] is exceptionally skilled and professional, delivering truly 5 star treatments. I highly recommend 'The Retreat' for these amazing services - one very happy customer! Thank you."*
>
> *"All the staff are trained to high standards and are always welcoming and professional at all times, I wouldn't go anywhere else for my treatments."*
>
> *"Staff very friendly and informative. Lovely salon - would recommend."*
>
> *"Found the staff very knowledgeable and supportive while I was following a course of radiotherapy."*

Health promotion, protection and improvement

We confirmed that patients provided comprehensive health and medical histories prior to their initial treatment and again prior to subsequent treatments. We confirmed medical histories were signed by the patient and were countersigned by the laser operator. All patients told us they had their medical histories taken prior to treatment. Two patients told us:

> *"I always feel so looked after and cared for when I visit for my treatment. All staff are respectful and make me feel comfortable at every appointment. A very professional establishment. Health and Safety are always top priority."*
>
> *"Excellent service with very good outcomes. I was very impressed with the duty of care the staff had for me and their clear knowledge and experience was evident."*

Dignity and respect

All patients who completed a questionnaire strongly agreed that staff treated them with dignity and respect when visiting the clinic.

The door to the treatment room was lockable and the registered manager confirmed they locked the door during treatment to maintain privacy.

Patients were provided with towels to protect their dignity if required and were left alone to undress if necessary.

Consultations were carried out in the treatment room, to ensure that confidential and personal information could be discussed without being overheard.

All patients who completed a questionnaire confirmed that staff explained what they were doing throughout the treatment and that they listened to them and answered any questions. One patient told us:

> *"Great setting, staff are great and very approachable. I feel at ease when I come here."*
>
> *"The girls at the Retreat are always welcoming and very professional. I never feel pressured into anything and are always on hand to answer any questions. Great service."*

Patient information and consent

All patients who completed a questionnaire agreed that they had been given enough information about their treatment, including the risks, different treatment options and after care services.

Patients were provided with a thorough face to face consultation prior to receiving any treatment. We were told that these discussions included the risks, benefits and the likely outcome of the treatment offered.

We found evidence to indicate patients were provided with enough information to make an informed decision about their treatment. One patient told us:

> *"The Retreat is a lovely, clean, friendly and relaxing place. Lovely, friendly care. Everything is fully explained."*

All patients who completed a questionnaire confirmed they had completed and signed a medical history form. All but one patient who completed a questionnaire confirmed they had signed a consent form and received a patch test prior to commencement of any new treatment. We were told that all patients were given a patch test prior to treatment starting to help determine the likelihood of any adverse reactions.

We saw that patients were asked to complete and sign a medical history form at the start of each treatment, prior to patch testing. We also saw evidence that patients provided an update to their medical history at every follow-up appointment.

Communicating effectively

A statement of purpose and a patients' guide was available for patients to take away. The statement of purpose included relevant information about the services being offered.

Comprehensive patient information was available for patients to read to help them decide about their treatment options and details about the service. We found evidence of this in the records we reviewed. All patients agreed that staff explained what they were doing throughout the treatment and that they felt listened to.

The majority of patients who completed the questionnaire indicated that English was their preferred language.

We were informed that both laser operators are fluent Welsh speakers, which helps to meet the needs of Welsh speaking patients.

Care planning and provision

We saw evidence to confirm that all patients received a face-to-face consultation prior to the start of any treatment. As part of this consultation, patient medical histories were collected to ensure suitability of the chosen treatment.

Treatment information was recorded within individual patient files, and a treatment register was being maintained.

We reviewed a sample of patient records and found a good standard of record keeping, which covered all areas of the patient journey, pre and post treatment.

Equality, diversity and human rights

There was an equal opportunities policy in place. This meant that the clinic was committed to ensuring that everyone had access to the same opportunities and to the same fair treatment.

All patients who completed the questionnaire confirmed they had not faced any discrimination when accessing or using the service.

Citizen engagement and feedback

We found that the clinic had a system in place for obtaining patient feedback to monitor the quality of the service provided. Patients were able to provide feedback at the end of each course of treatment via a questionnaire and through social media. Feedback and comments could also be submitted anonymously.

Delivery of Safe and Effective Care

Environment

The premises were visibly clean, tidy and well maintained. The clinic was in a good state of repair and provided a pleasant and welcoming environment for patients.

A mixed gender patient toilet was provided, with appropriate hand washing and drying facilities.

Managing risk and health and safety

Arrangements were in place to protect the safety and wellbeing of staff and people visiting the practice.

We saw evidence that portable appliance testing (PAT) had been conducted, to ensure that small electrical appliances were safe to use. We also saw that a building electrical wiring check had been undertaken within the last five years.

Fire safety equipment was available at various locations around the practice, and we saw that these had been serviced within the last 12 months.

Emergency exits were visible, and a Health and Safety poster was displayed.

The practice had a range of policies and procedures, as well as risk assessments in place, such as, fire and health and safety. All risk assessments were current and regularly reviewed. Fire alarm tests and six-monthly fire drills were taking place.

Infection prevention and control (IPC) and decontamination

We observed all areas of the service were visibly clean. There were no concerns expressed by patients over the cleanliness of the clinic. All patients who completed a questionnaire confirmed that IPC measures were being followed and that the setting was very clean. One patient told us:

> *"Beautiful relaxing clean space to have any treatment done."*

The registered manager described a range of infection prevention and control arrangements. These included a daily cleaning schedule for the treatment room, which involved cleaning the laser machine, treatment bed, equipment, and eyewear prior to each use. We saw that all laser operators had received level 2 IPC training.

There were appropriate arrangements in place for the disposal and collection of clinical waste, including sharps.

Safeguarding children and safeguarding vulnerable adults

The registered manager described how they would deal with any safeguarding issues. We saw that both laser operators had completed safeguarding level two training.

A policy was in place to safeguard vulnerable adults. However, the policy was due for renewal. We received evidence immediately following the inspection confirming that the safeguarding policy had been reviewed and updated. We saw there were clear procedures to follow in the event of any safeguarding concerns, along with flowcharts and contact details listing the actions required should a safeguarding issue arise.

Medical devices, equipment and diagnostic systems

The laser machine had an annual service and calibration certificate which were in date. There were treatment protocols in place for the use of the laser machine, and these had been approved by an expert medical practitioner.

There was a contract in place with a Laser Protection Adviser (LPA) and local rules detailing the safe operation of the machine. The local rules had been regularly reviewed by the LPA and signed by both laser operators.

Safe and clinically effective care

Eye protection was available for patients and the laser operators. The eye protection appeared in good condition and the registered manager confirmed that glasses were checked regularly for any damage.

There were signs on the outside of the treatment room to indicate when the laser machine was in use. The registered manager also confirmed that the treatment room door is locked when the machine is in use in order to prevent unauthorised access. We were told that the machine is kept secure at all times and can only be activated by a key, preventing unauthorised operation.

The environmental risk assessments had recently been reviewed by the LPA.

Participating in quality improvement activities

There were suitable systems in place to regularly assess and monitor the quality of service provided. In accordance with the regulations, the registered manager regularly seeks the views of patients as a way of informing care, conducts audits of records to ensure consistency of information and assesses risks in relation to health and safety.

The registered manager demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of the treatments provided. The registered manager also described the importance of post treatment observations and follow up with patients to help provide improved individualised care throughout a course of treatment.

Records management

A sample of five patient records were reviewed. There was evidence that good records were being maintained, demonstrating that care was being planned and delivered to ensure patients' safety and wellbeing. All the records we reviewed were individualised and contained appropriate patient identifiers, medical history, areas treated, relevant

parameters, shot count and details of any adverse effects. Records were detailed, clear, legible and of good quality. Records were kept in a well organised manner and were kept secure when not in use.

Quality of Management and Leadership

Governance and accountability framework

The Retreat Skin Health & Laser Clinic was run and owned by the registered manager who we found to be very committed and dedicated to their role.

We saw a current HIW certificate of registration and public liability insurance certificate on display.

A review of a sample of policies and procedures found these were subject to regular review and included clear version control and/or review dates. This demonstrated that the service had appropriate systems in place to maintain and update key governance documents in line with relevant standards. However, at the time of the inspection, there was no formal policy in place for the provision of information to patients or for recruitment. We immediately received evidence following the inspection confirming that both policies had been developed and implemented. This demonstrates a positive and timely response to address the gaps identified.

Dealing with concerns and managing incidents

We confirmed with the registered manager there had been no HIW reportable incidents.

There was a complaints policy in place, which included the contact details for HIW. The complaint procedure was also included within the statement of purpose.

The clinic had a system in place to log formal complaints and concerns. At the point of inspection, no complaints had been received by the clinic.

Workforce recruitment and employment practices

The registered manager described the pre-employment checks undertaken for any new members of staff. This included checking of references and undertaking Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. We confirmed that all relevant staff had a valid DBS check in place to help protect and safeguard patients.

Workforce planning, training and organisational development

We found enough trained staff to cover the clinic's needs and to provide safe treatment for patients.

We saw that core of knowledge training and system machine specific training was completed by both laser operators. However, we noted that one of the laser operators

needed to renew their training in Health and Safety at Work and Equality Diversity and Human Rights course.

The registered manager must ensure that the laser operator renews their training in Health and Safety at Work and Equality Diversity and Human Rights course.

4. Next steps

Where we have identified improvements and immediate concerns during our inspection which require the service to take action, these are detailed in the following ways within the appendices of this report (where these apply):

- Appendix A: Includes a summary of any concerns regarding patient safety which were escalated and resolved during the inspection
- Appendix B: Includes any immediate concerns regarding patient safety where we require the service to complete an immediate improvement plan telling us about the urgent actions they are taking
- Appendix C: Includes any other improvements identified during the inspection where we require the service to complete an improvement plan telling us about the actions, they are taking to address these areas.

The improvement plans should:

- Clearly state how the findings identified will be addressed
- Ensure actions taken in response to the issues identified are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed
- Include enough detail to provide HIW and the public with assurance that the findings identified will be sufficiently addressed
- Ensure required evidence against stated actions is provided to HIW within three months of the inspection.

As a result of the findings from this inspection the service should:

- Ensure that findings are not systemic across other areas within the wider organisation
- Provide HIW with updates where actions remain outstanding and/or in progress, to confirm when these have been addressed.

The improvement plan, once agreed, will be published on HIW's website.

Appendix A – Summary of concerns resolved during the inspection

The table below summarises the concerns identified and escalated during our inspection. Due to the impact/potential impact on patient care and treatment these concerns needed to be addressed straight away, during the inspection.

Immediate concerns Identified	Impact/potential impact on patient care and treatment	How HIW escalated the concern	How the concern was resolved
No immediate concerns were identified on this inspection.			

Appendix B – Immediate improvement plan

Service: **The Retreat Skin Health & Laser Clinic**

Date of inspection: **14 May 2026**

The table below includes any immediate non-compliance concerns about patient safety identified during the inspection where we require the service to complete an immediate improvement plan telling us about the urgent actions they are taking.

Findings			
Improvement needed		**Standard / Regulation**	
1.	No immediate non-compliance issues were identified on this inspection.		
Service Action:		**Responsible officer**	**Timescale**

The following section must be completed by a representative of the service who has overall responsibility and accountability for ensuring the improvement plan is actioned.

Service representative:

Name (print):

Job role: **Date:**

Appendix C – Improvement plan

Service: The Retreat Skin Health & Laser Clinic

Date of inspection: 14 May 2026

The table below includes any other improvements identified during the inspection where we require the service to complete an improvement plan telling us about the actions, they are taking to address these areas.

Risk/finding/issue		Improvement needed	Standard / Regulation	Service action	Responsible officer	Timescale
1.	One of the laser operators needed to renew their training in Health and Safety at Work and Equality Diversity and Human Rights course.	The registered manager must ensure that the laser operator renews their training in Health and Safety at Work and Equality Diversity and Human Rights course.	Standard 3.2 – Patient Information and Consent Standard 7.1 – Workforce	The laser operator is currently undertaking the required health and safety at work training and Equality, Diversity and Human Rights training. The training is in progress and will be completed as soon as possible. Evidence of the completion/certification will be retained within the staff training records.	Registered Manager	Training in progress. Expected to be completed in the next few weeks.

The following section must be completed by a representative of the service who has overall responsibility and accountability for ensuring the improvement plan is actioned.

Service representative:

Name (print): Zoe Garbett

Job role: Registered Manager **Date: 21/07/2026**