

IN THIS ISSUE:

Pg1 Strategy webinars/LOC Chairs

Pg2 Regional Roundup

Pg3 MPs hear of postcode lottery

Pg4 Fund urges annual donation

Pg5 Venerus' View

Pg 6 Performers List update

LOCSU publishes new turbo-charged strategy

LOCSU has updated its strategy with a new set of ambition targets. [A Breakthrough for Optics](#) – LOCSU's new blueprint – is designed to propel the sector on a faster and broader course.

The headline goals includes 80% of CCGs with MECs by March 2018 and new targets for “step down” care for monitoring conditions such as glaucoma.

LOCSU plans to achieve its aims by stepping up the capacity of the team of (renamed) Commissioning Leads working across England, and providing specific additional support for LOCs in the mobilisation and monitoring of services. The new strategy will require an increase in the LOCSU levy from



0.4% of GOS sight test fees back to its original level of 0.5% from April 2016.

Publishing the plan – which is currently with LOCs for consultation – Katrina Venerus said: “While we can be pleased about successes to date, I believe that the sector has to seize the moment and take this bold step forward.

“We need to set demanding targets and invest to achieve them. And it needs the backing of the whole sector.

LOC Chairs can [book here](#) from a series of webinars being hosted to discuss the new strategy.



February 2016 Newsletter

Optics ‘crucial’ to service reform – Burt



EYE care professions are “vitaly important” to the shaping of NHS service reform, health minister, Alistair Burt told an optical conference earlier this month.

And CCGs should use the whole range of health professionals, including optical practices, to innovate in health delivery and new care models, the primary care minister told 100% Optical.

“I want to acknowledge the importance of eye health,” he told the exclusively optical audience at the LOCSU-hosted Q&A session, Unleashing Local Energies.

“The role of primary care in developing services for the future is crucial and it’s vitally important that this includes eye care professionals, shaping eye care services so they are fit to meet the growing demand.

“Radical change is required to realise our objectives for health and wellbeing to meet the challenges we are going to face with a growing population, and to meet the

increasing needs of those with visual impairments.

“However, doing this is not just something for the CCG in isolation, but something in which the local health community has a shared interest, and should involve the full range of health care professionals.”

Recognised

Mr Burt said he was determined to ensure that the development of primary care was not centred solely around GPs and that all primary care professions are recognised.

The minister said he had chosen to attend the event and speak to underline the commitment he gave in December to work more closely with the optical sector.

Read the full release on the [Optical Confederation website via this link](#).

Regional Roundup – Manchester

■ *In the latest Regional Roundup, Optical Lead, Dharmesh Patel, who is also Chair of the Greater Manchester LEHN, outlines how optics is building the case for community optometry at scale both through the Regional LOC Company and through “Devo Manc” which sees the largest urban experiment in local decision making by devolving the health and social care budget.*

As most people will have seen in the national media, from the 1 April, Greater Manchester will assume local responsibility and decision making for a range of services, including health delivery for its population.

With 12 CCGs responsible for the health of nearly 3 million people it represents a huge opportunity for the optical sector. I am pleased to report that through LOCSU and the GM Confederation of LOCs, the sector is actively engaging with Commissioners and the NHS. We are represented at the highest level through the Strategic Partnership Board. A huge win, in my personal opinion.

Prevention

High on the health agenda is a refresh of the Primary Care Strategy to bring it up to date with the devolution landscape. Currently, there is a huge emphasis on prevention – propelling eye health up the agenda as Commissioners appreciate the link to smoking, falls and the cost of personal social care from preventable sight loss. Community eye health services present an amazing public health opportunity.

Commissioners are starting to understand and make the link between eye health and preventative health. It's has been our mission to bring them to this understanding and to build optometric eye services into new models of care. Looked at through the prism of devolution, optometry features highly in the updated GP primary care blueprint.



***‘We are represented at the highest level through the Strategic Partnership Board. A huge win.’
– Dharmesh Patel***

In tandem with Devo Manc, the Regional LOC Company has been making advances which mean that we are seeing services at scale across the GM metropolitan footprint. Building on the services already in place in Stockport and the momentum created through services with Heywood, Middleton & Rochdale CCG and Bury CCG, now GM Primary Eyecare has a new MECs starting 1 April. The Community Optometry service in Tameside & Glossop CCG is worth £350,000 and will operate across 25 practices.

Largest

Also beginning in April, GMPEC will deliver a Learning Disabilities Pathway which the LOC worked

on together with the LEHN. With a £100,000 budget, the pathway will be the largest learning disabilities project in the country with funding to see more than 1,500 patients with learning disabilities.

And in the wider region – in addition to the widely reported East Lancs integrated eye service – Liverpool CCG launches a GRR service in April and Central Mersey LOC has a MECs and Cataract pathway from St Helens CCG and Halton CCG commissioning together.

With positive discussions going on in Shropshire and Staffordshire, through all of this work with CCGs, we are building the case for community optometry at scale.

RECENT MP practice visits – organised by the Optical Confederation’s Public Affairs team along with LOCs – help us raise successes and concerns, including patchy services, the importance of childrens eye health and the convenience of local services for patients.



L-R Mohammed Bhojani Leicestershire & Rutland LOC, Cllr Sue Gerrard, Cllr Deborah Taylor, Edward Argar MP, Vinesh Patel (LOC Chair) and optometrist Geraint Griffiths.



Patients need community services, LOC tells MP

MP for Chesham and Amersham, Cheryl Gillan, visited Specsavers in Chesham on 22 January. Buckinghamshire LOC Chair, Bruce Gilson, said: “It was great to meet with Cheryl especially to talk about the importance of all children attending for a sight test by the age of four or five at the latest. We also discussed the work the LOC undertakes to bring more eye care services into the community. We look forward to working with Cheryl.”

Image above L-R: Heena Thaker, Practice Director, Chesham Specsavers, Cheryl Gillan MP and LOC Chair Bruce Gilson.

Many missing out on MECS

A LEICESTER MP and local councillors heard how patients face a postcode lottery for eye health services in the city during a visit to a local optical practice.

MP for Charnwood, Edward Argar, visited Optical 3 Opticians in Anstey on 12 February along with local councillors, Deborah Taylor and Sue Gerrard.

Leicestershire and Rutland Local Optical Committee Chair, Vinesh Patel, told the politicians: “In West Leicestershire, we have, among other services, a Minor Eye Conditions Service, which enables patients with conditions such as dry eye, red eye, watery eye and in-growing eyelashes to be managed in opticians, rather than being referred to over-burdened hospital eye departments. If you live in the other two Leicestershire CCG areas, however, this service is not available resulting in

patients having to attend the eye casualty with waiting times of up to four hours.”

Commenting on the visit, Edward Argar MP said: “Keeping our eyes healthy is important for everyone, and making sure we all have regular eye tests is a vital part of that. It was fantastic to hear first-hand from him and members of the Local Optical Committee about the hugely important role local opticians play in looking after our sight, as well as his innovative work on children’s eye health. Local opticians do so much more than just eye tests, meaning rather than having to go to hospital we can have a lot more eye complaints treated just round the corner from our own homes.”



Wimbledon MP, Stephen Hammond, visited a local branch of Boots Opticians on 22 January. The visit was organised with the help of Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth LOC to emphasise the importance of eye health and sight tests.

The picture from the visit shows, from left to right: Eyall Gelbart, LOC Chair, Stephen Hammond MP, Keval Subit, Manager Wimbledon Boots Opticians and Rose Brand, Optometrist Boots Opticians.

Leadership module candidates announced

LOCSU has announced the list of successful candidates who will receive funding for this year's Leadership Skills module.

The successful list is: Rupesh Bagdai (Cheshire), Divya Sudera (Sandwell), Peter Beverley-Smith (Dorset), Roger Smyth (East Yorkshire), Rahul Saggar (Stockport), Ahmed Sivardeen (Surrey), Jasheen Mangat (Dudley), Tim Finch (Somerset) and Adam Ormrod (Liverpool).

LOCSU's Leadership Skills for Optical Professionals is a 20-credit postgraduate module and is part of WOPEC's MSc programme at Cardiff University.

For more information, visit the [Learning & Development pages](#) of the LOCSU website.

College call for joint supervisors of trainees

THE College of Optometrists is looking for optometrists interested in supervising trainees.

Ruth Brough, Lead Assessor for the College, explained: "We've heard from many of our members that they would like to supervise a trainee, but are worried they may not have the time or space to do so: that's why teaming up with another member can work so well. Being a supervisor can be hard work, but will always be rewarding, and I would encourage all of you to consider doing it.

"We've done this as we've heard from many people that they just don't think they can supervise full time. Those interested can read a case study before deciding to register. Follow this [link](#) for more information.

Central Optical Fund urges donation conversation

WITH the AGM season marching towards us, the Central Optical Fund, urges LOCs to discuss investing in cutting edge optical projects for optometry nationally by donating to the Fund.



CENTRAL OPTICAL FUND

Over the past year the Central Optical Fund has been behind some of the most influential initiatives that will help shape and secure the future of the optical sector.

Recently financed projects include the:

- IT pilot linking optical practices to the NHS network
- New Data Repository to highlight the cost-effectiveness of community services to CCGs
- Foresight project to explore emerging digital technologies, and the
- Development of a new eyecare pathway for those with learning disabilities.

Explaining the call, Board Member, Bhavin Thanki, said: "Historically, the fund lobbied politically for the sector.

"At this pivotal point, now is the time to focus on

cutting-edge developmental projects and research issues which will be vital for the future of optometry.

"But we can only do that with the continued support of LOCs through the voluntary levy and by donations.

"The NHS continues to evolve and reform. It's important that we can meet and react to those changes as a sector.

"It is my hope that, even though you all have increasing calls on your resources, you will continue to want, and find it worthwhile, to invest in your profession for the future.

"With AGMs are on the horizon we would urge them to put the donation on your agenda to discuss and to consider making an annual donation to the Central Optical Fund.

For more information email office@centralfund.org.uk or visit the new website, www.centralfund.org.uk.

Venerus' View

I AM delighted that we have been able to share with you our ambitious new strategy for consultation (see Page 1) and for the positive feedback we have received since it was published two weeks ago. Embarking on a path that will enable LOCSU and LOCs to drive the commissioning of community eye services at greater scale and pace is very exciting and absolutely essential if we are to achieve our overarching aim of establishing optical practices in England as the first port of call for eye health, just as they have become in Scotland and Wales.

A question I have been asked by one LOC Chair who called me to discuss the strategy was “Out of curiosity, why now?” For me, the answer is that the review of strategy came at exactly the right time.

When we consider how technology is set to transform the traditional sight test, it is absolutely vital for the long-term sustainability of high-street optical practice that we start to expand of the scope of practice.

NHS reform and transformation is another real driver. Greater emphasis on shifting care away from hospitals and a move towards new models of care and devolution in England provides us with a window of opportunity. If we do not develop the capacity to address the challenges of implementing “step down care” at a scale in community optical practices, then other providers will dominate that market and we will lose out on the opportunity to bring revenue and development of clinical skills to our sector.

Optical practices large and small are increasingly seeing the benefit of working together across areas to bid for and deliver community services as a network of subcontractors to LOC Companies. We need to capitalise on this collective will of businesses

to collaborate and increase the momentum that has been building around LOC companies.

A wise man once said: “A strategy without a plan is just a wish.” As well as setting a series of tightly-focussed objectives with challenging and measurable targets in the new strategy, we have been working on a robust implementation plan to take the objectives forward. Clearly the plan is essential to ensure delivery within the required timeframe and the success of the plan relies on having the appropriate level of resources.

We need the whole sector to join together to back the new the Breakthrough Strategy. I look forward to discussing with LOC Chairs through the webinars coming up in the next two weeks. If you can't make any of the dates and you

would like a chat about it, please feel free to get in touch any time.

Our other big news this month is, of course, the session with health minister Alistair Burt at 100% Optical (see Page 1). It was a real boost for the sector that the minister took time out of his weekend to speak at the event, proving that the promise he made to engage more closely with us when we met him in December was genuine.

Mr Burt's public recognition that optical practices have an important role to play in primary care is important from a strategic perspective. In particular, his call for CCGs to work more closely with primary care professionals, including opticians and optometrists, in shaping local patient services and ensuring better preventative health outcomes, was music to my ears. I just hope that Commissioners out there are listening to the same tune.

Your comments and suggestions are always welcome: katrinavenerus@locsu.co.uk or [@katrinavenerus](https://twitter.com/katrinavenerus) on Twitter.



Learning Disabilities briefing note for LOCs

A new resource called “*People with learning disabilities and eye care – What every LEHN and LOC needs to know*” has been launched by the national sight loss and disability charity, SeeAbility.

The downloadable briefing note for LOCs and LEHNs comes from work that SeeAbility and LOCSU have been doing to support a number of LEHNs and CCGs to deliver the England Vision Strategy ambition to improve access and detect eye conditions early in hard to reach groups. It recommends:

- Suggesting enhancements to community sight tests and targeted work in special schools for

people with learning disabilities to be included in Eye Health Needs Assessments.

- Discussions with Commissioners about dedicated services for hard-to-reach groups.
- Promoting the LOCSU community eye care pathway for people with learning disabilities over the age of 14.

Download the [briefing note here](#) to link to other resources or email s.kill@seeability.org.

New Performers List

PRIMARY Care Support England (PCSE) have announced that LOCs will receive details of new entrants to the National Performers List in their area from February 2016.

Applicants to the List are advised that PCSE will share their contact details with the relevant local representative committee unless they opt out. The standardisation of this process will help LOCs to be able to communicate with performers in their area.

Falls Survey Update

THE College of Optometry is updating its [Focus on Falls report](#), exploring the link between [vision and falls](#) and highlighting the need for optometrists and falls teams to work more closely together.

They are asking for views on their work and what more the College can do to help. Please [complete this online survey](#). It takes a maximum of five minutes.

Dates for your Diary

● 22 February. Webinars for LOC Chairs to discuss the ["Breakthrough Strategy for Optics"](#). Further webinars take place on 25 February, 29 February and 2 March. [Book your place now](#).

● 29 February. Closing date for comments on the new draft LOC Model Constitution.

● [Optometry Tomorrow 2016](#) Hilton Birmingham Metropole 13-14 March 2016.

● [Optrafair](#), NEC Birmingham, 9-11 April 2016. Come and visit the LOCSU stand over the three days.

● The [Vision UK 2016 conference – Expanding Horizons](#) takes place Tuesday 14 June at The Grange

Tower Bridge Hotel, London.

● The College of Optometrists is hosting 25 [regional events](#) throughout the year.

● The Association of Optometrists (AOP) has launched its extensive programme of CET and CPD events throughout the country, offering over 200 CET points during the course of the year. [Download the guide](#).

● Fight for Sight is making its research presentation roadshow available for LOCs. The presentations aimed at both optometrists and dispensing opticians, and are CET certified. Email [Julian Jackson](mailto:Julian.Jackson@fightforsight.org) or call 07773 800073 for more information.

If you have an item of interest for *LOCSU News*, contact Editor [Chris McGachy](#), Head of Communications. You are receiving this email from the Local Optical Committee Support Unit. If you would like to unsubscribe, please contact info@locsu.co.uk.