

## **Local Optical Committee Support Unit (LOCSU)**

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SUPPORT FOR PRIMARY  
EYE CARE DEVELOPMENT

### **Advice note**

# **Running a Successful LOC**



**LOC SUPPORT UNIT**  
Available on line at [www.locsu.co.uk](http://www.locsu.co.uk)  
Or call 020 7549 2051

## Running a Successful LOC

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The function of a Local Optical Committee is to represent contractors and performers within its area.

### LOC Constitution

Every LOC must have a constitution. A Model Constitution was agreed by the Department of Health with ABDO, FODO and the AOP on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2008. The LOC needs to be recognised by the local PCTs & draws its authority from the National Services Act 2006 section 125(2).

There must be at least 6 elected members and an equal number of contractor and performers. The term of office for members is usually 3 years. The chair, secretary & treasurer are elected from the committee. Observers such as the optometric advisor or a local hospital optometrist can be invited to attend meetings, apart from closed sessions.

The LOC must act in accordance

with the powers provided in its Constitution and must properly discharge the duties and responsibilities required by the Constitution.



It is important that all LOC members are familiar with their Constitution, which defines:

- membership of the Committee;
- procedures for nominations and elections;
- procedures for the appointment of officers and their duties;
- the quorum for meetings;
- the term of office of members;

previously and by becoming involved in a LOC, younger optometrists can be encouraged to play a part in the future of their profession.



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### Allowances to LOC Members

LOCs can reimburse *bona fide* costs incurred by LOC members when attending day meetings on LOC business. In addition LOC members may claim reasonable travelling and subsistence costs incurred in attending meetings on behalf of the LOC. Some LOCs also pay a small attendance allowance for attending LOC meetings. Where this is paid the LOC should inform the LOC member in writing that the member is responsible for any tax liability arising on the profit element within the allowance.

### LOC Secretaries Salaries or Honoraria

The LOC is responsible for deduction of Income Tax and National Insurance contributions on the salary / honoraria paid to the LOC Secretary / Chief Officer or other officials, unless the LOC receives written confirmation from HM Revenue & Customs that the person is self employed.

### Mileage Rates

HM Revenue & Customs have set a maximum reimbursement rate for car mileage of 40 pence per mile in order that the payment may be free of tax. This covers up to 10,000 miles in any tax year and can be increased to 45 pence per mile if a passenger is carried.

### The Future

There is no doubt that the present climate for change within the NHS will present many opportunities for optometry to be involved with local and nationally agreed



enhanced service schemes. The formation of the LOC Support Unit, with the backing of the major national bodies in optics, is evidence of a readiness to work together which was not present

- procedures for the disqualification and resignation of members;
- procedures for dealing with casual vacancies;
- the requirement for an annual report and AGM;
- the procedure for amendment of the Constitution;
- governance matters such as declarations of interest and confidentiality
- the duties of the LOC
- LOC Finance

### **Functions of a LOC**

The specific functions of LOCs are not defined under legislation, but as the Committee representing contractors and performers within a defined area, LOCs have a general function in respect of all aspects of NHS primary care that relate to, or are relevant to, community optical and ophthalmic practitioners.

This representation will include the following:-

- Liaise with the Primary Care Trust on matters affecting the local contractors and

performers (these matters include General Ophthalmic Services, Local Enhanced Ophthalmic Services and complaints re ophthalmic services.



- Respond to local consultations
- Represent local contractors and performers locally and nationally
- Inform local contractors and performers
- Contribution to development of national policies
- Liaise with other LOCs & LOCSU
- Obtain support, advice and training services.

## Governance Issues

There are a number of principles, sometimes referred to as the **Nolan principles**, which define how people in public life should conduct themselves. The following principles reflect the application of the Nolan principles to the conduct of LOC members:

**Selflessness:** LOC members should take decisions solely in terms of the interests of all those contractors they represent and not to gain financial or material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

**Integrity:** Members must not put themselves under any obligations that might influence their performance on the LOC or their ability to reflect the interests of the contractors who elected or appointed them.

**Objectivity:** In making decisions and in carrying out the business of the LOC, members should act

within the Constitution and make decisions only on merit.

**Accountability:** LOC members are accountable for their decisions and actions to the contractors they serve and the public and must therefore submit themselves to scrutiny.

**Openness:** Members should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions, and restrict information only where the wider public interest clearly demands this. However, in being open, LOCs must take care when dealing with confidential or sensitive information.

**Honesty:** Members have a clear duty to declare any private interests relating to their LOC duties, and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising. A written declaration of interests, properly updated for all LOC members, should be in

place and conflicts of interest at meetings should be declared and be recorded in the minutes.

**Leadership:** Members should promote and support good governance by leadership and example.

## Effective LOCs

The LOC needs to be well organised with an efficient and effective chair, secretary treasurer and administrator. A meaningful agenda should be distributed in advance of all formal meetings and objectives need to be realistic. The workload should be spread across committee members rather than done by 2 or 3. The formation of sub committees can be effective so that different LOC members have responsibilities for specific areas eg clinical governance, website, visual impairment.

Good communication with contractors and performers is vital as well as with other key stakeholders eg LMC, LDC, LPC,

PCTs, Hospital Eye Service, Local Authority, GP commissioners, third sector and patient groups.

## Financing a LOC

The LOC is financed by means of a statutory levy on the GOS sight test fees payable to local contractors. The LOC's constitution requires it to prepare annual accounts. These should be approved by the LOC after they have been audited by a suitable



person or persons and presented to the LOC at its AGM. The treasurer should produce annual budgets to ensure the amount collected by the statutory levy will cover the proposed LOC expenditure. The budget and the amount of the statutory levy are agreed at the Annual General Meeting.