New Clinical Council to provide national leadership on eye health commissioning in England

Leading organisations from across eye health have come together for the first time to form the Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning, responding to the government’s NHS reforms for a clinically-led, patient focussed NHS.

The aim of the Council is to offer united, evidence-based clinical advice and guidance to those commissioning and delivering eye health services in England on issues where national leadership is needed.

The Council plans to work in partnership with NHS England, to support the development of services to meet local needs and improve outcomes based on best evidence and in the most patient sensitive and cost-effective ways.

Having met for the first time last week the Clinical Council is now contributing to the development of NICE accredited commissioning guidance on cataract and glaucoma services.

The Council will then move on to look at the best ways of improving the quality and efficiency of services for age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy in line with indicator 4.12 of the Public health outcomes framework.

President of The Royal College of Ophthalmologists and first Chair of the Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning, Professor Harminder Dua welcomed the new initiative. “Key players with interest in eye health have seized the opportunity to create history. The diversity and depth of collective expertise should make the Council a natural port of call for anyone seeking advice on eye health commissioning, based on best available evidence and in the best interest of patients.”

Dr Kamlesh Chauhan, President of the College of Optometrists, welcomed the collaboration of so many professions on the Clinical Council. “New treatments and an ageing population mean we are helping more patients than ever to beat eye disease and see clearly. But there is much more we can do and I am delighted patient groups, GPs, public health and social services are working with us to improve the quality and efficiency of eye care”.


Notes

- The Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning is the national clinical voice for eye health in England. Bringing together the leading patient and professional bodies, it advises those in health care, social care and public health how to improve eye health. The Clinical Council’s advice is based on the best evidence available and is independent of any commercial interests.

- It is led by The Royal College of Ophthalmologists and The College of Optometrists and the following organisations are members:
  - Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
  - Association of British Dispensing Opticians
  - British and Irish Orthoptic Society
  - Faculty of Public Health
  - Local Optical Committee Support Unit
  - Optical Confederation
  - Royal College of General Practitioners
  - Royal College of Nursing
  - Royal National Institute of Blind People
  - Vision 2020 UK

The NHS in England spends around £2.2bn on eye health services each year. There are almost two million people in the UK living with sight loss. Sight loss affects people of all ages but especially older people: 1 in 5 people aged 75 and 1 in 2 aged 90 and over are living with sight loss. There is a link between sight loss and reduced wellbeing. Over one-third of older people with sight loss are also living with depression. Two-thirds of registered blind and partially sighted people of working age are not in paid employment. The number of people in the UK with sight loss is set to increase in line with population ageing: by 2050 the number of people with sight loss in the UK could be nearly four million.

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