



#YourLOC

Case Study

What Do LOCs Do?

There are 75 Local Optical Committees (LOCs) across England, with over 300 committee members working hard across the country. But what do they do? What are their aims and what kind of people are they hoping will get involved?

Informing, Advising and Negotiating

Trevor Warburton, Chair of the Confederation of Greater Manchester LOCs is the ideal person to give us the lowdown on LOC activities, having been involved with LOCs for over 30 years ...

Trevor first became involved in Stockport LOC in the early 1980s. Over the decades he has seen LOC activities evolve and adapt to the changing public healthcare environment, but the ultimate aims of LOCs have remained broadly the same: to inform, advise and negotiate with national healthcare systems to ensure the expert delivery of high quality eye health services for patients, and to gather and represent the views of local performers and contractors to national representative bodies.

In a practical sense, Trevor explains, “the broad brush description is that LOCs represent contractors and performers in the region to their Primary Care body.”

A core role of LOCs is the negotiation of the delivery of extended eye care services, as Trevor continues: “It’s a representative negotiating role where we raise questions about the development of extended services and ensure they work for both CCGs and the practitioners that are delivering them.”





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LOCs are instrumental in negotiating and implementing extended services such as the Minor Eye Conditions Service (MECS); Pre- and Post-Operative Cataract Service; Glaucoma Referral Filtering and Monitoring Service and recently the Covid Urgent Eyecare Service (CUES). These are all designed to offer patients high quality eye health care and monitoring in a primary care setting which is more convenient and takes pressure off hospital eye services.

An important part of this is building relationships and connections with stakeholders such as CCGs, Local Eye Health Network, Integrated Care Systems and NHS Trusts. These come into their own when the pressure is on and, while the time it takes to implement a service varies, in the case of CUES in Greater Manchester, the service was being rolled out from initial discussion with the CCG to launch in just five weeks thanks to pre-existing relationships between the LOCs and everyone involved.

Max Halford (above), Chair of Devon LOC, also highlights the importance of the wider connections LOCs build, saying: “We try hard to align with the local medical committee and local pharmacy committee because if one group has a conversation with the CCG, it is likely to impact the other sectors, but unless we talk to one another we won’t all have the same knowledge, so it’s important to build that relationship.”

Supporting Performers and Contractors

There’s a definite two-way communication remit too, as Trevor remarks: “It’s just as important that LOCs communicate back to practices as it is that we take their views to clinical commissioning groups and national bodies. Information needs to flow in both directions.”

A further role that Trevor feels LOCs should adopt is ensuring that local referral pathways and contact details are well documented and kept up to date, so practitioners have an accurate reference when they need it. In the case of the Greater Manchester Confederation of LOCs this is undertaken via [the group’s website](#).

Balancing Local, Regional and National Interactions

In Trevor’s view it is important to combine the area-specific insight that individual LOCs deliver with collaborating as groups of LOCs to present a single voice to regional commissioning groups and this was the rationale behind the creation of the Greater Manchester Confederation of LOCs, as he explains: “We felt that we couldn’t have five different LOCs dealing with the Greater Manchester health and social care partnership, all with varying messages, so we joined together to present a united voice.” This principle is also behind the 2020 inauguration of LOC regional forums, which provide an opportunity for LOCs to share best practice and communicate collectively with health stakeholders on a regional basis.

What Makes an Effective LOC?

Keen committee members who are ready to get stuck in are the backbone of an effective LOC. Trevor stresses that it is important that tasks are shared across the group: “Everyone needs to be prepared to play a part, you can’t have all the work falling on two or three members; involving more people with smaller tasks keeps everyone engaged.”

Good leadership is also important. Developing leadership skills is something LOCSU helps committee members with through the popular Leadership Skills for Optical Professionals course, a post-graduate module that forms part of WOPEC’s MSc programme at Cardiff University. Through this LOC members continue their professional development through their involvement with the LOC.

Trevor also highlights the growing importance of communication skills: “When you’re talking with CCGs and working with practices it is important that you can be clear and effective – and diplomatic if necessary.”

Making a Difference

Being part of an LOC means contributing to the development and provision of eye health services for the benefits of patients across England. For Trevor, his most satisfying experience has been being among the first areas to implement new shared care services such as the diabetic retinopathy screening services in 1994 and going on to introduce MECS and other services: “All the development of shared care I have found very satisfying,” he says. “All along we were pushing forward the boundaries of what optical practices do and it is exciting to be at the vanguard of that.”

As the NHS pursues the long term plan, LOCs will be pivotal to the development and delivery of new services that provide exceptional patient care, make the best use of the skills and facilities in primary care and transform the relationship between primary and secondary eye care in England. There has never been a more exciting time to get involved!

[Find out more about LOCs and how you can get involved](#)