



## A report from the Chair Hants LOC 2017- 18

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There is an old Chinese saying “May you live in interesting times” and this year has certainly been interesting.

If we look at the world of optics as a whole we are faced with all manner of uncertainties from “are we going to get paid”, as the change from PCSE to Capita has not been smooth, to the increasing workload in practice leading to the AOP starting a help line for practitioners under stress and the new GDPR requirements for practices.

As I write this the CET grant payments have not been finalised and with the advent of electronic submission of GOS forms looming this understandably makes contractors worry for their business. This also makes any Post Payment Verification visits extremely difficult as there has been no reconciliation provided for practices in the interim.

The new Eye Health Needs Assessment for Hants. shows all too well that we are underpopulated both with optometrists and ophthalmologists. With an increasingly ageing population and with many practitioners choosing not to work full time the number of optometrist hours available remains a challenge.

The first cohort of students from the University of Portsmouth will embark on their pre-registration year in January 2019 so hopefully they can be encouraged to remain in the area and alleviate some of the demand.

With the current difficulties faced by the NHS due to increasing patient numbers and complexity of conditions Optometry has been asked to use some of the untapped skills of practitioners in providing Minor Eye

Condition Services and will be asked to take part in more and more step-down care services in the future.

Our domiciliary providers are being asked to take part in a pilot scheme to help provide eye care for the homeless population. This scheme is being managed by NHSE South (Wessex).

The last of the current MECS accreditation sessions for Hants Optometrists was run in May 2018.

This year has also seen several well attended CET events ranging from AMD & Glaucoma with Topcon OCT , NICE Guidelines, MECS peer reviews in North Hants and Southampton City and Heidelberg's live OCT Roadshow. As ever we are grateful to our Business Manager Ian Silk for putting together and managing the various events

Due to the advent of more step-down care services especially for Glaucoma, I'm requesting the members to approve a budget that will allow us to provide WOPEC level 2 training in glaucoma for all practitioners in Hants so that we have a workforce who at least can demonstrate their basic skill level as a progression towards the College certificates which at present remain the standard for shared care services. Specific details regarding the budget will be presented as a proposal by Bill Vance our Treasurer at the end of his report.

University Hospital Southampton are at present having great difficulty meeting their follow up appointment times for glaucoma patients and we are in talks with them and the respective CCGs as to how best to manage this workload in the long term.

The stumbling block to providing all of these services is that the commissioning decisions lie with the CCGs. We have in Hants and IOW eight CCGs all of whom have different commissioning priorities for their patient population. Thus we end up with the postcode lottery again with some services being available to patients registered with one GP and not to those of a neighbouring practice.

Why can't we make it national you may ask? - well CCGs are enshrined as legal entities and given the current political climate with Brexit overshadowing all policy decisions there is little appetite in government to undertake any change in the current legislation.

Successful implementation of new services remains our best way of proving that these services do help bring care closer to home, reduce A&E appointments and make the pathways for patients more logical and shorter. We are delighted to see that the MECS scheme launched in Southampton City last April has had the effect of reducing A&E attendances and significantly improved patient experience.

We are extremely grateful to Lucie Lleshi, Senior Commissioning Manager at Southampton City CCG for her support and recognition of the value of the MECS scheme.

In Quarter 1 (2017-18) when the scheme started nine patients were seen and in Quarter 4, one hundred and forty (140) patients were seen.

Overall 340 patients attended MECS practices and of these patients only 58 had to be referred to HES so significant savings and benefits to patients and proving the success that the scheme brings with it. Some CCGs appear concerned at the number of potential self – referrals in the case of this MECS scheme amount to 255. However without the MECS scheme these same patients could have self-referred to an already over stretched HES at an increased cost both financially and in terms of patient satisfaction.

To quote a couple of patients:

*"Happy not to wait in A&E for 4 hours!"*

*"Brilliant service and will be such a lot of help to Southampton Eye Casualty which is where I would have had to go to."*

We have run the Southampton City service this year through the Primary Eye Care Company(Southern) which now covers an area almost from Cornwall to East Sussex.

While this may seem somewhat far removed from practices in Hants we retain local representation on the PEC and as the LOC itself can't hold a contract this PEC model remains the preferred option when bidding for an enhanced service contract. With more services under the PEC banner there come economies of scale and a greater level of expertise in managing the contracts once established.

While the PEC model is still evolving I feel it is the most pragmatic way of offering the opportunity for any practices to participate in offering services.

With this in mind I'm asking you all to consider attending LOC meetings either as an observer or with a view to joining the committee as we want representation from all parts of the profession-details are always available from Ian our business manager if you email him at [isilk@hampshireloc.org.uk](mailto:isilk@hampshireloc.org.uk) Ian will even make sure you are catered for if you let him know in advance.

In hope of a not quite so interesting year!

Roisin Carruthers- Chair Hants LOC

24 April 2018