

LEHN Report for Hampshire LOC AGM 7th July 2020

As you are aware the NHS England regional areas have changed so that Dorset is part of NHSE southwest. Hampshire is in the southeast region. We were expecting the Wessex LEHN area to change on 1st April but due to the COVID crisis I am continuing to cover the old Wessex area of Dorset, Hampshire & the Isle of Wight.

Dorset CCG

- A 6-week independent review of hospital & community ophthalmology services in Dorset was carried out by Moorfields with PA. The results were made available in Dec2019
- It incorporates many of the recommendations of the Wessex Eye Health Needs Assessment which was carried out in 2017.
- The report was approved at a high-level CCG meeting in Jan2020 with Ophthalmology being rated as a top priority.
- There is an outline implementation plan in the report for a new service model in addition to recommendations on optimising current services with some quick wins.
- An Ophthalmology Transformation Programme Board was set up as a first step to achieve these aims, but this has been side-lined due to the COVID-19 crisis. It has recently started meeting virtually.

Seldom Heard Groups

Homeless eyecare provision

The pilot scheme was launched by NHS England Wessex to provide NHS funded sight tests and spectacles for people who are homeless in Hampshire and Dorset.

The pilot started in April 2018 & was due to run until the end of March 2020. Due to COVID-19 we had to cease the service a few weeks early.

The initial four shelters – two in Southampton, one in Portsmouth and one in Bournemouth – were chosen based on homeless statistics, selecting areas of greatest need. Later five more shelters, in Weymouth, Winchester, Andover, Gosport, and another in Bournemouth were added. We have emailed all of these shelters to thank them for all for their help in letting us use the premises and for advertising the service. This was followed up with a telephone call to get as much feedback as we can as this will help with the report going forward.

Over the last 2 years, 569 patients have had a sight test, 477 glasses have been dispensed and 50 repairs and replacements. 4 people have been referred on with eye conditions. The project has received positive feedback from the shelters, patients and the optometrists.

The report & decisions about possible continuation of the service has been put on hold due to the current COVID crisis. The long-term plan is to try to get a NHSE&I national programme for the homeless.

People with Learning Difficulties

Wessex Voices were commissioned by NHSE Wessex to undertake a project to engage with adults with learning difficulties &/or autism to understand what their experiences & barriers have been when going for a sight test & their aftercare. An eye care survey was developed with input from

SeeAbility. This went live in December 2019 until 16 February 2020 & was available in several formats including an on-line version, hard copies in Easy Read format, group & telephone intervals. Questions from the survey were designed in a way to understand:

- What barriers might have prevented someone from going for a sight test, if they had never been to one or hadn't attended a sight test in a long time
- What their experiences of going for a sight test were like at different stages of the sight test, if the respondent had been to one or regularly attended them (e.g. booking an appointment, at the sight test, choosing and fitting glasses, post-appointment glasses and eye care)

A total of 120 people participated in the project which included adults with learning disabilities and/or autism as well as carers who completed the online or hard copy survey on the behalf of someone with a learning disability and/or autism.

The report is very comprehensive & gives a fascinating insight into the experiences of people with learning difficulties in accessing eye care.

The main recommendation is that everyone should have access to good eyecare, as no one is too disabled to have a sight test and with the right support more people can get the eyecare they need.

Key factors that influenced a person's experience included:

- Having communication and support throughout the process, including the use of Easy Read resources
- Seeing the same optometrist & staff at each appointment
- Having more information about sight tests and good eye care, including domiciliary tests

Headline recommendations are;

- Increase general awareness of sight tests and good eye care
- Ensure optometrists and optical staff receive relevant awareness training and use reasonable adjustment flags to help meet people's specific needs
- Ensure Annual GP Health Checks are effective in addressing eye health
- Develop a learning disability and autism standard for optometrists and optical staff that is quality checked by local user-led groups
- Use the findings of this report to support the call for more dedicated eye care schemes for this group – ideally nationally but in the absence of this, create local eye care schemes in Wessex by adapting the LOCSU community pathway for people with learning disabilities

There will be a task & finish group setup to decide on action points from the survey & the formation of an action plan.

CUES- COVID Urgent Eyecare Service

NHSE published the service specification for CUES 17th April, with the intention to have it commissioned at pace. There is a much more detailed report on this in the CGPL report

This is in addition to monitoring which practices are 'open' for essential care.

Services for the Visually Impaired

The COVID crisis & lockdown have been particularly challenging for people with sensory loss. Many of those with visual impairments are unable to judge when they are 2m from another person. Sadly,

some have been verbally abused for breaking the social distancing rules. Many feel that they have lost their independence & self-confidence. Guide dogs have no concept of social distancing so many have not been used on their harness & have consequently lost some of their skills. Many third sector organisations have a funding crisis. The rehabilitation officers & third sector agencies have not been able to carry out mobility training because of social distancing rules. People with a hearing impairment often rely on lip reading so feel very isolated with the increasing use of face masks.