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Health minister lined up for NOC

ALISTAIR Burt is to attend this year's NOC as a headline speaker.

The Minister for Community and Social Care who is responsible for all primary care, including ophthalmic services – will be speaking at the flagship optical event, taking place 10-11 November 2016 in Birmingham.

Announcing the news, LOCSU MD, Katrina Venerus, said: "We hope that the minister's attendance signals a growing recognition through our Breakthrough Strategy that the optical sector has its sleeves rolled up and is ready to deliver on behalf of the NHS in primary care, which Mr Burt is responsible for.



"We are delighted that the health minister has agreed to come and speak directly to LOCs at the NOC."

Bookings are now open for the NOC and LOCs receive one free place. The Conference will include leading speakers from the NHS, ophthalmology and the optical sector as well as support for first-time delegates.

The NOC takes place at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole from 10-11 November 2016. [Bookings are open via this link.](#)

Eye health summit urges CCGs to make better use of optical practices



A CALL for more CCGs to make optical practices the first point of contact in primary care for eye problems was a clear outcome from this month's Eye Health summit in London.

The Demand and Capacity conference, at which LOCSU MD Katrina Venerus was among the presenters, heard that ophthalmology was at bursting point and people were in danger of sight loss due to the backlog in follow-up appointments.

David Parkins, Chair of the Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning, called for more activity to be carried out in the community sector.

Parkins said that primary eye care services should be the first port of call to manage and monitor cases prior to referral to hospital and that community ophthalmology solutions lay in multi-disciplinary, collaborative teams.

Eye health leaders called for more services to be commissioned at scale to make them more efficient and cost effective. Clinicians also demanded better IT connections to speed up and share patient data both within primary care and between primary and hospital care.

Over 100 delegates heard from a number of best practice case studies of working models from across England. CCGs showcased innovation to patient pathways – many achieving this with LOCs using the LOC Company model along with the OptoManager platform.

LOCs can read the full news release published on the [NHS website.](#)

LOCs and optics attract a national audience

LOCs and LOCSU put the role of optical practices and eye health in the spotlight

HEALTH chiefs, decision makers, politicians, CCGs and the Great British public were among the audience hearing key messages from the optical sector this month. While the NHS eye health summit drew attention to our strategic objective to make optical practices the first port of call for eye health, an LOC press release sparked a chain of interest which saw eye health as the lead item on regional news; both resulting in an audience of hundreds of thousands.



HSJ article targets key health decision makers

LOCSU was able to spread some key messaging out to health decision makers with a feature in *Health Service Journal* which has a weekly print circulation of around 10,000. The HSJ is widely read by Commissioners and health policy experts: a key audience for LOCSU and the eye health sector.

The feature consisted of a double-page spread containing a main 700-word article written by an HSJ journalist, with editorial independence, and a 400-word column written by LOCSU.

Chris McGachy, Head of LOCSU's Communications, explained the approach: "The main article is written externally gives the project independence and credibility and also allows us to put the key message out to our target audience, that optical practices should be the first port of call for eye health. We were able to suggest the interviewees, who included Carrie MacEwen, President of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, Helen Hibbs, Chief Officer at Wolverhampton CCG who recently rolled out a £600,000 basket of services, and Dharmesh Patel in his role as Chair of the Local Eye Health Network in Greater Manchester.

"LOCSU is delighted with the outcome and profile for the community eye health sector," McGachy said. Download a PDF copy of the [HSJ article here](#).

Devon media engagement leads to LOCSU interview

A NEWS release from Devon LOC this month shows how regular engagement with the media can lead to a story on eye health being picked up more widely.

Jonathan Drew and Charles Bill from Devon LOC appreciate the importance of keeping in contact with the media,

The media approach by Devon LOC showed how a local take on eye health can lead to the story being picked up by regional TV.

Simon Bates, who now earns his living behind the mic at BBC Radio Devon, interviewed Charles Bill about the pressures in the hospital eye services.

The story was picked up by the regional TV news in the South West, BBC Spotlight. The news team established that two people had lost their vision due to backlogs causing a delay in follow-up



appointments.

The Spotlight team interviewed Devon LOC for TV and a request for a national perspective found its way to LOCSU. Head of Communications, Chris McGachy (pictured) explained that with 11,000 optometrists and 6,000 optical practices in convenient, high-street locations, the sector was well placed to help. Watch both interviews on the media page of the [LOCSU website](#).

LOCSU In Touch with a national audience

LOCSU was on the airwaves again when a joint press release issued by the NHS and the eye health sector, promoted the eye health summit on capacity and demand on June 7.

Radio 4's *In Touch* programme asked for a spokesman from the eye health sector and LOCSU was again happy to pitch up for the interview and outline how optometrists could help ease pressures. *In Touch* is one of the BBC's flagship programmes covering a range of disability issues and hosted by blind-from-birth presenter Peter White. Listen to the interview – 10 minutes in – on the [LOCSU website](#).



RECENT MP practice visits – organised by the Optical Confederation's Public Affairs team along with LOCs – help spread the message about the cost-effectiveness of community services.



CCGs lack awareness

MP for Tiverton and Honiton, Neil Parish, visited Bill Opticians in his constituency on Friday 6 May to meet with the Devon LOC to find out more about the greater role community optometry can play in delivering eye care.

“As with all health conditions, early diagnosis is the key to good eye health,” the MP said. “I pay tribute to the work of practices in raising awareness of problems like macular degeneration, cataracts and glaucoma and providing testing, treatment and preventative measures for these problems.

Devon LOC’s Charles Bill, said: “I was really pleased Neil Parish took the time to visit a practice here in Honiton to see for himself the valuable services optometrists and opticians can deliver above and beyond the sight test. There is an optician in most towns and these valuable, highly-qualified people are an underutilised resource in eye health.”

He told the MP that community optometry could also play a greater role in delivering eye care, monitoring conditions like glaucoma and treating urgent-but-minor eye problems.

Commissioners, Charles said, need to be more aware of the services that can be delivered in optical practices that would help ease over-stretched hospital eye departments, and provide care closer to home for patients.

Image: L-R: Jonathan Drew, Business Manager Devon LOC, Neil Parish MP and Charles Bill, Devon LOC.

MP learns of postcode lottery



MP for South Leicestershire, Alberto Costa, heard about the postcode lottery in eye health during a practice visit last month.

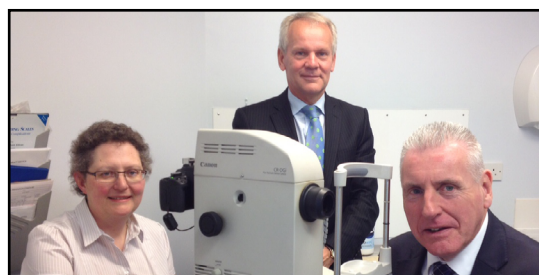
Members of Leicestershire & Rutland LOC explained the role that community optometry can play in delivering eye care. LOC Chair, Vinesh Patel, explained to the MP that MECS can take pressure off of GPs and A&E. But, Vinesh revealed, it had only been commissioned by West Leicestershire CCG but not in other areas, so people in the east of the county miss out on the NHS-funded service.

Speaking during the MP’s visit to Specsavers Opticians in Lutterworth, Vinesh said: “We look forward to working with Alberto to make sure his constituents are able to benefit from as many of these services as possible.”

Image, L-R, Alberto Costa MP, Abhijit Roy (Specsavers Lutterworth), Sophie Pavlovic (Optical Confederation) and Vinesh Patel (Leicestershire & Rutland LOC).

Step-down care impresses Nottinghamshire MP

MP for Gedling, Vernon Coaker, visited an optical practice in Arnold last month and heard about step-down care being provided in optical practices to reduce pressure on the hospital eye service. David Cartwright, Chair of the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Local Eye Health Network, and member of the Nottinghamshire LOC said: “We really appreciated Vernon taking the time to meet with us at Thomas



Bond Opticians, to discuss the community eye care services already available in optical practices across Nottinghamshire.

L-R: Liz Whitmore, David Cartwright and Vernon Coaker MP.

Venerus' View

BETWEEN the Referendum and the football, you are forgiven if your mind has been firmly focused on matters European over the past few weeks but we have of course been carrying on with business as usual among all of that.

I was delighted that LOCSU was involved in the first NHS England Eye Health summit on demand and capacity earlier this month, along with colleagues from the Royal College of Ophthalmologists and the College of Optometrists (Page 1). Hearing from a CCG leader at the start of the day that changes to ophthalmology services need to be at the top of the agenda of all CCGs, certainly got the attention of the commissioners in the audience.

It was great to see that a number of the case studies at the event highlighted the valuable role community optometrists can play in easing pressures on the Hospital Eye Service. The fact it was Commissioners, Acute Trust Managers and Ophthalmologists that were showcasing services being delivered by LOC Companies, rather than the profession promoting what we can do, demonstrated to me how far we have come in recent years.

I sometimes feel like a broken record when I bang on about establishing a culture of collaboration and the importance of building relationships, but I think every single case study presented picked this out as absolutely pivotal to the progress they had made.

Working at a national level with key stakeholders through the Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning is a vital part of LOCSU's work and having the capacity to support all LOCs on local collaboration is just as important. Our new Commissioning Team have completed the induction period and are now being introduced to LOCs to discuss how

they can support them in the months ahead.

Learning how other sectors have improved efficiency and transformed patient care is always valuable, and a fascinating example is Professor Tim Briggs who presented the results of the *Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT)* project he has led in orthopaedics at an event I attended this week. His peer-to-peer, clinically-led programme, which has seen him and his colleagues visit 98% of Acute Trusts in England, found huge variation in clinical practice, outcomes and costs and has identified a number of opportunities to improve in quality and drive down costs.



Such has been the success of the orthopaedics pilot, the Department of Health has agreed to fund a three-year programme that will look at a number of other specialties, including ophthalmology. This initiative ties in with the 2015 Monitor report *Improving Productivity Across Elective Care Pathways*, which cited "follow up by optometrist post discharge" as part of the *Good Productive Practice Model* for cataract surgery. A national spotlight on ophthalmology is fantastic news for our professions and patients as it will provide a real opportunity for us to raise awareness of the role optometrists and opticians can play in supporting the NHS to meet the eye health needs of the population.

Finally, it is around this time of the year that we get into the nitty gritty of planning for the NOC. **Bookings are open** and the programme is taking shape; I hope that confirmation that health minister Alistair Burt will be our headline speaker at NOC 2016 on Page 1 is enough to whet the appetite for now.

Your comments and suggestions are always welcome: katrinavenerus@locsu.co.uk or [@katrinavenerus on Twitter](https://twitter.com/katrinavenerus).

SeeAbility publishes kids report

SEEABILITY has published its second [Children in Focus report](#), entitled 28 Times More Likely. So named because their sight testing research estimates children with learning disabilities are 28 times more likely to have a serious sight problem than other children.

The report reveals that:

- Over half of children tested had a vision problem
- 43% of the new pupils seen this year had no history of eye care
- 85% of those discharged from hospital eye clinics had

no follow-up community eye care

- 75% of the children with no history of eye care were noted as having autism

- 36% of the children seen needed glasses

SeeAbility is calling for a national programme of sight testing in special schools and the new data supports a campaign towards this goal.

■ **LOCSU will be supporting a parliamentary launch of the new data at an event in the House of Lords on 5 July where Katrina Venerus is one of the speakers.**

MECS in the cities

A REMINDER for optometrists looking to undertake MECS accreditation that the Part II practical assessments will be taking place in the summers months with events in both Manchester

and London. Bookings are now open for assessments on [Thursday 18 August at the General Medical Council in Manchester](#) and on [Wednesday 24 August at the Royal College of General Practitioners in London.](#)

Glaucoma Commissioning

The Royal College of Ophthalmologists has launched new NICE-accredited [glaucoma commissioning guidance](#), developed with key stakeholders, including LOCSU and the OC.

Welcoming the guidance, Katrina Venerus, LOCSU MD, commented: "Making Higher Qualifications easily accessible is key to attracting increased numbers of optometrists to develop the competencies required to deliver community monitoring services at scale. I am pleased that LOCSU and the College of Optometrists are exploring the possibility of a bridging module to allow optometrists who have completed the LOCSU/WOPEC Glaucoma accreditation to obtain the College Professional Certificate, the first level of the College HQ framework and the start of the journey to specialist skills. An update on our discussions will follow in due course."

Dates for your Diary

- New LOC drop-in webinars last Wednesday of the month, 6pm–7pm
Next webinar taking place **this Wednesday 29 June** and then on 27 July 2016. Book your attendance via the [LOCSU website events calendar](#).

- [National Optical Conference](#) 2016, 10–11 November 2016, Hilton Birmingham Metropole NEC.

- The College of Optometrists is hosting 25 [regional events](#) throughout the year.

- [Optometry Tomorrow Bitesize](#). Sunday 18 September, Holiday Inn Wembley. One-day conference and exhibition, offering the

best sessions from their annual conference,

- The Association of Optometrists (AOP) has launched its extensive programme of CET and CPD events throughout the country, offering over 200 CET points during the course of the year. [Download the guide](#).

- Fight for Sight is making its research presentation roadshow available for LOCs. The presentations are aimed at both optometrists and dispensing opticians, and are CET certified in addition. Find out more by emailing [Julian Jackson](#) or by telephone 07773 800073.

If you have an item of interest for *LOCSU News*, contact Editor [Chris McGachy](#), Head of Communications. You are receiving this email from the Local Optical Committee Support Unit. If you would like to unsubscribe, please contact info@locsu.co.uk.