Avon Local Optical Committee

Avon LOC AGM

7pm Wednesday 18th May 2022

**Remote meeting: Zoom**

1. **Apologies**

Mark Humphrey-Ali

1. **Minutes of last AGM**

Approved

1. **Matters Arising**

**Charles Barlow (Regional Director, Central Optical Fund)**

Charles gave a short presentation covering the role the Central Optical Fund can perform for LOC’s.

The Central Optical Fund was established 50 years ago by the LOC’s to help finance work on behalf of the profession and LOC’s in particular. Over the years, it has financed projects from political, GOS related, research-based, legal, educational, strategic and database. These projects were delivered by major optical organisations, universities, charities, individuals, LOCSU and LOC’s.

The Central Optical Fund is structured by a company limited by guarantee (like LOCSU) and LOC’s are their members and LOC’s select the 5 directors of the fund. The simple objectives are to protect and promote optometry and the interests of the LOC’s.

Money is collected via voluntary levis from contractor colleagues across the country, receipt of donations from individual LOC’s, and individual donations and legacies. Practice-owner/directors wishing to donate can do so via eGos. This process is described on their website.

Avon LOC is not currently a member of the Central Optical Fund but this can easily be arranged and advice is to do so. The liability only being £1. Being a member, LOC’s have the ability to apply for grants to support projects that meet the criteria set by the organisation. They are currently undertaking support for LOCSU, eyecare trust and working closely with the organisation of National Eye Health Week and promoting strong public health messages over the next few years.

Charles is inviting funding applications from all LOC’s. The profession is seeing a big change post-Covid. Lots of potential for LOC’s with projects currently. If LOC’s have a project that is going to benefit the profession or a pathway, then please get in touch.

However, the organisation cannot fund a service i.e. pay fees to exam children under the age of 2.

**Action:** To discuss at the next LOC meeting. Charles to be invited to attend.

1. **Chair's report (Amar Shah)**

It really doesn’t seem like a year has passed, as this year’s cycle of AGMs comes around. 2021-22 much like the previous has still been bathed in the amber phase of the College of Optoms guidance for sight testing and clinical practice.

We are still limited in access to primary care across all 3 sectors of Optometry, General Practice and Dental. While, our Pharmacy colleagues are expanding their remit to help support GPs further.

In our sphere, we have continued in Bath to provide the CUES (Covid/Community Urgent Eyecare – similar to MECs) service, which has now been renewed until 2023, giving a lifeline to patients unable to fund a private emergency appointment and taking the weight off stretched eye casualty units. Sadly, uptake for the service has not been quite at the levels we would like in terms of practice sign-up, but as most know – demand is still high for our traditional services.

Further services in the Bath have on-going discussions, but nothing concrete is tabled yet. It has been an uphill journey to explain to commissioners and their advisors how GOS is funded and what is not in scope for a referral without an extended service being commissioned. Nevertheless, these conversations are on-going.

Positively, our continuing dialogue with Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Clinical commissioning group (BNSSG CCG) – soon to be an integrated care system (ICS) – and Bristol Eye Hospital (BEH) has yielded some good progress. By the summer, we hope to be piloting a funded and unique data gathering service – where community opticians sites will be funded to help BEH with its backlog of patients in stable and suspect glaucoma. More info on this to follow in the coming weeks/months – please look out for a webinar invite to discuss further and express your interest. With successful pilot of this and a roll out, the scope of this project is expansive and may include, medical retina, further glaucoma and other shared care projects / referral platforms down the line.

Secondly, with the current post-op cataract scheme for Bristol GP registered patients – never quite getting off the ground, the CCG and BEH have agreed to expand this service to the whole of BNSSG. Again we will launch this formally by the summer, so please look out for further communication around this. We appreciate your patience in the post-op cataract scheme as we are aware many practices want to register to this.

There have been a lot of discussions with the wider NHS and including the LOC as part of their Primary care offering – this has included the very successful vaccine roll out but more recently, we have been offered mental health and coaching support.

The primary care links have also led to us being part of the research and learning project around long-COVID, with a webinar on this due post Easter. I encourage all to take part in these offers and share them with your staff and teams.

Outside of the two areas, the post-op scheme with Newmedica and Spa Medica are ongoing. The Newmedica offering is still administered via Opera and Primary Eyecare Services, with fees going direct to the practices. Spa Medica state they are also “on Opera” but referrals are yet to come out via that platform.

Discussions are being had for a similar post op scheme with Emersons Green treatment centre and more details will follow when we have contracts in place. I hope that everyone and their families are doing well and I look forward to seeing some of you at our up-coming face to face events. The first one being a CPD hands on foreign body removal event with model eyes – watch this space for more information

1. **Treasurer's report (Andrew Pinn)**

I continued the treasurer’s role from January 2021 to today. My remit was to manage the incomes and expenses of the Avon LOC. The figures in the accounts cover activity for the period 1st January 2021 to 31st December 2021.

Avon LOC income for the period was £32,385; this was all from the statutory levy. The levy is deducted by NHS England as a percentage from the NHS GOS sight test fee prior to payment to GOS contractors. The Avon LOC proportion of the statutory levy remained at 0.6%. The proportion of statutory levy paid to continue our membership of LOCSU (LOC Support Unit) remained at 0.5%. Expenditure by Avon LOC was £11,142 which is less than previous years. Compared to last year; there was no National Optometric Conference in 2021.

Expenditure on our website was less. Expenditure on CET was less because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year LOC work was carried out by individual committee members and our administration secretary Carolyn Hudd. Support from LOCSU (LOC Support Unit) was provided as part of our continued LOCSU membership.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic the committee agreed to continue to keep their hourly rate at the reduced rate of £45 agreed in 2020. This combined with meetings being online rather than face to face resulted in significantly lower expenditure than previous years. As a committee we continued to build and maintain strong relationships with all eyecare organisations working in our area. Committee member attendance at LOC committee meetings is funded which is in line with the practices of other LOCs in England. In my view the time costs invoiced by the committee members in the last year has been significantly less than they could have legitimately claimed.

The reduction in LOC expenditure has produced an increased surplus of LOC funds. I recommended to the committee that the Avon LOC proportion of the statutory levy (0.6%) should be suspended until such a time that it needs to be reintroduced. This action has been agreed and NHSE have been instructed to implement it. The voluntary levy has traditionally been collected by NHSE, paid to the LOC who then pass it on in full to The Central Optical Fund https://www.centralfund.org.uk/ This arrangement finished in 2021 and is replaced by direct payment of voluntary levy by NHSE to The Central Optical Fund. I would like to thank Ruth Davies for auditing the accounts and recommend the AGM appoints her to audit next year’s accounts. I am happy to answer any questions you have either now or at any time throughout the year. I can be contacted by email at treasurer@avonloc.co.uk

1. **LOCSU Membership**

Continued LOCSU membership proposed and seconded – motioned carried.

**Action**: Avon LOC will discuss the benefits of remaining with LOCSU at the next committee meeting and may at any point return with an extraordinary general meeting to vote on leaving or remaining with LOCSU.

1. **Elections to Committee**

Andrew Edwards, Lynne Fernandes and Mark Humphrey-Ali are all elected unopposed. Two casual vacancies remain open. Interested applicants are encouraged to email the secretary to ask any questions or attend any meetings as an observer. secretary@avonloc.co.uk

1. **Any other business**

Nick Foster – The Emerson’s Green Pos-Cat Service – Recently, a relatively young patient had been charged for and paid extra for an otroric lens. She only had a0.75 cil which seems someone may have taken advantage of her.

**Action**: This will be discussed at the next LOC meeting.

* + - * + Adult squint surgery is not currently being funded. Andrew Pinn recommends that all referrals refer to ‘restorative surgery’ rather than ‘cosmetic surgery’ to aid with the process of agreement.