

## Avon LOC Chairs report – 2025

Local Optical Committees are the statutory bodies representing optical providers and contractors to the NHS. Avon LOC specifically represents you in BNNSG ICB and those in Bath to the BSW ICB.

I'm thrilled to have chaired the committee over the past year and want to express my sincere gratitude to all the committee members. This dedicated group of elected members has been instrumental in supporting and fostering strong relationships across the system, including the ICB, trust, and ISPs.

Over the past year, we've continued collaborating with the ICBs, who are also undergoing organisational changes due to budgetary constraints. As with other primary care services, optometry is now a delegated function of the ICB. We remain your representatives in various forums, such as the primary care committee and primary care operating group, where all critical decisions for GPs, dentists, pharmacies, and optometrists are made.

The committee has had several focuses, including bringing more commissioned services into the community. The initial step was the setup and ongoing development of the macular referral pathway pilot. We've already observed a significant impact on patients, both in terms of faster outcomes and quicker treatment. The LOC has supported the integration of this pathway through joint events and communication to ensure its long-term commissioning. We'll continue to support this pathway to increase its chances of being commissioned after a thorough review.

As a reminder, the macular pathway facilitates referrals from the community, including complete DICOM OCT data, by directly using the Opera platform, which connects to the hospitals' chosen systems. The goal is to expand this pathway and reduce the need for face-to-face appointments at the hospital itself.

The LOC remains dedicated to working across the entire eye care system and has recently joined the eye care board. This new board brings together the ICB, LOC, and trust as equal partners, enabling us to proactively discuss the local eye care system and ensure that we can continue to align our thinking on pathways and the opportunities available to enhance local services.

As we evolve the committee, we recently completed a strategic priorities review, focusing our resources more effectively. The review highlighted the need for increased emphasis on communication and engagement. We would like to share more information and discuss the activities that the committee undertakes on your behalf. This will also enable us to gather more feedback to shape our activities with the ICB and build trust. To achieve this, we created a new lead committee role. We're already seeing the positive impact, and we'll continue to listen to your feedback as our activities and communications evolve, planning accordingly.

Bath and North East Somerset locality is the only part of our area that currently has a CUES service commissioned. The service has been running for a number of years successfully and is currently operating out of contract. A procurement was paused last year which the LOC had raised a number of concerns. I am therefore pleased that together with Wiltshire LOC we have held positive engagement meetings with the new BSW ICB team. We want to ensure that we proactively work with the ICB, so that we are included in any future service redesign.

Finally, as a committee, we've begun reflecting on this year's priorities, which include further work on engagement and continuing pathway work. We value your feedback, so please share your thoughts and questions. If you'd like to get more involved or attend any future committee meetings, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

John Hopcroft – Chair Avon LOC