Dudley LOC

Business Plan

2026/27

Introduction

After an absence of several years Dudley LOC was reformed on the 13th November 1996 following the creation of the Dudley Health Authority from the merger of the Dudley Family Health Services Authority with the District Health Authority. The intervening years have seen the LOC active with PCTs, CCGs, and now NHS England and the Black Country ICB.

Structure

The LOC has an elected committee, roughly half of which are contractors and half are performers. 1/3rd of the committee is elected at each AGM.

The current committee consists of:

Chair: Shamina Asif (Performer)
Secretary: Paul Sidhu (Performer)
Treasurer: Mark Tuffin (Contractor)
Vice Chair: Shazad Mahmood (Performer)

CPD Officer: Roseline Birhah (Performer)

Committee Members:

Charles Barlow (Performer)
Gurdeep Dosanjh (Contractor)
Hussain Ejaz (Contractor)
Nicky Ferguson (Contractor and Hospital Optometrist)
Shazad Mahmood (Performer)
Jasheen “Sheena” Mangat (Performer)
Sonja Tyrell (Co-opted Dispensing Optician)
Dan Wright (Contractor)

Principles

- Achieve excellent eye care locally.
- Ensure a transparent and open organisational culture.
- Utilise officer and member skills to the maximum effect.
- Maintain excellent relationships with key local bodies, decision makers and stakeholders.
- Work with the Local Optical Committee Support Unit (LOCSU).

General Aims of LOC

The functions of LOCs, as prescribed by law, are simply stated as being to represent local contractors and local performers. On the basis of past experience such functions, if not currently undertaken, may include the following activities:

1. Informing, advising and negotiating with NHS England or Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) on matters affecting, or liable to affect, local contractors and local performers, including, but not limited to:
    1.1. the efficient administration and payment of remuneration in relation to Primary Ophthalmic Services;
    1.2. the introduction and implementation of community eye care services, as well as the terms and conditions upon which any local community eye care services are provided and performed;
    1.3. Hospital Eye Services, in so far as they affect Primary Ophthalmic Services;
    1.4. Complaints against local contractors and local performers in respect of Primary Ophthalmic Services, local community eye care services in the area for which the committee is formed.
2. Responding to consultations initiated by NHS England, ICBs, the Local Eye Health Network, Public Health or any other local body.
3. Facilitating and encouraging local contractors and local performers to formulate collective views on the performance and administration of Primary Ophthalmic Services and local community services or community eye care services. In particular, to make suggestions for their improvement within the scope of the regulations and to transmit them to relevant bodies.
4. Disseminating information about Primary Ophthalmic Services and local community eye care services among local contractors and local performers to help them to understand and comply with their contractual and other obligations.
5. Conveying the views of local contractors and local performers on Primary Ophthalmic Services and local community eye care services to the national representative bodies.
6. Contributing to the development of national policies on all levels of Primary Ophthalmic Services and related services by, inter alia, liaising with LOCSU and the national representative bodies, attending or making representations to the National Optical Conference, its successors or equivalent events.
7. Liaising with other LOCs and LOCSU to support the LOC in developing and achieving their objectives in respect of primary ophthalmic services and local community services.
8. Obtaining support, advice and training services from LOCSU and/or the national representative bodies to assist in the discharge of any of its functions and activities.
9. Carrying out such administrative activities as are necessary to perform the functions set out above.
10. Delegating any of its functions or activities, with or without restrictions or conditions, to such sub-committees as it may establish.
11. Where possible, providing opportunity for continuing education and training in order to maintain and improve the quality of eye care provision in Dudley.
12. When requested by a contractor, and subject to approval by LOC officers, an LOC member may attend practice visits initiated by NHS England to act as an independent observer. This may include contract compliance and post payment verification visits or other audit or investigation. The LOC member may provide advice regarding regulations to a contractor on these visits within the limits of the LOCs remit and according to current professional guidelines. They may not enter into negotiations on behalf of the contractor. The LOC officers may deputise a non-committee member to perform this function on the LOCs behalf.

Key Organisations

Key organisations the LOC works with:

- NHS England
- Primary Care Services England
- The Black Country ICB (Soon to complete its merger with Birmingham and Solihull ICB)
- The Local Eye Health Network (currently not functioning)*
- Dudley Health and Wellbeing Boards
- Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Trust
- Black Country Primary Care Collaborative (BCPCC)
- Public Health Dudley
- The Black Country & West Birmingham ICS
- Brierley Hill PCN
- Dudley And Netherton PCN
- Halesowen PCN
- Kingswinford & Wordsley PCN
- Sedgley, Coseley & Gornal PCN
- Stourbridge, Wollescote & Lye PCN

*A Local Eye Health Network served the area previously but, despite it being a requirement, NHS England have not re-established one for the region despite ongoing multiyear efforts collectively by all local LOCs.

Budget

The LOC receives its funding primarily from a levy on all GOS sight tests fees. LOCSU have decreased their fees so instead of the previous 0.5% of GOS sight test fees that fund our contribution to them, it is now 0.4%. The current levy stands at 1.75%, leading to a budget as below.

BUDGET 2026/2027

Expected Income:	
Statutory Levy 2025/26	£44,103.22
Other income Estimate (e.g. CPD sponsorships)	£3,0000
Total Income	£47,103.22
Expected Expenditure based on 2025/26 Accounts	
LOCSU (0.4%)	£10,500.00
Meeting Attendance (committee including NOC)	£20,000.00
Meeting Attendance (external)	£1,000.00
Administrative Expenses	£,750.00
Room Hire	£250.00
Website / IT	£500.00
Central Fund	£500.00
Other	£1500.00
Accountancy	£650.00
HMRC	£6,500.00
Total Expenditure	£50,650.00

Surplus/Defecit -£3546.78

Subject to formal adoption at the AGM, Dudley LOC's reserve policy will be:

"The reserves will consist of a minimum of six to a maximum of 12 months running costs aligned with the needs of the LOC. If additional reserves are necessary to fund a planned future project or capital investment, the LOC must agree the purpose and amount of additional reserve(s)."

As the current reserves satisfy that policy, no change in the statutory levy is necessary at this time. Dudley LOC is committed to trying to keep the levy at the lowest figure possible whilst still running an active and effective LOC.

The rate of fees the LOC pays its members for work done on behalf of the LOC is reviewed at the first committee meeting following the AGM.

Key local statistics

The population of Dudley on Census Day, 21 March 2021, was 323,488. 18.9% were aged under 16, 60.7% were aged 16 to 64 and 20.4% aged 65 and over.

As of now there are 41 known mandatory services contractors in the area.

NHS England now "assigns" the levy payments of domiciliary service providers to LOCs based on the location of the registered office of the provider. As such, data on the number of domiciliary providers active in Dudley LOC's is no longer available.

Fully Functioning LOC

The LOC has identified the factors that characterised a fully functioning and effective LOC.

- An inclusive constitution – representative of independent and corporate sectors, contractors and performers and dispensing opticians.
- Administrative back-up and support for projects.
- A Business plan – the basis to deliver local objectives
- Officers – skilled in negotiating, influencing, lobbying, communications
- Adequate budget & statutory levy financing based on business plan
- Good local communications and contacts.

EeRS

EeRS is a new electronic referral system that has been commissioned to cover patients with a GP practice in the Black Country ICB and in the Birmingham and Solihull ICB areas.

It allows a method of reliably referring directly to secondary care including evidence that a referral has been sent. Previously routine referrals had to be sent to the patient's GP for onward referral by the GP to the hospital eye department.
Referring via the system has several benefits including:

- Reducing GP burden
- Speeding up receipt of the referral by the hospital.
- Being able to track the progress of the referral.
- Potentially having access to feedback about the outcome of the referral.
- Improving patient care

The LOC has been actively engaged in the implementation of the scheme, with funding to cover the cost of work done provided by NHS England. At time of writing the majority of practices are actively using the system, and the vast majority of Dudley practices are signed up.

Regional Optical Committee

Dudley LOC along with neighbouring LOCs formed the Heart of West Midlands Regional Optical Committee (HMROC) in January 2011. This is a collaborative committee consisting of officers from Birmingham LOC, Sandwell LOC, Dudley LOC, Walsall LOC, Wolverhampton LOC and Solihull LOC. This body has facilitated an area wide consistent approach to supporting practitioners and communicating with NHS bodies. Additionally, it has been critical in allowing LOCs to share experience and knowledge as well as generally assist each other particularly with respect to the commissioning of enhanced/community services. Unlike LOCs, it is not a statutory body, and its decisions must be ratified by each LOC to ensure a democratic approach. It also receives its funding from LOCs.

As a result of the Long Term Plan 2019, DHSC White Paper 2021, and the national eye care transformation project, health and social care in England is changing significantly. The new NHS bodies have a much larger footprint, in the case of Dudley this encompasses the whole of the Black Country. In order to most effectively advance the interests of our constituents, the LOCs have proposed a formal Confederation of LOCs to speak as a single voice and a single point of contact. The Confederation will represent the interests of all LOCs in the BSolBC geography. The Confederation is not itself an LOC; it is a working group of all BSolBC LOCs. This has been agreed by all the LOCs at each of their respective AGMs and awaits necessary administrative tasks to be completed before it comes into effect.

The Regional Committee has a website at https://www.loc-online.co.uk/heartofwestmidlandsoc/ which includes valuable resources for the whole area, and which Dudley LOC maintain.

Black Country LOC Alliance

This organisation is made up of the Chairs of Dudley LOC, Walsall LOC, Wolverhampton LOC and Sandwell LOC. This has been formed to the Black Country LOCs to better coordinate together with a view to better representing optometry to the Black Country ICB.

Primary Eyecare Services

Primary Eyecare Services is a not-for-profit company established by LOCs to simplify commissioning of services with the healthcare commissioners across the country. It allows an ICB or other bodies to have a single contract with the company, and the company then sub-contracts with individual optometry practices.

Primary Eyecare Services handles the day to day administration and clinical governance of the scheme.

The Opera platform collates data for all activities and produces a single monthly invoice for the ICB for all the episodes of activity in the scheme. The ICB pays this, and this is this is then distributed to the practices that carried out the episode(s), minus a small not for profit fee to cover costs e.g. administration and training.

The company has signed a memorandum of understanding with each LOC setting out its duties and how it is answerable to the LOCs.

Enhanced/Community Services.

The following services have been commissioned in the Dudley area:

- The Community Urgent Eyecare Service offers rapid assessment of people with recent onset eye problems.
- Glaucoma Enhanced Referral Refinement scheme (GERS) to allow for additional testing by a Optometrists with further qualifications in order to deflect away from secondary care cases that do not require hospital review.
- IOP Repeat Readings which enables improved assessment of eye pressure in an eye examination.
- Cataract Direct Referral, where patients are assessed and referred to their choice of provider for cataract surgery.
- In 2024 Russells Hall Hospital commissioned a Cataract Post-Operative Management scheme

Services are run via the Primary Eyecare Services and administered on the Opera system.

LOC's aims and objectives.

The LOC feels there are gaps in the provision of Community Based Eye Care Services including:

- Naevus monitoring
- Hydroxychloroquine monitoring
- Glaucoma Monitoring / Virtual Clinics
- Wet Age Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) referral filtering
- Low Vision Provision
- Special Needs eye examination provision
- Childrens – Suspect Disc Pathway and a more appropriate children's vision pathway, to dovetail with any school vision screening scheme operating in the area.

We wish to engage with the PCNs, ICB, NHS England, the new Black Country Integrated Care Board and Public Health Dudley and aim to achieve:

Short term:

- Continue to support the Dudley Healthy Living Optical Practice Scheme
- To continue supporting the commissioned enhanced services.
- To continue to encourage greater attendance of LOC committee meetings
- To continue, along with other local LOCs, to persuade NHS England to re-establish a Local Eye Health Network
- Engage with any pilots/public health services by NHS England as well as ICB as part of a Black Country wide initiatives
- To engage with Ophthalmologists to enable the establishment of an Ophthalmic Managed Clinical Network (MCN) for the area
- Engaging in any new innovative projects with public health e.g AI ,
- Upskilling LOC members and encouraging them to attend external meetings, even making presentations.

Medium term:

- To increase uptake of the Dudley Healthy Living Optical Practice scheme by attracting more sites
- To continue to try to engage effectively with Dudley PCNs, The Black Country ICS and Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Trust in order to get further patient centred community services commissioned.
- To attract new active LOC committee members

Long term:

- To have a large number of Community Based Eye Care Services running locally, ideally with a region wide protocol to enhance patient access.

Ongoing:

- To upskill LOC members
- To ensure effective mechanisms in the area of succession planning

Healthy Living Optical Practice Scheme

In association with Public Health Dudley, a Healthy Living Optical Practice scheme is running in the area. This is the first such scheme nationally and has drawn a lot of attention within the profession and public health. The scheme is analogous to the Healthy Living Pharmacy scheme. Optical practices in the scheme offer services including cardiovascular assessment (NHS health checks), weight management and alcohol screening. We have had over 10 practices active in this scheme. The majority of the contact time spent is by auxiliary staff trained to a nationally recognised standard. This opportunity will promote optometry as a profession allied to healthcare, and Dudley LOC believes that this is a way forward for the future of optometry.

LOCSU pathways

The Local Optical Committee Support Unit (LOCSU) has commissioned documents detailing the workings and commissioning of a number of Community Based Eye Care Services. These have been widely praised across the professions and by NICE, and have been adopted for successful enhanced services across the country. LOCSU also provide support and assistance to LOCs in the processes and procedures involved with commissioning these services.

Dudley LOC is committed to (wherever possible) promoting the adoption of LOCSU pathways in order to achieve better uniformity across areas. This benefits optometrists moving between areas, as well as patients. The service specifications for the services currently being tendered are broadly in line with the LOCSU pathways. The current pathways locally were commissioned in line with this.

The LOC is committed to working with local ICBs to solve cross border issues, where a patient can conceivably live in one area, have a GP in another and attend an optometry practice in a third (e.g. near their place of work). Ideally the LOC would like a simple mechanism by which these patients can access services commissioned by the various ICBs at a location of their choosing, in a way that is straightforward for both patients and practitioners. This is key to ensuring the best patient outcomes

Educational events

In order to achieve the LOC's aim of improving quality of optometry services locally, it is committed to providing continuing education and training events locally free at the point of delivery. As well as on its own, it does this in conjunction with Sandwell LOC, and has organised a series of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) afternoon/evening events with large numbers of practitioners attending, in some cases over 100. These have been very successful and have consistently been oversubscribed. Feedback from practitioners for these events has been overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic.

Workforce Development Project

Dudley LOC (as part of the Regional Confederation) coordinates a regional Workforce Development Project founded in 2021 following successful bids for support funding from the NHS.

Its aims are:

• To enhance and develop an integrated local optometric workforce.

• To increase the skill mix of the primary care workforce and ensure the skill development meets the needs of both primary and secondary care to the benefit of patients and the eyecare system overall.

• Develop clinical leadership skills and create clinical champions to support peer to peer learning and mentoring.

To meet its aims, it is:

• Optimising core competencies through locally convened workshops, co-learning events and secondary care placements with locally acknowledged accreditations.

• Developing extended competencies and increase the skill mix of the primary care workforce by providing training and grants towards approved higher qualifications.

Progress to-date:

Learning events have included: Peer discussion sessions, Face to Face Grand Rounds vitreo-retinal training, Paediatric dispensing days, Clinical Paediatric Workshops and Foreign Body Workshops.

As of mid 2026 , 238 grant applications to assist practitioners financially in undertaking advanced qualification have been received of which 105 Grants have been paid out so far. The project has also assisted in finding hospital placements for Independent Prescribing qualifications, a known bottleneck/barrier to successful completion of the qualification.

Communication

The LOC communicates with constituents and key organisations primarily via email. In the modern world, this provides the best way forward.

We also have Facebook (facebook.com/locdudley) and twitter (@DudleyLOC) accounts. As well as general announcements, these are used to pass on information from third parties e.g. requests from charities to relay information, requests from contractors for locums, requests from for-profit CPD providers to disseminate information, requests for pre-reg positions etc.

The LOC maintains a website at https://www.loc-online.co.uk/dudley-loc/. This provides resources to practitioners as well as allowing the LOC to be as transparent about its business and finances as possible.

All LOC committee meetings are announced to contractors and performers, and all are welcome to attend. The LOC actively encourages participation and membership of the committee.

Conclusion

Dudley LOC is enthusiastic and eager to improve and enhance eye care provision in the area especially with respect to access, choice and quality. Optometrists have the skills, the outreach and the desire to achieve this.

We are keen to engage with all groups and stakeholders from patient groups right through to commissioners.

Dudley LOC's business plan outlines a blueprint to move Optometry forward in locally. We hope this plan will be accepted and supported by all eye care professionals interested in delivering improved patient care and satisfaction.

Contact Us

The LOC is always pleased to help and assist practitioners, commissioners and any other person who has an interest in eye care. Feel free to contact us at any time at Secretary@dudleyloc.co.uk

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