



Monday 19th September 2023

COMMITTEE MEETING USING ZOOM

DRAFT MINUTES

Present:

Jane Bunker (Chair) (JB)

Steve Roberts (Joint Vice Chair) (SR)

Eileen Gay (Treasurer & Minutes) (EG)

Peter Chapman (PC)

Amisha Pau (AP)

Sally Tucker (ST)

Karan Sai Malik (KSM)

Deepali Modha (DP)

Anita Jones (AJ)

Gavin Sirett (GS)

Kavita Kathuria (KK)

Fionnuala Kidd (LOCSU) (FK)

1. Apologies for Absence

Ash Patel (AP), Hansil Shah (SH), Seema Raunier (SR), Nisha Shah (NS), Katie Patel (KT), Wendy d'E Vallancey (observer) (WdV)

2. Approve Minutes from June 26th 2023

The minutes were accepted as a true reflection of the meeting and approved.

3. Matters Arising

CPD Event Tuesday 19th September

SR

The CPD event has now changed considerably due to difficulties arranging the original programme. OCL (Ophthalmic Consultants of London) offered to take over the event at short notice, and have organised the venue (Elstree), speakers, and food, (the LOC have agreed to pay for the latter). They also volunteered to find a sponsor to cover this cost as well, but it was felt by the Committee that as LOC funds are healthy, and this was all arranged at short notice, we would cover this. SR is keen to use OCL again as they were so helpful.

ST and JB thanked SR for all the work he has done for this event.

ST suggested that we should collect data on how far attendees travelled to this event, with a view to perhaps holding CPD in different areas of Hertfordshire (such as West, East, central). Possibly someone on the door could do this. FK suggested that we add a question to the usual feedback form given out at the event, also asking for suggestions of topics which could be covered at future events. On this occasion the feedback forms will be provided by OCL, and JB will ask for these questions to be included.

JB stated that no further progress had been made on setting up additional MECS training.

4. Conflict of Interest Declarations

Very few of these have not been completed by members of the Committee. SR will print some off and take them to the CPD Event to see if he can meet up with those concerned.

5. Treasurer's Report

This was circulated before the meeting. Funds are healthy.

We have an ongoing issue with HMRC and PAYE due, but our accountant is dealing with this and the Treasurer was confident this would be resolved shortly.

6. S&WH ICB/CHEC/WHHT/LOC meeting update Meeting 8th Sept. AJ

(a) WHHT out of hours service with Western Eye Hospital

This appears to be running well as we've had no complaints from Optoms. JB suggested that, when patients are seen by Watford A&E, they are given a letter to take with them to Western Eye Hospital to avoid problems on arrival as they may not be included on the patient list there.

(b) CHEC Glaucoma service

All new patients sent to CHEC are initially transferred for their first assessment to WHHT. This is running well. Stable patients are triaged and referred back to the CHEC Community eye service for ongoing care.

(c) Waiting times to Secondary Care

WHHT clinical lead Stacey Strong has tried to get the system to show accurate WHHT referral waiting times to Watford, but has been unable to do so.

(d) Cataract Referrals

CHEC CEO Imran Rahman and Josie Bailey have helped WHHT set up a separate cataract assessment service on Electronic Referral System (ERS) which has reduced the choose and book waiting time from 57 to 33 weeks. This is still not accurate but is better than it was.

CHEC do not offer toric IOLs. KK will find out if the Lister does do so and report back, as this is useful information for referring optometrists and patients.

As an elective hub for orthopaedics is being set up at St Albans, the Cataract service may be moved to Bushey Spire, using the same Watford team.

Patient choice of cataract provider is given or should be given by CHEC since the referrals go initially to them or occasionally via the GP. There is no direct referral into WHHT for this service.

(e) Contact number for chasing HES referrals to WHHT

Patients or optical staff wishing to do this can phone 01923 236887 Option 3 for up to date information on their referral.

(f) ICB future plans

Regarding possible conflict of interest with consultant-led services, the ICB have decided that an independent provider will be needed in order to allocate referrals fairly between HES, Community Eye Services, independent providers such as Optegra, Spamedica or CHEC, etc.

(g) Personnel changes

Stacey Strong is stepping down as Clinical Lead at WHHT and will be succeeded by Sarah Zaher. Imran Rahman, CEO of CHEC, is handing over to Mahmoud Rabie, consultant at Stevenage CHEC. Josie Bailey at CHEC is being replaced by Rachel Wilkinson.

Mr Rabie is hoping to meet with Fariha Shafi (Clinical Lead) at Lister Hospital to improve communication between E&N Herts and the various other parties.

(h) Collaboration in S&WH

This has worked well, and there are aims to further improve communications between hospitals, community providers and optometrists in the area.

PC asked if relations between the LOC and the ICB were any better than with the CCGs. JB said that generally things are better.

7. E&NH Update KK

-Electronic patient records (EPR) are now in place, and electronic emergency referrals appear to be working well. JB has received no feedback on this so assumes it is going well.

-Cataract waiting times are currently 6 months.

-Children are still being referred when a Rx has been found but not prescribed, such that children are attending without their glasses.

-JB and KK will compile a suggested list of appropriate tests required for a paediatric referral. There is a draft list already so they will review this again and send to the Committee first for

information/approval of practitioners in all clinical settings, and thence to all practitioners via Mailchimp.

Hertfordshire Sensory Strategy Board Meeting

KK has attended a meeting on healthcare services (GPs, dentists, pharmacists, optometrists etc) for patients with sensory problems to try to make these more accessible for these groups. The meeting concentrated mostly on hearing loss; strategies were announced such as trialling BSL interpreters accessible via iPad in the GP surgery.

Various organisations were represented at the meeting, including Sensory Services and Herts Vision Loss. The aim is also to link healthcare with council services for these groups.

KK suggested free Aps on iPad can be useful, such as those supplied by Kay Pictures, and that perhaps these could be included with the list of children's tests to assist practitioners who are not so experienced with seeing young children. JB suggested a CPD event with Kay Pictures, as the owner (Hazel Kay) is based in Tring. KK said that the LOC did run such a Childrens' CPD event a few years ago but JB will approach Hazel to see if she would be prepared to help with a new event.

KK also advised the Committee that BSL does not have tense, so written instructions need to be simplified if BSL is the patient's first language, as their knowledge of grammar may be limited. It was also noted by the meeting that interpreters are not always well-received due to the confidential nature of the examination.

JB said that interpreters can be ordered to attend the practice for a patient. The cost of this would be covered by the NHS if the patient is eligible for GOS. The case for non-GOS patients was unclear, and KK or JB will try to clarify the position in these cases.

8. BiB Event 17th October 2023

This is a CPD event on Myopia Management which will be held at Knebworth Barns.

A shared event with CPD was considered but proved to be too costly. The LOC have agreed to have a stand at the event, with a rota compiled to manage the time required for each Committee member who has volunteered to help.

It was noted that take-up for this event has been poor. BiB are charging £25 deposit for each attendee, but there is no cancellation refund arrangement under any circumstances. GS commented that as the event was advertised two months or more in advance, with no refund policy, this may be a contributory factor.

SR offered to contact the organisers and suggest they change their policy to give refunds if cancellation is made within a reasonable period of time (such as 72 hours) before the event.

JB suggested giving some kind of "freebie" to those who attended the stand and showed an interest in the LOC. As the event is fully catered it was felt that edible gifts would not be suitable. SR suggested pens with the LOC name/logo. DM demonstrated a pen/pentorch/screwdriver set which she obtained from an AOP stand. This was deemed to be a good incentive, but due to cost perhaps could be considered as raffle prizes. JB agreed to find out more about these items.

9. LOCSU Update

FK

(a) LOCSU Restructuring

LOCSU has recently undergone significant restructuring within the organisation. The Optical Leads have been renamed as Advancement Leads, and there are now 6 of these.

There are now 4 board members each to represent one regional area.

FK will send a summary of all the changes together with a short introduction for each of the new members to JB for circulation.

(b) New LOCSU resources

-Various resources including template letters are being developed for LOCs to use, together with a contact list for the various ICBs, if there is difficulty engaging with these groups.

-There are various email scams circulating "via LOCSU"; members were asked to be on their guard.

-There have been issues with various NHS Trusts referring patients who are on a long waiting list back to optometrists for examinations which are not covered under GOS or additional service contracts. LOCSU want to know if this is happening in our area to assess if this is a national problem. FK emphasised that patients who are being encouraged to have an “eye-test” if they are due, and are also, for instance, overdue for their glaucoma check, the optometrist should not be expected to comment on the progress of their condition as they have no background information on which to base their assessment.

(c) LOC “Celebrations” & Presentations for the NOC

Presentations have been requested from the LOCs on “what we are doing well”. Case studies can also be presented. LOCSU also collate “celebrations” for each year, currently ending 2022/23 (and also 2023/24) where LOCs can submit their “successes”. This can be the same presentation as for the NOC. An electronic “map” will be produced to illustrate these presentations.

(d) Outside Clinics

Funding for these has been changed (without consultation) such that payment is made to the head office concerned rather than the area locality. This means that GOS activity in some areas, particularly rural, is being processed in another area, and therefore the LOC receiving the levy is different. This not only affects LOC budgets, but also ICBs as costs may arise unexpectedly. Some LOCs have reported significant increases in GOS activity, and other LOCs have experienced the reverse. LOCSU is working to try to address this situation, particularly for those LOCs who have experienced a sudden significant drop in income.

SR advised the Committee that the ICB are running annual awards, and he has nominated Herts LOC for ‘Optometry Service of the Year.’ Much to his surprise, we have been shortlisted, and SR has to produce a one minute video on our behalf. Results will be announced in mid-October. If we win, this will be a good candidate for our “success” for 2023/24.

JB has also applied for the Digital Transformation award on behalf of Steve/Herts LOC and is waiting to hear from them as to whether we have been shortlisted for this too.

10. NOC 13th-14th November

JB

We have 4 members attending the NOC this year: JB, SR, DM and SR. Two places are “free” for the LOC and the other 2 will be funded by ourselves.

11. Insurance

SR

After extensive research, SR has found that Zurich will give us the cover we require for £100 per year. The problem has been convincing companies that we do not give healthcare advice, and therefore we do not need cover for healthcare-related claims.

Communications via Mailchimp are not covered as the mailing list is held outside the UK, but this should not be a problem for us.

The Committee agreed that SR should go ahead with this policy.

12. Chair’s Update

JB

JB has met with other East of England LOCs and also the H&WE Steering group.

(a) Moorfields Out of Hours Contract

The out of hours contract with Moorfields is still being investigated. (This contract was signed about 5 years ago). It has been noted that E&N Herts area send the greatest number of such patients to Moorfields. Last year, 3000 patients from H&WE were sent to Moorfields out of hours (average 62 per week).

(b) Hydroxychloroquine Pxs

There have been issues with patients on hydroxychloroquine for long periods not being seen in a timely manner within the HES. 0.8% of patients taking this medication may have problems, so this is not affecting many people. JB emphasised that these patients must be seen within the HES and not in high street practice because there must be oversight by an Ophthalmologist.

(c)Cataracts

Regarding statistics for cataract patients, 8 patients per list is required by the NHS, but the best achieved is 6.6 at present. In East of England, H&W Essex are top with 4.4 per list, as they generally see the most difficult cases, with other private providers see the straightforward patients.

(d) Eye Care Transformation

Money has been allocated for Eye Care Transformation in our region, and this will be split across the 7 ICBs. In EofE, FK said this may be “accelerator funding”, used to achieve projects in a shorter time frame. West Essex will receive a larger share of this funding as they have more projects in place. JB will find out more and see if any funding is given to our area. £500k could be available, £250k for Mid &SE, and the remainder split between evaluation, Cambridge & Peterborough, N&W, and H&WE

13. Any Other Business

KK asked if a face-to-face meeting /Christmas Social event was planned. Proposed dates of 27th or 28th November at the Crooked Chimney, Lemsford, have been suggested and SR will send a poll round to establish the preferred date.

AJ asked the Committee if anyone had an email address for Moorfields, Bedford cataract service, for those patients who live near the Herts/Beds border. SKM said he would send this round on WhatsApp after the meeting.

14. Date of next meeting: TBA

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.