



Chair's Report 2023-2024

Unlock Exclusive Opportunities at Our AGM: Join Us for Valuable CPD and Networking!

Prepare to be inspired as we present the highlights of our committee's endeavours during the past year and unveil exciting plans for the future at our upcoming AGM. But that's not all – mark your calendars for an enriching CPD event happening alongside the AGM, where you can earn valuable CPD points while connecting with fellow optometry professionals. Now I have your attention, please read on for more information.

After our 2023 AGM in May, I was re-elected as Chair of the committee for a fifth consecutive year. Rob Hopwood continues as our vice chair, and Martin Bull retains his position as Treasurer. Carolyn Hudd remains as our secretary, playing a crucial role in managing emails, recording meeting minutes, and ensuring the smooth organisation of our planned events.

Over the past year, following consultations with LOCSU (LOC Support Unit) and HMRC, the committee transitioned to receiving PAYE payments. This change was implemented nationwide to mitigate tax fraud risks for all Local Optical Committees (LOCs).

As a statutory body established alongside the founding of the NHS, the LOC operates thanks to a small fee (levy) collected from every NHS sight test conducted within BSW (Barnes, Swindon, and Wiltshire). Currently, this fee stands at 0.75%, with 0.25% allocated to Wiltshire LOC and 0.5% to LOCSU for operational costs. However, adjustments in the NHS England GOS levy payment system have led to changes in the payments received by our LOC. Specifically, payments are now based on the contractor's head office location rather than the test location, impacting the distribution of fees from domiciliary work, particularly from providers The Outside Clinic, based in Swindon, but testing nationwide. We are actively working with LOCSU, NHS England, and The Outside Clinic to ensure fair distribution of these funds across all LOCs, although challenges persist due to the lack of detailed payment breakdowns from NHS England.

Committee efforts towards modernisation and increased productivity have been spearheaded by Jamie Bowden, our IT lead. Jamie successfully updated our website on LOCSU's platform and manages our social media presence on X (formally Twitter) (@WiltshireLOC) and Instagram (wiltshireloc). These platforms serve as channels to disseminate information about our committee's activities and engage younger professionals in our work. Please look us up and give us a follow if you haven't already. Additionally, Jamie facilitated the setup of Microsoft Office 365 accounts for the entire committee, enhancing collaboration and information sharing among members.

We are currently focused on crafting a vision and mission statement, along with defining our values and a motto. These initiatives aim to provide clarity on our objectives, foster teamwork, and attract new members to contribute to our profession's advancement at the local level.

We've noticed recently an increase in hospital requests for information on post-cataract surgery refraction results following a GOS eye test. Please **do not** fill these forms in. This falls outside our GOS eye test contract and necessitates extra resources and time to fulfil. To tackle this issue, we're pushing for the implementation of a properly commissioned post-op cataract service throughout BSW. The Opera platform, managed by Primary Eyecare Services and utilised by several independent cataract providers in our region, facilitates streamlined post-operative assessments and ensures appropriate compensation for our services.

Despite the temporary suspension of post-operative care appointments in secondary care during the pandemic, the lack of a reinstatement plan presents ongoing challenges. We remain steadfast in our advocacy for fair compensation for the additional work demanded by the GOS eye test system.

In the past year we have also been engaged with the BSW Integrated Care Board (ICB) and participate in eyecare meetings to address regional eyecare issues. Our feedback regarding the CUES service led to its extension for an additional six months, with ongoing discussions regarding the terms of the proposed new tender due to begin in October 2024.

We are collaborating with Wessex Local Medical committee and Avon and Wiltshire pharmacy committees to advocate for a more integrated approach to patient eye health care, seeking input and support for our initiatives.

Our CPD events, including the recent session in January on colleague wellbeing and an upcoming event in collaboration with RUH ophthalmology, aim to provide valuable learning opportunities for our local colleagues. We encourage attendance at our AGM on the evening of 23rd May 2024 in Devizes, where members can connect with the committee and consider joining our ranks to contribute fresh ideas and shape the future of optometry in Wiltshire and beyond.

Dynamic Leadership: Discover the vision driving our committee forward as we share insights into our strategic initiatives and collaborative efforts aimed at elevating optometry in Wiltshire and beyond.

Inspiring Collaboration: Hear firsthand accounts of successful partnerships with local healthcare stakeholders and primary care colleagues, as we champion a more integrated approach to patient eye health care. Find out how you can be part of this transformative movement.

Exciting CPD Opportunities: Elevate your professional skills and knowledge with our CPD event, thoughtfully curated to address topics relevant to today's optometry landscape. Gain insights from industry experts and engage in stimulating discussions that will enrich your practice.

Unforgettable Networking: Forge meaningful connections with like-minded professionals in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Share experiences, exchange ideas, and build lasting relationships that will support your professional growth.

Unveiling Future Opportunities: Be among the first to learn about upcoming initiatives, including opportunities to join our committee and contribute to shaping the future of optometry in our region. Whether you're a seasoned practitioner or new to the field, your perspective and passion are valued.

Don't miss this chance to immerse yourself in an evening of learning, networking, and inspiration. Join us at our AGM on 23rd May 2024 in Devizes and be part of a vibrant community dedicated to advancing optometry excellence.

See you there!

Warm regards,



Colin Gault

Chair, Wiltshire LOC