



Wiltshire LOC Chair's Report 2025–2026

Over the past year, Wiltshire LOC has continued to represent and support local optical practices through a period of significant structural change within the NHS, whilst maintaining a clear focus on protecting and developing community-based eye care services.

System Changes and Commissioning Environment

The most significant development this year has been the merger of BSW ICB into a larger cluster alongside Somerset and Dorset. This transition has understandably led to a period of instability, including management restructuring and reduced engagement from the ICB while roles have been reviewed.

Despite this, the Community Urgent Eyecare Service (CUES) has been extended until October 2026, providing some short-term stability. However, we are aware that plans are in place to retender the service, and we continue to seek clarity on the future model. The LOC has proactively offered support and engagement to the ICB throughout this process, although communication has been limited to date.

Encouragingly, Wessex LMC, representing local GPs, have expressed strong support for maintaining CUES within primary care, reinforcing the value of community optometry in delivering accessible urgent eye care.

Service Delivery and Impact

CUES continues to demonstrate its importance across Wiltshire and the wider BSW system. Data from the past year shows that over 4,500 patients in Wiltshire alone have been seen through CUES, contributing to more than 7,500 patients across BSW.

Importantly:

- Around 80% of patients are discharged within the service, avoiding onward referral
- Only a small proportion require hospital input
- High levels of patient satisfaction (95% would recommend the service)

This clearly demonstrates that community optometry is delivering safe, effective, and patient-centred care while reducing pressure on GP and hospital services.

In addition to urgent care, we have seen further pathway development this year. Practices are now supporting post-operative cataract follow-up care in collaboration with IHG Westbury, complementing existing pathways with Practice Plus Devices via Primary Eyecare's Opera platform. These developments highlight the increasing role of optometry in delivering extended care closer to patients' homes.

Governance and LOC Development

In January 2026, the LOC formally adopted a new constitution aligned with LOCSU guidance, which was approved by majority vote. This update ensures that the committee operates in line with national best practice, improving governance, transparency, and resilience.

The revised structure also supports:

- Greater flexibility in committee roles
- Stronger succession planning
- Alignment with modern NHS and commissioning structures

We continue to work closely with neighbouring LOCs across the South West and benefit from ongoing support from LOCSU.

As part of our commitment to development, Emma Woodhouse has undertaken the LOCSU leadership pathway, helping to strengthen future leadership within the committee.

Workforce, Engagement and Future Leadership

A key priority for Wiltshire LOC is building a sustainable and engaged committee for the future.

We are actively encouraging new members to join and contribute, with a particular focus on developing individuals into leadership roles including Treasurer, Vice Chair and Chair. Our aim is to introduce a model of role rotation approximately every three years, ensuring fresh perspectives while maintaining continuity.

LOCSU now provides a wide range of training opportunities to support members in developing the skills needed for these roles, and we strongly encourage practitioners to get involved at any level.

We also welcome ongoing feedback from contractors and performers to help shape our work:

contact@wiltshireloc.org.uk

Financial Position

The LOC remains in a stable financial position, with no significant changes or notable expenditure over the past year. A full financial report will be provided separately by the Treasurer.

Challenges

This year has not been without its challenges.

Practices continue to face increasing pressure from:

- Rising costs and inflation
- Workforce constraints
- Balancing NHS sight tests with urgent care demand

At a system level, uncertainty around commissioning remains a key concern. While there is growing national support for a standardised urgent eyecare model, commissioning decisions remain locally driven, leading to variation in services across the country.

There is also ongoing uncertainty regarding the future direction of urgent eyecare locally. While we are committed to maintaining services within community optometry, there is a risk that alternative models—such as ophthalmology-led hubs—could be considered, potentially reducing accessibility for patients.

Looking Ahead

Over the coming year, Wiltshire LOC will focus on:

- Engaging with the new ICB structure to influence future service design
- Supporting the continuation and development of community-based urgent eyecare
- Expanding enhanced service pathways where appropriate
- Strengthening committee capacity and leadership succession
- Increasing engagement with local practitioners

We remain committed to ensuring that optometry continues to play a central role in delivering high-quality, accessible eye care across Wiltshire.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all members of the LOC for their continued hard work and commitment.

In particular:

- Martin Bull, who will be stepping down as Treasurer after many years of dedicated service—we thank him for his significant contribution and wish him a very happy retirement
- Carolyn Hudd, our Secretary, for her tireless work behind the scenes
- Sid Maher (LOCSU) for his ongoing guidance and support
- Jamie Bowden, for his work in developing the cataract pathway with IHG and supporting the LOC with communications and systems

- Emma Woodhouse, whose enthusiasm, leadership development, and commitment have made her a valuable addition to the committee

AGM and Engagement

We encourage all practitioners to attend the upcoming AGM, which will include a CPD event and provide an excellent opportunity to network with colleagues. Food will be provided, and we hope to see as many of you there as possible.

Please also stay connected by joining our mailing list or following Wiltshire LOC on social media.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Gault', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Colin Gault – Wiltshire LOC Chair