

NHS Five Year Forward View

1.) The Optical Confederation and the Local Optical Committee Support Unit (LOCSU) welcome the development of an NHS *Five Year Forward View* (5YFV) and particularly the reference it makes to the Calls to Action. We assume this includes the recent Call to Action on improving eye health and reducing sight loss where we made important proposals about how outcomes and services can be improved whilst reducing waste and tackling the growing needs gap¹.

2.) We respond now to NHS England's further invitation for relevant comments, research or contributions to the 5YFV.

3.) In the case of eye health the facts are simple

- the demand for eye health is rising and is inexorably linked to the growth in the ageing population
- new technologies have become available in recent years, e.g. drugs which can prevent blindness and in some cases reverse deterioration; this adds to short-term pressures but will save the NHS and care system significant resources down-stream
- the community optometric workforce skills are significantly under-utilised as are estates capacity and facilities in community practices
- a lot of routine work currently performed in hospital ophthalmology departments could safely be transferred to the community, which would be more convenient for patients and at less cost.

4.) We welcome NHS England's plan not to commission any more reports or evidence. As 5YFV recognises, the NHS is already awash with those. In our case very effective models for community eye health services have been developed in various parts of the NHS over the past ten years. What has been missing is any commitment to systematic implementation at scale.

5.) Commissioning is still a major weakness and does not seem to have moved on much from the early days of the purchaser-provider split.

6.) To overcome this, we welcome the overdue recognition in 5YFV that some services are better commissioned at national level or within national frameworks.

¹ <http://www.opticalconfederation.org.uk/downloads/consultations/call-to-action-response-oc-locsu--final-2014.pdf>

(This is good news and, if properly pursued, will minimise transaction costs whilst maximising health outcomes and financial savings.)

7.) National frameworks for this (combined with local flexibility) are the most cost effective way of making change happen at scale (building outcomes, clinical governance and financial reporting into the system on a “do once and share” basis). In eye care this will free up capacity in ophthalmology departments to treat cases which need higher level intervention and, at the same time, reduce pressures on GPs and A&E where patients currently have to be referred for eye health services not covered by the national sight testing service.

8.) The development of community eye health services - as part of integrated local services - should therefore be actively pursued by Local Eye Health Networks, as a priority. This should be part of the process of re-building an integrated primary care system which has as its default position for older age care preventing people becoming vulnerable, maintaining their independence and keeping them out of hospital and in their own homes and communities.

9.) To maximise these benefits across eye health and primary care more widely, IT connectivity is critical. Enabling community optical practices to communicate electronically and in real-time with hospital ophthalmology departments, GPs and other services will bring major benefits in terms of both better outcomes and greater efficiency.

10.) The Optical Confederation stands ready to help – together with the Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning, Local Eye Health Networks and our partners across the health and care system - in any way that we can to bring about better outcomes, better access and convenience, lower costs for patients and better value for the NHS.

11.) Please contact us if NHS England would like any further information.

About Us:

The Optical Confederation represents the 12,000 optometrists, 6,000 dispensing opticians, 7,000 optical businesses and 45,000 ancillary staff in the UK, who provide high quality and accessible eye care services to the whole population. The Confederation is a coalition of five optical representative bodies: the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO), the Association of Contact Lens Manufacturers (ACLM), the Association of Optometrists (AOP), the Federation of Manufacturing Opticians (FMO) and the Federation of (Ophthalmic and Dispensing) Opticians (FODO). As a Confederation we work with others to improve eye health for the public good.

LOCSU provides quality, practical support to Local and Regional Optical Committees (LOCs/ROCs) in England and Wales to help them to develop, negotiate and implement local objectives in respect of primary ophthalmic services. It is a key interface between the optical, representative bodies and the LOCs/ROCs, facilitating robust lines of communication between the national organisations and the grass roots of the professions.