

LOC Support Unit

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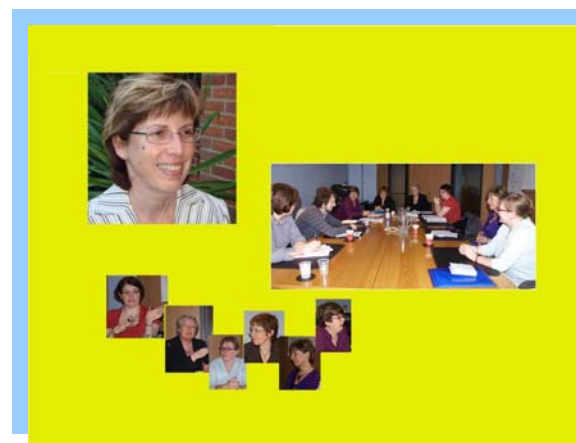
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Advice note

Running a successful LOC



LOC SUPPORT UNIT
ADVICE NOTE #3
Available on line at www.locsu.co.uk
Or call 020 7207 8156

Advice note

Running a successful LOC

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Local Optical Committees (LOCs) have clearly prescribed functions relating to representing local optometrists with their respective primary care trust or health board. To be successful LOCs in general need to have three main characteristics. They need to be inclusive, have realistic objectives and overall be well organised.

Inclusive

Often LOCs are made up of a small group of dedicated independent practitioners, who have a common aim of enhancing the provision of optometric services in their area. Being independent they are able to react to changes occurring in their area easily and are often very successful. Some of the more successful LOCs have actively sought to attract members who work for some of the larger companies.

The new GOS regulations mean that the involvement of employees in corporate optometry is now more likely with the LOC comprising equal numbers of local contractors and local performers.

It is only by persisting and welcoming employed optometrists at all opportunities that successful involvement will be achieved.

Realistic

In an ideal world we would expect that optometrists would all be regarded as eyecare professionals in



the fullest sense and patients would be referred and would self-refer for not just refractive error corrections, but also further examination and possibly even treatment. However we know that this utopia does not exist – YET! But there is nothing to prevent an LOC from planning for potential future developments whilst still accepting that not everything will happen the way they wish. In order to

achieve changes the LOC needs to be ready to participate in any discussions relating to eye and ocular health in their area. It is only by regular and sometimes dogged persistence on low vision committees, local health forums, ophthalmology restructuring groups, falls-management programmes etc that consideration of how optometrists can be involved becomes the norm.

Well organised

LOCs in accordance with the new constitution need to meet at least three times a year, although if a local initiative is being undertaken this might mean more regular meetings whilst this is active. It is important that meetings are planned ahead and not simply called ad hoc, and that a meaningful agenda is distributed in advance so members can prepare to play an active role in the meeting. If the LOC is involved in a number of local committees it is beneficial to appoint different members to represent the LOC, especially if they demonstrate enthusiasm in a specialist area e.g. low vision. At each LOC meeting feedback should be sought from those representatives and encouragement given, particularly where there is a lot happening and the workload has increased. It goes without saying that the LOC needs the

appointment of an efficient chairman, secretary, treasurer and administrator to look after the affairs of the LOC and to keep a close watch on the revenue and expenditure.

An exciting time ahead for optometry

There is no doubt that the present climate for change within the NHS will present many opportunities for optometry to be involved with local and nationally agreed schemes. The formation of the LOC Support Unit, which has the backing of the major national bodies in optics, shows that there is a readiness to work together which has not been present previously and by getting involved in an LOC, younger optometrists can be encouraged to play a part in the future of their profession.

For advice and support, please contact the LOC Support Unit:

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