

News Release

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ADULT LOW VISION PATHWAY LAUNCHED WITH TRAINING SUPPORT

A community optical pathway that offers adults with sight loss, quicker access to a low vision assessment and support closer to home has been launched. Developed by the Local Optical Committee Support Unit (LOCSU), the Community Optical Pathway for an Adult Low Vision Enhanced Service is designed to provide all adults with sight loss with:

- High quality low vision assessment, information and clinical support, and
- where appropriate, low vision aids (LVAs) daily living aids and follow-up in a community setting in a convenient location for them.

The pathway, which has been developed through LOCSU's Clinical Advisory Group in consultation with visual impairment charities and patients, is designed to be delivered by both optometrists and dispensing opticians working in community optical practice.

Dr Michael Crossland, a low vision eye specialist based at Moorfields Eye Hospital, explained his support for LOCSU's pathway saying,

"In my work in low vision clinics I have seen first-hand the improvement which low vision rehabilitation can make on quality of life. Having more clinicians trained in providing these services is very important. The LOCSU enhanced service will ensure that more people with visual impairment can access high quality low vision rehabilitation at a time and place convenient to them."

Trevor Warburton, Chair of LOCSU's Clinical Advisory Group and LOCSU Associate said: "Low vision blights lives and can make people who are already frail or vulnerable even more isolated. This community pathway underlines the need for commissioners to improve access to treatment in order to prevent falls which may result in injuries requiring expensive hospital treatment."

Jennifer Brower, President of the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) and a low vision practitioner, welcomed the launch saying "Dispensing opticians are well placed to provide excellent low vision services, and through this pathway many people with low vision will be able to access high quality care and support from their local optical practices."

Anita Lightstone, UK Vision Strategy Programme Director said:

"People with low vision often find it hard to get the support they need when their sight first affects their normal day-to-day routine. This new pathway supports the aims of the UK Vision Strategy to deliver excellent services for people with sight loss when they need it most. Developed by a large number of organisations who are experts in this field, the pathway offers a rounded-approach to tackle the issues faced by people with low vision in their local community."

A new training and accreditation package for low vision has been developed by LOCSU in conjunction with WOPEC (Wales Optometry Postgraduate Education Centre). The theoretical part, is available free of charge to LOCSU members. WOPEC can support local areas to provide the practical training and accreditation. LOCSU recommends that practitioners, who hold the Association of British Dispensing Opticians Honours Diploma in Low Vision or the College of Optometrists Low Vision Diploma and/or have significant experience in low vision practice, should not be required to undertake further training to become accredited.

Ends

Notes to editors

- Copies of the full LOCSU pathway can be obtained from Jacque Hudson, Office Manager at LOCSU. Contact: jacquehudson@locsu.co.uk or telephone 020 7202 8156
- Successful completion of the Theoretical Low Vision training (with WOPEC) course is worth 18 CET points.
- WOPEC can work with local areas to set up practical training and accreditation. Contact ryanb@cardiff.ac.uk or telephone 029 2087 0233.

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