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## Series of MECS OSCEs planned

A new series of MECS OSCE events is planned across the country in the next year to get the profession ready for the increase in Minor Eye Conditions Services, outlined in the [Breakthrough Strategy](#), published in February.

The new approach will see the College of Optometrists deliver MECS OSCEs to support the Strategy as part of a major accreditation drive combined with the existing programme of LOC-hosted events delivered by WOPEC.

MECS accreditation is a key component to deliver an important objective of the Breakthrough Strategy.

Announcing the roll-out plans, Katrina Venerus said: "The new Breakthrough Strategy for the sector aims to make MECS central to every LOC and practice around the country. For our part, as a profession, we have to push ahead and show CCGs that we have a ready and able workforce that is committed to playing a wider role within the NHS, particularly to meet increased community services.

"We are grateful for the support from the College of Optometrists and WOPEC to help us get the workforce on the front foot."

So far, 2,820 have completed online training and 1,292 have undertaken OSCE assessments for MECS.

■ **Details of the dates and venues are being finalised and LOCs will be notified as soon as these are confirmed.**

April 2016 Newsletter

## LOCSU unveils breakthrough team



NEW members of the expanded LOCSU team to help deliver the Breakthrough Strategy met at a team development day in London this week.

The commissioning team will double in size and has the benefit of two, full-time Commissioning Support Officers in addition to a London-based Assistant Director, Commissioning.

The team's main focus is to deliver the headline targets in the new strategy: doubling CCGs with MECS by April next year and reaching

80% by April 2017; along with increasing activity in current services and new targets for step-down care.

Welcoming new members of the team, MD Katrina Venerus said: "The expertise and the extra capacity that the new recruits bring will help LOCs and LOC Companies in their commissioning ambitions.

"LOCSU's new Strategy and the additional support for LOCs to work with acute trusts and CCGs on service redesign is timely with ophthalmologists acknowledging the severe pressures exist in the Hospital Eye Service.

See Page 2 for more background of the newest members of the LOCSU team.

## ATTEND YOUR AGM

The LOCSU website now features a handy, **A-Z list of LOC AGMs** for members looking to attend their LOC event.

Go to Page 7 for more help

# Breakthrough recruits join LOCSU

*A key plank of the new Breakthrough Strategy was to expand the LOCSU team to help LOCs and LOC Companies to meet meet the targets for increased MECS and step-down care. Here, we introduce the latest recruits to the LOCSU team.*

**Richard Whittington**  
**Assistant Director,**  
**Commissioning**



RICHARD has worked at a senior and director level across a range of health organisations, both commissioner and provider.

Specialising on commissioning and service redesign, Richard led the development of a range of primary eye care services in South East London.

Richard also has experience of working in acute eye care departments and has been involved in formulating links between primary and secondary care. He has detailed knowledge of NHS contracting, most recently being the director in a London CCG commissioning both acute and community contracts.

He is looking forward to putting his experience into good use, working collaboratively with LOCs to further develop primary and community ophthalmic services.

**Martin Russ,**  
**Commissioning**  
**Lead**



MARTIN is an experienced optical practice development and training consultant.

He co-founded the practice training and development company, Total Marketing Resource (TMR). Prior to this he worked for Pilkington Barnes-Hind (contact lenses) in sales and technical management roles. Martin recently sold his share in a

group of four independent practices he ran in East Anglia, where he was very supportive of the local shared-care initiatives.

**Richard Rawlinson,**  
**Commissioning**  
**Lead**



RICHARD qualified as a Dispensing Optician in 1992 and has been a franchise practice owner for over 20 years. His Boots Opticians store in Brownhills offers a range of community services including domiciliary services and diabetic screening as well as recently negotiated MECS, Glaucoma and Cataract schemes.

Richard is a qualified retinal grader and has also provided OPDR services for Walsall Manor Hospital. He sits on Walsall LOC and is the ABDO representative on the UK Domiciliary Eyecare Committee. He is involved with the provision of CET for ABDO.

Richard served as a director of Vision Aid Overseas responsible for the integration of vision centres and optometry services into ophthalmology departments and hospitals throughout Africa.

**Nizz Sabir,**  
**Commissioning**  
**Lead**



NIZZ works as an independent optometrist. He is a committee member of Rotherham & Barnsley LOC and North and North East Lincolnshire LOC.

He is a director of the Primary

Eyecare North Yorkshire and Humber.

Nizz has completed the Leadership Skills for Optical Professionals course and Optometry and Ophthalmic Public Health course. He has worked with his local Public Health team and Health and Wellbeing board to increase the awareness of the role of optometry and the LOC locally.

**David Barker**  
**Commissioning**  
**Support Officer**



DAVID joins LOCSU from the pharmaceutical industry bringing a wealth of experience from working in the North West in primary care and secondary care.

Recently, David worked as the north west ambassador launching the new DWP initiative, FitforWork, in to primary care in North Wales and Lancashire. Before the DWP project, David worked in smoking cessation, developing commissioned services and mobilisation with Local Pharmaceutical Committees and CCGs.

**Lisa Stonham**  
**Information**  
**Officer**



LISA will be joining LOCSU in June as a full-time information officer based in the London's Woodbridge Street HQ office.

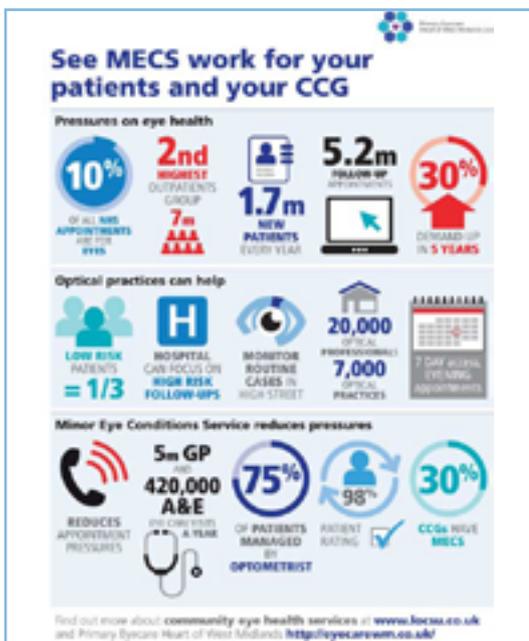
She has a background in the arts and not-for-profit organisations, working in a range of activities including grant administration, event management and business support.

Lisa joins LOCSU from Orchestras Live, a national music charity who enable orchestral music to be performed in under-served areas of England.

## Flexing your PECS through MECS

LOCSU has produced a series of resources for LOCs and LOC Companies looking to promote the benefits of MECS to CCGs and patients.

A new infographic poster has been produced for use by Regional Primary Eyecare Companies looking to explain the benefits of MECS in relation to current pressures in the hospital eye service.



Described as an “impact infographic”, the poster can be branded and hyperlinked to the company or dedicated MECS website. It is available as a JPEG or PDF format and can be downloaded from the Resources page of the Communications section of the LOCSU website, [via this link](#).

In addition, LOCs and LOC Companies who are introducing a new MEC Service can make use of new template press releases for use with the local and regional media.

One press release is aimed specifically at the introduction of MECS, while the other covers a basket of services that include MECS and step-down care.

Both can be downloaded from the [Resources page](#) of the website. Contact LOCSU’s [Chris McGachy](#) if your LOC would like advice on media planning.

## NHS eye summit set to showcase LOC services

INNOVATIVE service models involving LOCs will be among the case studies up for discussion at the national eye health summit taking place on 7 June.

The programme for the event, organised by the NHS, will feature services delivered by Primary Eyecare Lancashire, Heart of West Midlands and Gloucestershire.



Katrina Venerus along with Carrie MacEwan, (pictured) President of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists and David Parkins, Chair of the Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning.

The conference – *Immediate Solutions to Address Demand and Capacity Pressures in the Hospital Eye Service* – will explore collaborative approaches between ophthalmologists, optometrists and acute trusts.

This event is being hosted by NHS England in partnership with LOCSU, the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, the Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning, the College of Optometrists and Moorfields Eye Hospital.

LOCSU News will carry a special report following the event.

The event is exclusively targeted at CCGs and acute trusts and will be outlining how community services are taking pressure off of the hospital eye service and improving eye health services for patients.

As well as local case studies, speakers include LOCSU MD

## Bagdai appointed new LEHN Chairman

RUPESH Bagdai, LOCSU Commissioning Lead, has been appointed as Chair of the Cheshire, Warrington & Wirral Local Eye Health Network.



**RECENT MP practice visits – organised by the Optical Confederation's Public Affairs team along with LOCs – help spread the message about the cost-effectiveness of community services.**

## MP hears how MECS deflects



A MECS scheme in Durham has significantly reduced eye-related visits to local A&E departments, a North East MP has heard. Members of Durham LOC told Helen Goodman, MP for Bishop Auckland, that the service delivered by optical practices had “deflected a huge number of patients away from A&E” in the past 12 months. During a visit to Specsavers in the MP’s constituency, Durham LOC Chair, Jane Ranns, also explained that the year-old service was valued by patients, who found eye health services in the high street, much more convenient.

The MP also heard about the Cataract Referral service which stops the need to visit a GP to be referred for surgery and also caters for people who are unable to leave their home unaccompanied, but who are able to attend for surgery.

Following the practice visit, the MP said: “It was really interesting meeting with representatives from the Durham Local Optical Committee and hear about the services now delivered – above and beyond the sight test – in opticians. In particular, it was interesting to learn about the Minor Eye Conditions Service, and how people with minor eye problems should visit the opticians in the first instance if they have an problem.”

## All-Party chief hails work of LOCs

MP for Wealden, Nus Ghani, picked World Glaucoma Week to visit an optical practice and raise awareness of the condition – the second most common cause of blindness in the world after cataract and the leading cause of irreversible sight loss.



During the visit to Specsavers in Uckfield last month she met members of the East Sussex Local Optical Committee and LOCSU Commissioning Lead, Chris Newall. The All-Party Chair praised the work of eye health professionals, such as LOCs and the sight loss charities.

Commenting on the visit, Nus Ghani said: “As Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Eye Health and Visual Impairment, it was a pleasure to visit Specsavers’ Uckfield branch last month. I am proud to work closely with eye health charities and organisations, and, from

personal experience, know full well the difference that high-quality, and regular, eye care can make.”

LOC Chair, Thurka Sivapalan, said: “It was great to meet with Nus and talk her through the work of the East Sussex Local Optical Committee and to discuss the community eye care services in the constituency, as well as hearing more about her interest in eye health.”

**Image (L-R): Chris Newall LOCSU South East Commissioning Lead, Nus Ghani MP, Badrinath Mohandas Practice Director Uckfield Specsavers, Thurka Sivapalan East Sussex LOC Chair, Dimple Metha Practice Director, Uckfield Specsavers.**

**Turn to Page 5 for more coverage of MPs’ practice visits**

**MP practice visits**  
...continued from Pg4

## MECS a 'wonderful success' says MP



A WOLVERHAMPTON MP has backed high street optometrists to benefit patients and help reduce sight loss.

During a practice visit in her Wolverhampton North East constituency, Emma Reynolds (*pictured right*) said that, with an ageing population, every effort must be made to increase the early detection of eye problems.

The MP met members of the Wolverhampton Local Optical Committee during a visit to Prab Boparai Opticians in Bushbury in March. Following the visit she said: "I'm grateful to Prab and the LOC for the work they are doing and for inviting me to learn more about it. Community-based optometry has a great role to play in the prevention of sight loss. The MECS scheme, which is helping to reduce pressures on the NHS, has proven a wonderful success and a welcome service for the residents of Wolverhampton.

LOC Chair, Prab Boparai, said: "It was really great to meet with Emma, and talk through the services in the Wolverhampton area, particularly MECS that, since its introduction, has allowed 80% of patients attending optical practices with minor conditions to be managed within those practices.

**Image, (L-R): Prab Boparai Wolverhampton LOC Chair, Peter Rockett Wolverhampton LOC Secretary, and Emma Reynolds, MP.**

## Ealing MP backs kids eye health call



**Image: Ealing Central and Acton MP, Rupa Huq (left) and Joy Hynes (right), Chair of Ealing & Hounslow LOC with some younger optical practice patients.**

EALING Central and Acton MP, Rupa Huq, has given her backing to a campaign to highlight the importance of sight tests for children.

And she called on more CCGs to introduce a Children's Pathway to screen children's vision and pick up eye health problems at an early age.

Her plea comes following the publication of [recent research](#) from the University of Ulster and the College of Optometrists which highlights the increasing prevalence of myopia in children in the UK. The study shows that myopia is now twice as prevalent among children as it was in the 1960s.

On a visit to a local optical practice Ms Huq said: "Of course, it's essential that everyone has a regular sight test – every two years, or more often if your optometrist recommends – but I'm here to particularly encourage parents and guardians to make sure that if their child has not had a recent sight test, they book them in for one, as undiagnosed sight problems can have a negative impact on a child's ability to perform well at school."

### **Effective**

Joy Hynes, Chair of the Ealing and Hounslow Local Optical Committee, said: "It's very important for children to have regular sight tests from around the age of three. At that age, if a problem such as a squint or lazy eye is detected, treatment can be very effective, but it becomes much harder to treat these conditions after the age of seven.

"Parents and guardians need to be made more aware of the importance of regular eye care, as children may not realise that there is a problem with their vision, and accept that what they see is normal. And remember, children do not need to be able to read to have a sight test."

# Venerus' View

You might remember I said back in February when we launched the **Breakthrough Strategy** that we would only be able to achieve our goals if we bolstered the LOCSU team. As anyone who has run a business knows finding the right people to deliver your ambitions is not

always easy and having been knee deep in recruitment for a number of weeks I am thrilled to be able to introduce our expanded commissioning team who came together for the first time this week (see Page 1-2).

At the inaugural development day for the new LOCSU commissioning team, I was bowled over by the drive and determination of the group to achieve the overall aim of establishing optical practices across England as the first port of call for eye health. David Barker, who came on board at the beginning of the month as Commissioning Support Officer (North), is already in contact with a number of LOCs to discuss targeting low activity services and an intensive induction period for our new Commissioning Leads, who come from a range of backgrounds, is now underway.

The old saying “good things come to those who wait” is certainly the case when it comes to the appointment of Richard Wittington as Assistant Director, Commissioning. Currently in post as Assistant Director of Commissioning at Lewisham CCG, Richard won't be able to join LOCSU until early July, however, he is already getting his sleeves rolled up to prepare for his new role and I was delighted he was able to come along to this week's development day to share his perspective as a Commissioner with the team. As well as working with LOCs across London and the surrounds, Richard will play a key role in driving the overall commissioning strategy. Roll on July!



It will be a challenging year for LOCSU and LOCs but with the collective experience and expertise of the team I am confident that we are ready to tackle this exciting new phase.

## **Drop-in webinars**

Thanks to those of you who joined me for the first drop-in webinar for LOCs earlier this week. It was great to hear that LOCs are getting behind the drive to roll out MECS accreditation across England (see Page 3) and the online session on Tuesday evening gave colleagues from different areas an opportunity to exchange ideas and learn from each other. (Next webinar is on 25 May, 6–7pm)

Unsurprisingly, the Primary Care Support England (PCSE) service provided by Capita was the other main topic colleagues wanted to hear about. A recovery plan is in place to get the

operational service on track but the reality is there is a major backlog of queries they need to get through.

Daily calls are taking place with Capita and NHS England to monitor the situation and will continue until service is at an acceptable level. As you would expect, we have stressed time and time again the business impact that underpayments and payment reconciliation issues have on contractors. Please remember PCSE can arrange a “special payment” for contractors who have an underpayment issue that has the potential to affect cash flow. All queries should be sent to **Optical.Queries@capita.co.uk** I hope to be able to report some major progress with the PCSE service soon!

Your comments and suggestions are always welcome: **katrinavenerus@locsu.co.uk** or **@katrinavenerus** on Twitter.

## RNIB updates sight loss tool

THE RNIB has updated its [Sight Loss Data Tool](#). Version 3 of the Sight Loss Data Tool has now been published and can be accessed at the charity's Knowledge Hub.

RNIB's Sight Loss Data Tool is the most in depth source of evidence for sight loss statistics at a local and national level.

Virtually all indicators have been updated and include an improved range of new local indicators. In particular, sight loss estimates are down to

district level, which show that there are now over two million people in the UK living with sight loss.

New features also include enhanced custom tables to compare data for specific areas and a benchmarking report to compare key indicators for local authorities to the national average.

If you have any questions about the Sight Loss Data Tool or evidence related to blind and partially sighted people or those at risk of sight loss, contact [research@rnib.org.uk](mailto:research@rnib.org.uk).

## Glaucoma grant deadline approaches

THE IGA and College of Optometrists welcome applications for a £25,000 research grant.

Applicants must be optometrists and should be members of the College of

Optometrists. Both practices and individuals can apply for a grant and the closing date is 2 May 2016. To download an application form, please [click here](#) or email [r.kew@iga.org.uk](mailto:r.kew@iga.org.uk).

## Find your LOC AGM

TO find out when your LOC AGM is, take a look at the [LOCSU website](#) for a handy list of upcoming dates and details.

If the AGM for your area does not appear on the list, please check back regularly as the website is updated when meeting details are confirmed.

All contractors and performers are encouraged to attend their LOC AGM to learn more about the current work of the committee and how they can help shape and support future plans for the area.

LOCs can check out our [2015 blog](#) for tips on making your AGM fit for purpose.

And don't forget to let LOCSU know when your AGM is taking place. Please email [info@locsu.co.uk](mailto:info@locsu.co.uk) with the details.

# Dates for your Diary

- New LOC drop-in webinars last Wednesday of the month, 6pm–7pm: 25 May, 29 June, 27 July. Book via the [LOCSU website events calendar](#).
- BCLA UK Conference & Exhibition, 12–13 June 2016 includes lectures and workshops to improve confidence in contact lenses. For full programme booking visit the [BCLA Events page](#).
- The [Vision UK 2016 conference – Expanding Horizons](#) takes place Tuesday 14 June at The Grange Tower Bridge Hotel, London.
- [National Optical Conference](#) 2016, 10–11 November 2016, Hilton

Birmingham Metropole NEC.

- The College of Optometrists is hosting 25 [regional events](#) throughout the year.
- The Association of Optometrists (AOP) has launched its extensive programme of CET and CPD events throughout the country, offering over 200 CET points during the course of the year. [Download the guide](#).
- Fight for Sight is making its research presentation roadshow available for LOCs. The presentations aimed at both optometrists and dispensing opticians, and are CET certified. Email [Julian Jackson](mailto:Julian.Jackson@fightforsight.org) or call 07773 800073.

If you have an item of interest for *LOCSU News*, contact Editor [Chris McGachy](#), Head of Communications. You are receiving this email from the Local Optical Committee Support Unit. If you would like to unsubscribe, please contact [info@locsu.co.uk](mailto:info@locsu.co.uk).