

Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster, Hammersmith & Fulham Local Optical Committee



Chairmans' Report, AGM 2020-2021

Dear Contractors and Performers,

It has been a very difficult year for many people marked by Covid -19. This year working together with Primary Eyecare Limited, enhanced services have continued to be delivered in Westminster. This service has been adopted as part of CUES (Covid Urgent and Emergency Service). However there has also been a response to the pandemic from secondary care, with the setting up of various clinics to deal with urgent and emergency cases. This has meant that the CUES service has not been adopted across the patch. So Kensington, Chelsea, Hammersmith and Fulham CCG's have chosen not to implement the service through us and our partner in this regard Primary Eyecare Limited.

Throughout the last year our secretary, our communications officer along with our vice chair and our liaison officer have contributed to providing our response and supporting the work of the LOC. For that I thank them. We have made efforts to keep our contractors and performers informed of the developments as and when they happen and have dealt with contractor and performer concerns and enquiries as well. It has been a testing time and we have felt the pressure as our financial resources have come under pressure. We have all pulled together by supporting each other, deferring honorariums and the like.

The website has been regularly updated by Zohra (communications officer) whilst timely updates have been disseminated by Fazlin (our secretary). Sam (our vice chair) has supported me and will outline in his report his other activities, both Mike (our treasurer) and Shaf (our liaison officer) have also supported me in my role. With regular Zooms between the other London Chairs organised and delivered by LOCSU and between the us, the other LOC chairs and NHS England we have sought to pull together as a profession during these difficult times to ensure that we support the role of optometry, dispensing optics and all our colleagues who work in practice in NHS service delivery.

Change continues at pace. We have reached a point as I write this on 1st April 2021 where there are now plans to consolidate the CCG's into a single body a so called Integrated Care System ICS that will cover the whole of North West London. From Westminster to Harrow, the vision is to bring all the CCG's together and deliver a coherent service across the whole of North West London. This future will require more engagement from us as new processes are put in place for NHS services to be more streamlined and less patchy which should benefit service delivery, service management and ultimately patients.

It has been my privilege to serve as Chair of Kensington Chelsea Westminster Hammersmith and Fulham LOC for the last 12 years. I do however feel that the time has now come for a change in our LOC and for me personally. Several years ago we held an extra ordinary meeting where we met together with our colleagues who were at the time our neighbouring LOC of Hammersmith, Fulham, Ealing and Hounslow. At the time we voted together to merge Hammersmith and Fulham with our LOC. At the time we were Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster LOC. The result of that meeting was to form Kensington, Chelsea, Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham LOC and at the same time create Ealing and Hounslow LOC. The reason we did this was to mirror the new boundaries drawn up by NHS England. At the time the newly formed Tri-Borough consisted of Kensington Chelsea Westminster Hammersmith and Fulham so we made this change to our boundaries in order to mirror those of NHS England in the hope that we would be able to commission services across the patch in partnership with the secondary care providers. Sadly it didn't work, although we won the bid that was up for grabs for service delivery across the patch, our partners, the secondary care providers of the Imperial trust and the Chelsea and Westminster trust, chose not to follow through with the planned community based optometry delivered service. The rest as they say is history.

Fast forward a few years and with the help of LOCSU we have managed to secure services in Westminster but not in Kensington and Chelsea and not in Hammersmith and Fulham. We then chose to novate the contract and the service over to Primary Eyecare Limited but sadly even with Covid and despite our best efforts services have not been adopted by Kensington, Chelsea, Hammersmith and Fulham.

Looking back I wonder whether our committee should now vote to pass Hammersmith and Fulham back to Ealing and Hounslow LOC and go back to our old boundaries of Kensington Chelsea and Westminster or to go one step further. I believe there is wisdom in our committee merging entirely with Ealing and Hounslow LOC and indeed also with Hillingdon, Brent and Harrow. This would create efficiencies in the running of services and consolidate all the North West London LOC's into one LOC that would surely represent the profession more effectively and not allow it to be side lined as we have seen can happen.

There is no doubt we are on the brink of a new chapter for the LOC. I believe this requires someone with the time and energy to take it forward. As I alluded to earlier in this report I feel that now is the right time for the committee to take a decision on the leadership that will take the committee forward over the next years. I personally, because of the demands on my time, feel that it is time that I resign my post but I feel it is also important that I ensure a smooth transition over to the new leadership. My recommendation to the committee is to either elect a new chair who displays the qualities they would like to see in a Chair or either seek nominations for the position of Chair or consider a merger with one of the our neighbouring North West London LOC's. Should the committee choose the latter of these two options I would recommend approaching Ealing and Hounslow LOC who's committee directly neighbours ours, who's members I have a great respect for and who's members I believe to be excellent representatives of our profession.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee and everyone involved

for their support and contribution over the last 12 years of my tenure as Chair.

Thank You

Panos Nicolaou - Chairman Kensington, Chelsea, Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham
Local Optical Committee