

**County Durham and Darlington Low Vision Services
Committee**

**Thursday 19 November 2009, 9.30am
Meeting Minutes**

Venue: 4th floor, Conference Room B, County Hall,
Durham.

Present: Andy Nuttall (Chair), Anita Lightstone RNIB, Dawn Calvert, Rachel Emery, Chris Steele, Barbara Pratt, Dr Claire Rose-Innes, Leigh Nicholson, Derek Illingworth, Pauline Morphet, Linda Curtis, Margaret Welch, Helen Henderson (Minutes).

Apologies: Reti Winward, Heather Hebdon, Jim Welch, Phil Smith.

1. Minutes of Meeting held on September 2009 and Matters Arising

- Andy stated that Marie Scott, CYPS and Simon Berry have held the first screening pilot clinic for visually impaired children and young people on 22nd September 2009.
- The Minutes of the meeting held on 10th September were agreed as a true record.

2. UK Vision Strategy Presentation – Anita Lightstone

Andy welcomed Anita to the meeting.

- Anita stated that, according to recent research over 50% sight loss is correctable.
- What is needed is an inclusive society. Bus stops that can tell people when the next bus is due as well as talking buses which state what the next stop will be. A lot of people with vision problems do not go out

because of the problems they experience on public transport.

- 95% of books cannot be utilised by people with vision problems.
- The Department of Health have set up an eye care strategy group who are looking at pathways as well as a prevention agenda.
- The England Implementation group are looking at what needs to be led nationally and what needs to be led locally. Nationally they are looking at evidence building to identify good practice and to show that what has been proposed will be effective.
- There are 1.8 million adults in the Country with sight loss.
- Anita mentioned that she would leave some booklets with Andy if anyone would like one.
- Anita's team, the UK vision strategy team - RNIB, have been working on a conference which will be held in Birmingham on June 15th 2010. Anita invited anyone with any ideas for the conference to email her.
- They are also working on developing a network of champions as well as hosting partnership events. The first one was in Gateshead and the next one is to be held in York. The idea around the events is to get the PCTs, local authorities and local societies together to form links. They would like to know what people have done and what their plans are for the future. What it is that they have learned from that? How would people like to share that information?
- There is a newsletter that goes out. Anita agreed to circulate a copy to anyone who gave their name to Andy. UK Vision action packs are also available.
- Two DVD's are also available. One talks about the impact and living with sight loss, and the second talks about working together.

- Services need to work together and link into policies that are already out there and ensure that all information is available in alternative formats.
- By the age of 80 one in four people will have some sight loss.
- Anita quoted Winston Churchill – *“If we are together nothing is impossible. If we are divided, we fail”*.
- The PCC hold regular events. Anita has been contributing to the meetings around the topic of World Class Commissioning and eye care and the relationship to the UK Vision Strategy.
- According to recent research, 6-7000 cases of sight loss due to glaucoma could be prevented, if the detection rate was increased to 90%.
- Anita stated that she would pass the query regarding ECLOs on to the appropriate person within RNIB.
- Problems experienced by Derek and Pauline have included being told to watch the screen at the Doctors for their appointment. Awareness is a big problem which needs to be addressed.
- There is a guide for GP practices which Anita agreed to send to Andy so that he could circulate it.
- Leigh Nicholson agreed to provide an update at the next meeting on the York conference.

3. **Commissioner’s Update**

- Rachel briefly outlined what happened last month. There is a large proportion of secondary care referrals which are now false positives in relation to suspected cases of glaucoma. To alleviate this pressure a service specification has been written to develop a triage service within the community to try to reduce the number of inappropriate secondary care referrals.

- It has been highlighted as a potential to ensure best use of hospital care as soon as they get the go-ahead and it should be running by 2010.
- Any person who has an eye test, if the pressure measurement is above a certain level then they should be re-tested within the community before referral into secondary care or indeed not at all if inappropriate.
- Rachel stated that the service recommendation has been made for six months now and is frustrating, however it does seem that things are progressing and a service will hopefully be in place in the next financial year.
- Andy informed the group that after discussion with Heather Hebden (Senior Nurse Ophthalmology) in early November, it has been proposed that a trained volunteer and a DCC Rehabilitation Officer – Steve Driffield – undertake additional eye clinic liaison work. Both will cover clinics on two mornings per week at Bishop Auckland Hospital as a pilot project for 6 months to judge levels of demand, the nature of the work and evaluate the role there.

3a. Learning Disability Outcome.

Andy informed the group that he will give a presentation on 8th December 2009 to the Learning Disability Partnership Board, to raise awareness within that service of the UK Vision Strategy and begin a dialogue highlighting the implications of sight loss for adults with a Learning Disability.

Some discussion was had within the group about where responsibilities lay for promoting the eye care of children and young people with a Learning Disability. Claire stated that Paediatric services were likely

involved in this area and would forward names of the relevant clinicians.

4. Exhibition – Look to the Future 2009: Debrief.

- The event took place 8th October 2009 and it was felt that it was a very good piece of work. It was widely advertised for blind and partially sighted people and the feedback forms were very good.
- The training was slightly stunted due to the venue. An evaluation sheet will be sent out and an appraisal completed.
- Views were welcomed on whether a combined sensory loss - Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Blind/Partially Sighted – event be provided in future years. This might best be offered every two years – next one being 2011.

5. Any Other Business

- Chris Steele stated that Darlington will be taking over the eye care which is currently provided in Durham by City Hospitals Sunderland, Sunderland Eye Infirmary (SEI). To replace these clinics SEI has established more localised sites in Sacriston and Stanley which will commence early in the New Year hopefully. It is also hoped that another eye clinic run by SEI will be available in Shotley Bridge in due course.
- Pauline has attended an “Eccentric Viewing” conference and has now completed her training programme. This has enabled her to use the clearer part of her peripheral vision to good effect. Pauline was also shown how to use the ‘steady eye strategy’, where you focus on a point and move the paper to keep clearer vision. She felt that this could benefit many people with a sight loss although it would not suit all people

Date and time of next meeting:

Thursday 18th February 2010 at 9.30am in Conference Room B, 4th floor, County Hall Durham. (Meet in main reception)