

County Durham Low Vision Services Committee

(4th) Meeting Thursday 30th April 2009 at 9.30 a.m.

Minutes

Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham

Present: Andy Nuttall (Chair), Heather Hebden, Barbara Pratt, Linda Curtis, Derek Illingworth, Sharon Meadows, Chris Steele, Jim Welch, Margaret Welch, Reti Winward, Dr. Claire Rosen, Martin Pilgrim, Pauline Morphet, Phil Smith, Reti Winward, Adam Greenwood, Chris Steele, Leigh Nicholson,

Apologies: Rachel Emery, Emma Keeble, Gil Smith

Andy welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes of the last meeting – agreed as a true record.

Matters Arising

None.

Commissioners Update

In Rachel and Emma's absence Andy confirmed that the PCT bid to the AOP had been unsuccessful, however despite that outcome, there was now a more encouraging knowledge within commissioning of the eye care agenda and low vision services. Further bidding was expected for equitable access across the County to the eye clinic liaison role.

Sharon reported that there was now a review of the ECLO role funded by RNIB/Action for Blind People given the recent association of the two organisations. It could not be

assumed in future that finding would continue in the absence of a local PCT or County Council financial contribution.

A view was expressed that Ophthalmology can make money so they are in a position to fund and bail out eye low vision services.

Adam reported on activity in Newcastle. They receive up to 100 referrals for Durham and Darlington areas.

Frustration was expressed by the group at the lack of progress to secure ECLO funding. AN commented that we were in a stronger position now with Rachel and Emma promoting eye care agenda within PCT and that funding was tight. Our problem as usual was slowly raising our profile and fixing it to the public health agenda

A suggestion was made that we should be establishing a central low vision centre or perhaps a mobile service. Crook was identified by one member as the centre of Durham.

Chris reported on the increasing likelihood of the withdrawal of Sunderland Eye Infirmary as a provider of regional eye care to County Durham patients, in favour of services at Darlington Memorial Hospital. The LVSC committee considered writing to the relevant Hospital Eye Department Managers to seek further clarification.

Heather stated that this proposal was still in a planning phase with no likelihood of consultation with the community. Question was asked whether ECLO post(s) were included in the business case and this was not known.

Heather was asked to provide a senior manager whom the committee could contact to seek further information. Heather stated that Anne Parker was the relevant lead. Darlington has no Optometry back up(?).

Martin asked why no decision makers from the hospital were present at this meeting.

It was noted that the NHS Choose and Book referral system may lead to dispersal of services.

Cataract surgery will commence in Bishop Auckland from August 2009. Bishop Auckland Hospital will continue to provide eye care services

Comment that since low vision clinics are not at Bishop now they could be provided in D'ton or Durham instead.

A comment was made that patients need support after the clinic to help them with sensory equipment and remind them of use. People do need to be badgered to provide the service and follow-up. Issue comes down - as it always does – to funding.

Comment made that the latest focus is on new patients with acute conditions. The longer term costs are beginning to be looked at. Some surprise expressed that the duty to consult in respect of the new planning in the NHS is not being adhered to. An independent customer satisfaction survey was suggested.

Eccentric Viewing conference

Feedback from PM and LN. This technique uses peripheral vision (the best part of retina) to maximise vision. This technique had a huge knock-on effect on improving vision and function although it is not easy to do. It needs to be available early in sight loss in order to boost

confidence. Evaluation is being carried out. Survey taking place in Fife and results available in 5 years time.

Need to make clinics aware of eccentric viewing and how to offer the training to MD patients. It was suggested we have a workshop at the exhibition to inform people about it.

Suggested frequency of training: 3 -5 hrs training every few weeks. Vol sector could be involved in it. 1 in 4 people would benefit from it.

VI Exhibition

Meetings begun a few weeks ago about providing an event for the general public to look at equipment available and agreed to look at prevention and eye care.

World Sight Day - 8th October – has been chosen as the best day with a mix of exhibition and training hosted by the Council at County Hall. Stroke and sight loss training for professionals has already been booked.

Query raised about promotion and advertising it. Everyone on the Council visual impairment register will be invited . Comment made that written material in clinics would not be read!

Sighted guides will be required. AN discussed with Soroptimists of Durham who will discuss at their meeting in mid-June.

LVSC Expansion

AN asked if the Committee were willing to consider inviting Darlington Borough Council to join the group and expand our remit to include the borough. Members approved this development. **AN to write to management in Darlington.**

**Consultation on County Durham Long-Term
Conditions Commissioning Strategy 2009-12 (Joint
DCC and NHS Durham)**

AN to e-mail to membership for their comments on this draft document – 1st time sensory loss has been included.

First Year Review

Membership agreed that we should review LVSC next meeting. Terms of reference will be included with these minutes and agenda.

**Next Meeting: Thursday 2nd July 2009 @ 9:30am,
Committee Room 1A, County Hall**

AN/RW 08/06/09