

# LOCs' Engagement with the ICS



The healthcare landscape in London continues to evolve. Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) have been replaced by Integrated Care Systems (ICS), area boundaries have shifted, and roles within NHS England and management structures have changed. As a result, Local Optical Committees (LOCs) have needed to establish new relationships with the newly formed Integrated Care Boards (ICBs). This engagement is essential to ensure LOCs can influence decision-making, represent primary eye care effectively, stay informed about developments in ophthalmology, and collaborate with all relevant stakeholders.

## Background

A few years ago, there was limited engagement between Local Optical Committees (LOCs) and the London-wide ophthalmology board, as well as minimal involvement in local ophthalmology meetings. Primary eye care pathways across the five Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) in London were inconsistent. While South East London (SEL) ICS had pathways in place across its entire area, the other four ICSs had fragmented services, with access depending on a patient's GP location. Some LOCs struggled to identify appropriate contacts or gain invitations to key local meetings.

Today, all London ICS optometry leads are invited to the London ophthalmology meetings alongside trusts, commissioners, and ophthalmologists. LOCs are now active contributors, and their input is valued. Additionally, all ICSs hold local meetings with optometry leads and commissioners, and each now has commissioned primary eye care pathways. These improvements have been made possible through strengthened collaboration between primary and secondary care, with LOCs playing a key role in pathway development.

## What We Did

Greater London is home to 11 Local Optical Committees (LOCs), following the merger of two LOCs last year. To streamline efforts, avoid duplication of work, and ensure consistent representation, the LOC chairs collectively agreed to nominate an Optometry ICS Lead for each of the five ICS areas. These leads act as key points of contact, attending relevant meetings and feeding back important information to the LOCs within their ICS.

All five Optometry ICS Leads are now regular attendees at the London Ophthalmology Board. They are invited to contribute agenda items and actively participate in working groups. This has ensured a strong and unified voice for primary eye care at a strategic level.

In addition, each Optometry ICS Lead has established regular contact with their local eye care boards, NHS trusts, and commissioners, fostering stronger collaboration and communication. In some areas, Optometry ICS Leads have also begun forming cross-sector partnerships, working alongside pharmacy and dentistry leads to enhance integrated primary care services.

This structured, collaborative approach has helped improve representation, build key relationships, and ensure that optometry has a central role in shaping local and regional eye care pathways.

## Outputs and Impacts

The establishment of ICS Optometry Leads and stronger collaboration between LOCs, commissioners, and secondary care providers has resulted in significant progress across all London ICS areas.

In **North East London (NEL)**, the Optometry Leads now participate in the NEL Clinical Network, the Primary Care Collaborative Committee, and the Primary Care Contracting Committee. With the support of both LOCs in the region, they have also formed an Optometry Provider Group. As a result of this coordinated effort, NEL now has primary eye care services commissioned across the entire ICS, addressing previous inconsistencies between inner and outer NEL.

In **South East London (SEL)**, long-standing relationships with the ICB and commissioners have led to the most advanced commissioning of services in London. A single point of access (SPoA) processes all ophthalmology referrals via the e-Referral System (ERS), efficiently routing patients to either primary or secondary care. Recent developments include the commissioning of hydroxychloroquine monitoring, ocular lesion monitoring, and the Easy Eye Care pathway. A new contract has been signed, confirming the continuation of these services until December 2029, with an optional 15 month extension.

Within this, a separately commissioned Independent Prescribing (IP) service has been agreed and is in implementation phase, and an imaging pathway for 2D and 3D imaging (OCT / 2D Fundus, Scanning Laser Ophthalmoscopy, Fundus Autofluorescence, and slit lamp photography) to aid monitoring of lesions and improve referral accuracy.

In **North Central London (NCL)**, the LOC attends regular ophthalmology meetings and contributes to the Eye Healthcare Inequalities Improvement Group. The LOC played a key role in developing the Single Point of Access (SPoA) alongside Moorfields, ensuring integration with primary care. An Advice and Refer pathway was piloted, shaped by NCL LOC input to reduce unnecessary administrative burden on optometrists while ensuring seamless transfer of care to secondary services. This approach not only streamlined the referral process but also introduces additional steps such as clinical audit which helps to provide clarity and assurances to optometrists over the clinical responsibility. Collaboration in NCL has been strong, with an end of year social event organised by the LOC to celebrate joint working, attended by commissioners, consultant ophthalmologists, Clinical Directors, and SPoA leads thus further strengthening stakeholder relationships.

In **North West London (NWL)**, the LOCs' engagement with commissioners and trusts has led to the full ICS-wide commissioning of MECS, pre-cataract, glaucoma repeat readings and glaucoma enhanced case findings. The Optometry ICS Lead regularly attends strategic meetings with local NHS trusts ensuring primary care optometry is represented in key decision-making and enhancing CPD opportunities for local practitioners. Recent involvement in the Primary Care Collaborative Committee, and the Primary Care Contracting Committee has increased awareness of optometry services and opened doors for collective working.

In **South West London (SWL)**, the two LOCs have built strong and proactive relationships with the ICS and key decision-makers. They are active participants in the SWL Ophthalmology Clinical Network meetings and meet monthly with ICB members to ensure optometry is not only understood but is well represented both at a clinical and commissioning level. The recently established Multi-Disciplinary Primary Care Board brings together Pharmacy, Optometry and Dentistry further strengthening collaboration across primary care. The SWL LOCs are actively involved in developing new primary eye care pathways, soon to be procured across the SWL ICS footprint. This includes plans for a Single Point of Referral (SPoR) to streamline access and improve coordinate. Their early and ongoing input ensures the optometric perspective is integrated from the start, leading to patient centred, primary care led, efficient service models. The well-established Croydon referral model serves as a foundation for wider ICS adoption, showcasing the benefits of close collaboration between primary and secondary care.

### Key Learnings

- Strong relationships and regular communication between LOCs, ICBs, and secondary care are essential for successful commissioning, seamless integration, and effective collaborative working
- Having dedicated Optometry ICS Leads ensures consistent representation and avoids duplication
- Collaborative, cross-sector approaches (e.g., including GP, pharmacy and dentistry) enhance the role of optometry within wider primary care
- Flexibility and responsiveness from LOCs, such as helping to shape new pathways that ensure appropriate remuneration for Primary care Optometry, reduce administrative burden on optometrists and support clinical decision-making are key to securing engagement and long-term sustainability. These pathways also enable optometrists to work at the top of their skill set and support their ongoing professional development
- Celebrating collaboration strengthens professional networks and fosters mutual respect among stakeholders

## Acknowledgements

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- Inner South West London LOC
- Kensington, Chelsea, Hammersmith, Westminster, Fulham LOC
- Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham LOC
- North Central London LOC
- North East London LOC

Further LOC case studies can be found [here](#)

