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Proposals for health and social care reform

Dear Sirs

Thank you for inviting us to respond to this consultation. Together ABDO, AOP, the College and FODO represent the 10,500 optometrists and over 5,000 dispensing opticians and optical businesses who provide high quality and accessible eye care services throughout the UK.

We confine our response to one question in your document, namely the composition of Local Commissioning Groups (LCGs) in Question Two.

We support the move to introduce five LCGs covering the same geographical areas as the five provider HSC Trusts.

However, we strongly believe the Minister should reserve a seat, as of right, for an optometrist or dispensing optician member in any reconstituted LCG (as is currently the case) and not commit to an either/or scenario whereby the seat could be for an optometrist or a dentist, as proposed.

We believe that eye care is a crucial NHS service with increasing health and patient value, and an expanding role as more care is provided outside hospital and the population ages. To meet these demands eye care professionals are taking on an increasing role in the provision of eye health and low vision services in the community through initiatives, such as optometrists seeing patients with acute eye problems (as in the Scottish General Ophthalmic Services contract and in the Welsh PEARS (Primary Eyecare Acute Referral Service) scheme), and this can only increase with the advent of prescribing rights for optometrists.

Primary Care Organisations in England, Wales and Scotland are increasingly looking to eye care professionals to take work into the community that would previously have been provided in secondary care. This is both more accessible for the patient and cost-effective for the NHS.

This expanded and expanding role, and the essential part eye health has to play in health, wellbeing and independence, make an overwhelming case for direct optical leadership, advice and input on each LCG.

We notice that the proposal is that each Local Commissioning Group will have 4 elected representatives. We would acknowledge the value that elected representatives can bring to the table but we would question the need for 4 seats, as is proposed. We feel that 2 may be sufficient.

If you have any queries please contact:

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Yours faithfully



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