Cost-effective and high quality care: The evidence for Eye Clinic Liaison Officers – ‘ECLOs’

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Background
- RNIB is increasingly involved with evidence-based healthcare.
- The Third Sector are key partners in delivering high quality cost effective care in the NHS.
- Almost two million people in the UK live with a sight loss that seriously affects their daily lives (1). Eye care spending across the UK in 2009–10 was £2.3 billion (2). Both are estimated to rise steadily.
- RNIB established the first Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) in 1994 in response to patients’ needs for practical and emotional support when newly diagnosed with sight loss.
- Depression amongst people with sight loss is significantly higher than the population in general.
- Evaluations assess the effectiveness of ECLOs across the UK.
- ECLOs are an example of how to implement QPP principles (quality, innovation, productivity, prevention).

Impact
- This evidence supports the introduction of new posts, secures new and recurrent funding.
- Evidence improves training RNIB provides to ECLOs.
- Current research informs future research. For example, RNIB Northern Ireland is working with the University of Ulster to follow-up research that examined the impact of ECLOs in reducing the cost of falls.
- RNIB is working with Action for Blind People to provide more detailed findings on the impact of ECLOs on patients’ quality of life.

Eye care spending across the UK (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>2008/09</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>£45.7 million</td>
<td>£48.4 million</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>£104.2 million</td>
<td>£113.4 million</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>£183.8 million</td>
<td>£201.3 million</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>£1.67 billion</td>
<td>£1.93 billion</td>
<td>16%</td>
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Lord Howe and Caroline Beebee, ECLO

Objectives
- Build the evidence base, locally and nationally, to document improved quality of care and cost effectiveness achieved by ECLOs.
- Use this evidence to influence and transform policy and practice.

Methods
RNIB funds local and national evaluations into the effectiveness of ECLOs using:
- Surveys (qualitative and quantitative) and interviews with service users, commissioners, ophthalmology staff, funders, other third sector organisations and ECLOs.

Evaluations assess the effectiveness of:
- the ECLO service in improving the patient’s eye care journey
- their impact within hospital eye services
- the integration of the ECLO within hospital eye care teams and their impact on access to social care services.

"As a single Mum of two young children, I was devastated to hear that I was going to be registered blind. It was only when I was referred to an ECLO that I could understand the registration process and they introduced me to visual aids and products. I have, as a result, been able to keep my current job.”

(Patient)

Results from various RNIB research (3)

Commissions and health care professionals will want to know...
- In three different studies, we found ECLO service increased clinical staff efficiency by reducing time spent with distressed patients. This is important as ophthalmology has one of the highest rates of follow-up appointments.
- ECLOs provide patients with the information needed to take control of their condition and make informed choices. 72 per cent of blind and partially sighted people cannot read the personal health information provided by their GP.
- ECLOs provide emotional support and services outside the hospital. 90 per cent of clinical staff working with ECLOs say they significantly improve patient experience. 77 per cent feel more comfortable when patients left if they knew patients had ECLO support.
- ECLOs improve hospital standards in letter writing, signage, and stickers in notes indicating the patient is usually impaired.

In 2010, ECLOs employed by RNIB and its associate charities helped 13,385 people in the UK take the first step towards rebuilding their lives.

In June 2011, 101 hospitals in the UK have a qualified ECLO.

Emotional support to patients and their carers when sight loss is diagnosed

"For patients, the presence of an ECLO is of inestimable value.”

(Physiotherapist)

"The Eye Clinic Liaison Service provides a vital link between treatment, rehabilitation and social services. Patients benefit immensely and it ensures that patients adjust and learn to cope with their sight loss. I have no hesitation in recommending their services.”

(Ophthalmologist)

Social care will want to know...
- ECLOs improve referrals, providing an invaluable link between hospitals and social services.
- 88 per cent of ophthalmologists in one study said ECLOs’ assistance in processing the Certificate of Visual Impairment resulted in more expedient referrals.

The Third Sector will want to know...
- Evaluating a national service is important; time taken to develop effective evaluations, results in national service improvements.
- RNIB produces research synopsis, shares practice with local groups and the third sector and encourage those carrying out local research to publish their findings.
- RNIB supports local capacity to improve services by documenting good practice and disseminating this information to empower patients and improve quality.

References
(4) Eyes University (2011) The role of ECLOs is improving the quality of life of people with visual impairment. London: RNIB. RNIB (2011) RNIB. The current impact of RNIB’s Early and acute referrals to statutory and voluntary services. London: RNIB.