

26th August 2016

Outcome of the Freedom of Information for Vision Screening of children aged 4 -5 years

The evidence the British & Irish Orthoptic Society (BIOS) had of an inconsistent approach by Local Authorities (LAs) to the commissioning of the 4–5 years old vision screening and onward care pathway was proven by the data collected from the Clinical Council for Eye Health Commissioning (CCEHC) Freedom of Information (FOI) request, reported in February 2016.

The inconsistency of commissioning for the screening is exacerbated by a lack of clarity on who is responsible for the commissioning as:

- The Government / Public Health England (PHE) do not clearly stipulate that LAs are responsible for commissioning vision screening.
- The 0-5 Healthy Child Programme does not cover schools and no mention is made of school vision screening in any of the government links.
- The recommendations all state the screening should be Orthoptic-led but Orthoptists are commissioned by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) not LAs.

In its review (2013) the National Screening Committee (NSC) stated there was variation in the delivery of screening programmes in UK and stated the need for a standardised approach. The ability to deliver on this is being prevented by the lack of clarity in commissioning responsibility and knowledge of national guidance. The BIOS has developed recommendations and tools that define orthoptic-led screening, provide a care pathway that encompasses the screening and onward referral for those who fail and the quality assurance needed. The BIOS recommendations are evidence-based and provide the standardising approach to screening required by the NSC.

Whilst business organisations may wish to provide vision testing that is not in line with the NSC guidance, BIOS believes it is important that the public understand the difference in the services being offered. The national guidelines provide a population based examination of all children ensuring the 'at risk' and

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vulnerable children in the population are reached and appropriate use of resources. This is essential to those who do not seek advice or think they are at risk, and show no signs or symptoms of the condition.

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