

COUNCIL

Safe Contact Lens Use project: update

Meeting: 11 July 2018

Status: for noting

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Project Board: SMT

Purpose

1. The purpose of the paper is to update Council on our Safe Contact Lens Use project and seek views on our 2018 'Love Your Lenses' public awareness campaign.

Recommendations

2. Council is asked to:
 - 2.1 **note** our evaluation of the public awareness campaign around contact lens safety (see **annex one**);
 - 2.2 **note** our work on improving the practice of registrants in delivering contact lens aftercare messages to patients; and
 - 2.3 **provide views** on:
 - 2.3.1 the evaluation of the 2018 public awareness campaign; and
 - 2.3.2 how we might develop the public awareness campaign for the future.

Strategic objective

3. The specific purpose of the Safe Contact Lens Use project is to protect the public by increasing contact lens wearers' awareness of and compliance with safety advice.
4. This project contributes to our mission of protecting and promoting public health and safety by helping to achieve our strategic objective in the 2017-20 Strategic Plan to have a targeted approach to regulation, ensuring that our regulatory activities reduce risks to the health, safety and wellbeing of the public.

Risks

5. The rationale for increasing contact lens wearers' awareness of and compliance with safety advice is to improve patient safety by addressing the

risks to contact lens wearers identified in the [research report](#) produced on our behalf by Europe Economics.

6. The original aim of the project was to implement an illegal practice strategy. There is a risk that we are not able to meet stakeholders' expectations in relation to the actions we take and the results we achieve. We will continue to engage closely with stakeholders to maintain support for the illegal practice strategy and spread awareness of the limitations on our ability to take formal enforcement action, particularly when contact lens suppliers are based overseas.

Background

7. In July 2017, Council agreed to change the name of the illegal practice project to the Safe Contact Lens Use project, revising the scope to include the following workstreams:
 - 7.1 increase contact lens wearers' awareness of, and compliance with, advice on wearing contact lenses safely; and
 - 7.2 improve the practice of registrants in delivering contact lens aftercare messages to patients.
8. The original aim of the project was to revise our illegal practice strategy. We are still dealing with illegal practice complaints under our prosecution protocol.
9. During 2016/17 we appointed a PR agency, Claremont Communications ('Claremont'), and worked with our stakeholders to help us to promote guidance for the public on how to buy and wear contact lenses safely, and generally to raise awareness about contact lens safety among contact lens wearers. We ran a public awareness campaign entitled Love Your Lenses and carried out an awareness week in March 2017.

Analysis

Love Your Lenses

10. We worked with Claremont and our stakeholders in 2017/18 to deliver the second Love Your Lenses campaigns. The second awareness week took place from 24-30 March 2018. We also raised awareness throughout the year by using the Love Your Lenses channels at particular points such as promoting 'Top Tips for Summer' and providing advice on wearing cosmetic contact lenses at Halloween.
11. During the awareness week the campaign media had a significant reach. There were thousands of visits to the campaign website, print media and radio reached over 1.98 million people and there was a social media reach of over 1.69 million users. A fuller evaluation report produced by Claremont is provided **an annex one**.

12. Overall, it is positive that even more stakeholders got involved in the campaign this year and the campaign website continued to be a good platform upon which to build in future years. Year one was primarily about 'proof of concept' and we expect the impact to grow year on year, with the impact being optimised after four or five years. While it is difficult to measure behaviour change, there was some evidence of the intention to change behaviour throughout the campaign. Given the budget of £30,000 attached to the Love Your Lenses campaign for 2018 (which is a relatively small budget for a behavioural change campaign of this nature), we consider that the impact we achieved represented good value for money.
13. Due to the limited budget available for the campaign it would not be proportionate to carry out a detailed analysis to measure behaviour change and it is too early to measure sustained behaviour change in any case. However, we intend to repeat some of the survey of contact lens wearers in quarter one of 2019/20 – this will help us to assess whether there has been any change in behaviour and we will ask whether participants have heard about the campaign to see if we can make a link between our campaign and behaviour change.
14. We intend to repeat the campaign in 2019 and to work with Claremont again to publicise the campaign. We are continuing to encourage stakeholder activities throughout the year by regularly updating the website and communicating topical contact lens issues through social media. We would be interested to hear Council's views on how we might continue to develop the public awareness campaign for the future.

Halloween

15. We worked with Claremont to develop an infographic to encourage those who choose to wear cosmetic contact lenses at Halloween to do so responsibly (<http://www.loveyourlenses.com/dont-get-spooked-by-eye-damage-this-halloween/>). We also partnered with Moorfields Eye Hospital to jointly promote the importance of cosmetic contact lens safety at Halloween.
16. There were 165 pieces of media coverage (TV: 1; radio: 3; print: 8; online: 153). There was also significant engagement on social media as follows (NB these figures do not include engagement with the infographic when posted by partners and stakeholders rather than LYL so the true reach and engagement figures are likely to be slightly higher):

Twitter	Facebook
Retweets: 84	Shares: 39
Likes: 49	Reactions: 36
Link clicks: 28	Link clicks: 5
Reach: 3,490	Reach: 5,347
Engagement rate: 5.6% (anything above 3% is generally considered to be good)	Engagement rate: 1.5%

17. Several tweets indicated intentions of behaviour change. We directed people to the Love Your Lenses website and there were 453 visits to the website between 16 October and 6 November 2017.

Improving the practice of registrants

18. We have been working with Claremont and a group of stakeholders to develop tools to trial with the aim of improving registrant practice in delivering aftercare messages to contact lens patients. Trial resources include a visual aid of five top tips to share and discuss with patients, a pre-appointment questionnaire detailing contact lens behaviours, and habit-based questions for the optician to ask patients during the contact lens consultation. Trials are expected to take place over the summer and the resources will be updated to take into account feedback from opticians and patients during the trial. Once we have finalised the resources we will be sharing these with registrants and professional bodies, and encouraging CET providers to develop CET in this area using the resources.

Impacts

19. Likely impact of the proposed illegal practice strategy:
- 19.1 reserves – no impact;
 - 19.2 budget – we have funds for research and consultancy, and have factored into the draft budget for 2018/19 the work we will need to do in relation to raising consumer awareness;
 - 19.3 legislation – no impact;
 - 19.4 resources – we consider that we have sufficient resources to carry out the project;
 - 19.5 equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) – we have carried out an initial impact assessment and have not identified any issues that might impact negatively on anyone with protected characteristics, however, we will continue to consider this as we think about the new area of improving registrant practice in delivering contact lens aftercare messages to patients;
 - 19.6 Human Rights Act – no impact; and
 - 19.7 sustainability – no impact.

Devolved nations

20. We do not believe that this work has any specific implications for the devolved nations, but we will continue to engage with stakeholders in all four nations as we implement our proposals and will respond to any issues that may subsequently arise.

Communications

21. We have ensured that our key stakeholders are represented on our stakeholder group and it was open to all stakeholders to sign up as a supporter of the Love Your Lenses campaign.
22. The optical press is likely to take an interest in this area of work, and at certain times of the year (particularly around Halloween) the issue of cosmetic contact lenses can attract national media attention.
23. We engage with Trading Standards throughout the year on individual cases and attend the annual Trading Standards Conference (most recently in June 2018).

Timeline for future work

24. The currently envisaged timeline for the project is as follows:

Action	Date
Trial resources aimed at improving registrant practice in delivering contact lens aftercare messages to patients	June - August 2018
Share resources for improving registrant practice in delivering contact lens aftercare messages to patients	September - October 2018
Work with the PR agency stakeholder groups to repeat the contact lens safety public awareness campaign	September 2018 - March 2019
Deliver the Love Your Lenses awareness week	March 2019

Attachments

Annex one – Evaluation of Love Your Lenses campaign



Love Your Lenses Week 2018 – Evaluation Summary

30 April 2018

Love Your Lenses Week 2018 aimed to build on the success of the first Love Your Lenses Week in 2017. A campaign plan and revised messaging focusing on the importance of hand-washing informed campaign activity. Revisions were made to existing assets (website/toolkit) to reflect the new plan and a suite of new assets (news story, infographics, visuals and mnemonic) were produced to support 2018 activity.

Stakeholder Engagement

Following feedback from LYL Week 2017, engagement with stakeholders started earlier in the planning phase of LYL Week 2018. 2018 campaign messaging was well received by stakeholders who saw the hand-washing message as important and relevant to practice.

2018 saw the addition of **three new, major industry supporters**: Boots, Specsavers and the Association of Optometrists. Stakeholders supported the week in different ways, such as sharing **content on social media, displaying posters** in store and through the development of a **new online film** about effective hand-washing. Downloads of the **stakeholder toolkit increased in 2018 to 375** (from 351 in 2017).

Media

Hand-washing was used as a news hook in 2018 in order to broaden the issue out to as wide an audience as possible. Following the development of press releases for tabloid and broadsheet media, and extensive engagement with journalists, coverage was generated in **The Sun, BBC Radio Manchester, BBC Radio Three Counties and BDaily**, with a combined audience reach of **1,938,000 people**. The tone and content of the articles was good and aligned well to the campaign messaging.

Feedback received from other journalists (e.g. The Express, PA), indicated that even though the appeal had been broadened to a more mainstream audience through references to hand-washing, contact lenses are still seen as **too 'niche' for widespread mainstream coverage**. Generating wider coverage would be possible using 'shock' tactics (e.g. those used in the 2017 Halloween/cosmetic lenses story), however, this approach is considered to be too risky for Love Your Lenses Week, which relies so heavily on industry support.

Social Media

Overall there were fewer tweets, posts and 'Love Your Lenses' mentions surrounding LYL Week 2018 than were seen in the same period in 2017. This may

have been caused by a lack of mainstream online news articles in 2018, which are more readily shareable than print or broadcast content.

However, the potential **total number of people reached by social media increased to 1,690,000+ in 2018** (from 1,092,000+ in 2017) suggesting that **more influential channels shared LYL Week content in 2018**.

Highlights included the sharing of the 'Rule of THUMB' infographic and visuals by high-profile social media channels such as Specsavers.

Website Activity

There was a slight reduction in web traffic in the period before, during and after Love Your Lenses Week 2018 compared to the same period in 2017. This is primarily due to a large spike in traffic that came as a result of the BBC Magazine story in 2017.

The email to registrants resulted in fewer web hits in 2018 than 2017. This may be due to people already being aware of the Love Your Lenses campaign in 2018. An alternative explanation might be that the email came at the same time as revalidation information in 2017, which increased the open rate of the emails.

Future considerations

Stop?

1. **LYLW reliance on mass consumer news PR.** Mass consumer news PR is achievable using 'shock' or 'trivia' tactics, however, these are not considered to be appropriate for this campaign. 2018 consumer PR activity aimed to make the issue as mainstream and relevant as we feel is possible while staying true to the purpose of the campaign. While there were some good media hits, it is felt that alternative methods for reaching consumers could yield a better return on investment.

Keep on?

2. Investing in the website and SEO (search engine optimisation) as an all-year-round resource.
3. Activating and coordinating stakeholders/partners for LYL Week.

Start?

4. **Highly targeted consumer PR focused audiences/lifestyles.** For example, a discreet campaign specifically targeting e.g. swimmers using targeted media channels and stakeholders from outside the optical industry.
5. **Laying the ground for a sustainable, long term LYL future.** Consider the long term future for Love Your Lenses campaign and consider greater involvement of potential key partners.