



# LEG ULCER PATHWAY AUDIT (LUPA) VALUE

## Tissue Viability Nurse



**Caroline Hunter**  
Community Lead – Tissue Viability Nurse  
Specialist  
Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

I rely on nurses, GPs and even patients themselves (including family members) to refer people who have had leg ulcers that are not healing as expected. It is vital that healthcare professionals feel empowered to do this task as soon as it is required. Failure to do so often leads to people receiving care which feels endless, along with what can be many years of unnecessary suffering.

Implementing a clear and consistent pathway is key to improving leg ulcer healing rates and reducing their recurrence. This will have a huge positive impact not only on these people's quality of life, but also their family members and healthcare professionals.

## District Nurse



**Dawn Dunn**  
District Nurse Sister  
Guy's & St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

I have run a venous leg ulcer clinic for the past 24 years and also nurse these types of ulcers in the community. I have seen first-hand the pain, misery and helplessness experienced by patients suffering with leg ulcers; shared in their relief at being healed as well as their frustrations and disappointment upon recurrence.

Treating venous leg ulcers in the community can be time and resource intensive as typically, these patients require 2-3 visits per week. The finalised LUPA Pathway empowers me to promptly identify and refer patients to Specialist Services thus ensuring they receive the care they need and deserve. Efficient referring like this means faster healing times (and happy patients!) which in turn, increases my capacity so that I can provide better care to more people.

## Vascular Surgeon

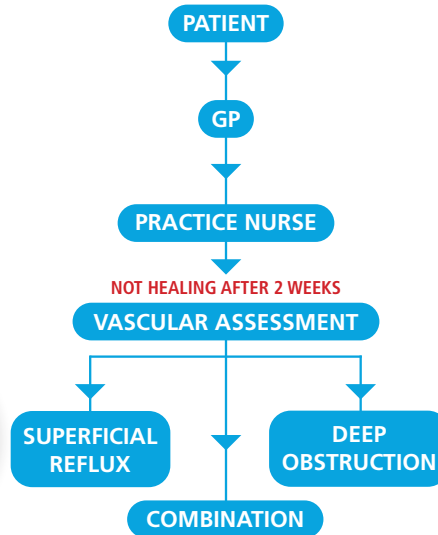


**Stephen Black** is a Consultant Vascular Surgeon and Reader in venous surgery at King's Health Partners. He has a special interest in problems associated with venous disease and in particular venous leg ulcers.

Venous leg ulcers are often a manifestation of one or many underlying, and complex, venous health issues. Addressing these issues is vital to ensuring ulcers can heal, and most importantly reduce their recurrence. To achieve this, people need their healthcare professionals – from their general practitioner to their nurses – to understand how they can contribute to deliver the best outcome for their patients. A common, consistent pathway is a way to achieve this and improve the lives of many left adrift in the NHS. A leg ulcer causes lifelong misery to patients and results in significant social deprivation to many. We need a concerted, co-ordinated effort to deal with this problem.

Patients with venous leg ulcers suffer enormously. Venous leg ulcers (VLUs) are painful and significantly disruptive to the patient's capacity to lead a normal, independent life. The system costs associated with the management of VLUs are significant and estimated at around a billion pounds annually.

The Leg Ulcer Pathway Audit (LUPA) study was established to evaluate a new care pathway based on integrating all elements of care around patient need. Results fulfil the promise of improved patient outcomes. Beyond the clinical data, we spoke to those who have an interest in improving the care landscape.



## General Practitioner



**Dr Harpal Harrar** is a senior partner in a busy LAMBETH practice where he has worked for over 20 years. His previous role as a Governing Board Member for Lambeth Clinical Commissioning group allows him to understand the resource strain to the system from chronic diseases.

The scale of the issue of people with leg ulcers is significant. I regularly see patients with this chronic disease that affects their legs at my practice. Often we see this after a minor injury in susceptible patients. It is a complex area, and clarity in what is the best approach and treatment for them is welcomed. It can be very distressing for patients with pain and itching and can take up significant practice time resource.

I am relieved that the team at St Thomas' has developed this tool, as it will support my surgery in acting decisively and ensuring people receive the care they need.

## Patient

**Mr Leonard Thomas**  
Board Member, Revolving Doors  
Mr Thomas has endured with venous health issues and currently receives treatment at the Pulross Intermediate Care Centre

As someone who has struggled with venous health issues, I can bear witness to how difficult it is to get the care I needed across all levels.

At the time I had very little knowledge of what was causing my legs to have these wounds that would not heal. I assumed that my varicose veins were a cosmetic problem. I was very wrong about this; it was only until I spoke to a vascular specialist that I understood the magnitude of the issue, and how we could address it.

## Practice Nurse



**Julia Gale**  
Practice Nurse, MGMP & Hambleden Clinic

I have been made very aware of the need for a more organised, better resourced service for our patients with leg ulcers in Southwark. Having such a condition can affect all areas of someone's life, stopping them doing what they enjoy, giving discomfort and affecting their ability to get out and about. Caring for such wounds is complex and requires commitment from both nurse and patient as healing requires regular weekly or twice weekly dressings, plus an in depth knowledge of wound care and bandaging techniques.

The LUPA Pathway will provide an efficient and much needed route to improve the care of my patients. If their ulcer has not healed after 2 weeks, I can refer them on to LUPA, so they can receive the specialist care they need. This should lead to faster healing, which also means they can get back to enjoying life sooner and subsequently need less of my time. I can't wait for this service to happen, as it will have a tremendous impact on my patients. It will also greatly benefit my fellow Southwark Practices Nurses.

## Vascular Specialist Nurse



**Vanessa Harvey**  
Vascular Clinic Nurse Specialist  
Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

In my opinion, venous leg ulcers are one of the worst debilitating health problems a person can have. Malodorous, oozing, perpetual open wounds on your leg are life-changing, life-limiting and can affect anyone no matter the age or lifestyle. Often those that suffer from them, do not realise there is specialist care and treatment available that may significantly improve their quality of life.

We hope to help give patients with non-healing venous leg ulcers a chance by assessing, diagnosing and treating the underlying disease. As a vascular clinical nurse specialist, I can facilitate the new pathway and serve as the key point of access for these patients. I can act as the link between the other health care professionals and support the patient through their journey to a healed ulcer. Our team has a focus and passion for helping these patients reduce their pain and get back to living their lives. VLU's need the same specialist dedication as other health problems.



I consider myself fortunate to have received quick, compassionate care from a committed NHS team. I know many are not as fortunate as I am and live in pain and isolation without knowing that help is available. Early treatment leads to improved outcomes, and I encourage people to speak about their experience and pain as soon as possible.

**I am eternally grateful to the NHS team for their help. They gave me back my legs.**