



General Optical Council
Annual Report, Annual Fitness to Practise
Report and Financial Statements for the
Year Ended 31 March 2017

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April 2016

Our new Standards of Practice came into effect, with separate standards for students and fully-qualified registrants for the first time.

July 2016

Our Public Perceptions research showed that most people are satisfied with opticians, but still tend to visit the GP first with eye problems.



May 2016

We published new hearings and indicative sanctions guidance - to reflect legal and regulatory changes - and keep our decisions fair and proportionate.

November 2016

Results from a survey of over 4,000 registrants showed that most are keen to get involved in enhanced optical services. But over half had, at some point in their career, felt pressured to meet commercial targets at the expense of patient care.

May 2016

We announced our Education Strategic Review, assessing the current system of optical education and training to prepare registrants for the future.



December 2016

We launched our Education Strategic Review by asking people how education may need to change in the future.



March 2017

We published guidance on the duty of candour, to help registrants meet our requirements. Guidance on obtaining patient consent followed in April.

January 2017

Gareth Hadley was reappointed as our Chair for a second four-year term.



February 2017

Council agreed our new Strategic Plan, placing particular emphasis on the learning and development of optometrists and dispensing opticians.

March 2017

We worked with a wide range of stakeholders and patient groups to promote the first Love Your Lenses Week, which encouraged patients to look after their eyes through better contact lens care, regular eye tests and contact lens check-ups.

Message from the Chair



This time last year I wrote about how important our Education Strategic Review will be to prepare optometrists and dispensing opticians for future roles and so continue to ensure patient safety.

I am therefore delighted to report that our stakeholders have thrown themselves into engaging with the review with enthusiasm and commitment.

Their response to the call for evidence with which we kicked off the review was thoughtful, positive and detailed. Educators, employers, charities and professional bodies have all acknowledged the rapid rate of change in the optical sector, and the importance of education keeping pace with that.

It has given us a great deal of things to consider as we enter the next phase of the project, which will involve developing a proposal for change. As we do so, though, ongoing engagement with those stakeholders, calling on their expertise, will be vital to ensure project success.

The future of education is rightly front and centre of our new strategic plan for the next three years. However, we have other vital work to do as well.

A targeted approach to regulation is essential – thoroughly understanding the risks in the sector we regulate, and targeting regulation accordingly means continuing to boost our research capability to fully understand the views of patients, the wider public, our registrants and other stakeholders.

We will continue with our programme of organisational transformation. Our move to the new premises in Farringdon has had an extremely positive effect on the organisation. However, we have to continue improving the way we work to ensure we are responsive, easy to deal with and handle complaints faster.

It's a strategic plan for three exciting years and I look forward to leading the GOC through them, working with our stakeholders every step of the way. This will build on the achievements of the last year.

In particular, it was especially pleasing to note that registrants responded so positively to our new Standards of Practice. These standards reflect good practice across the healthcare professions, while supporting optical professionals in the development of their roles.

Importantly, our research showed that 85 percent of registrants were confident in their ability to meet the standards. We have sought to augment that understanding by issuing new guidance on gaining patient consent and the duty of candour.

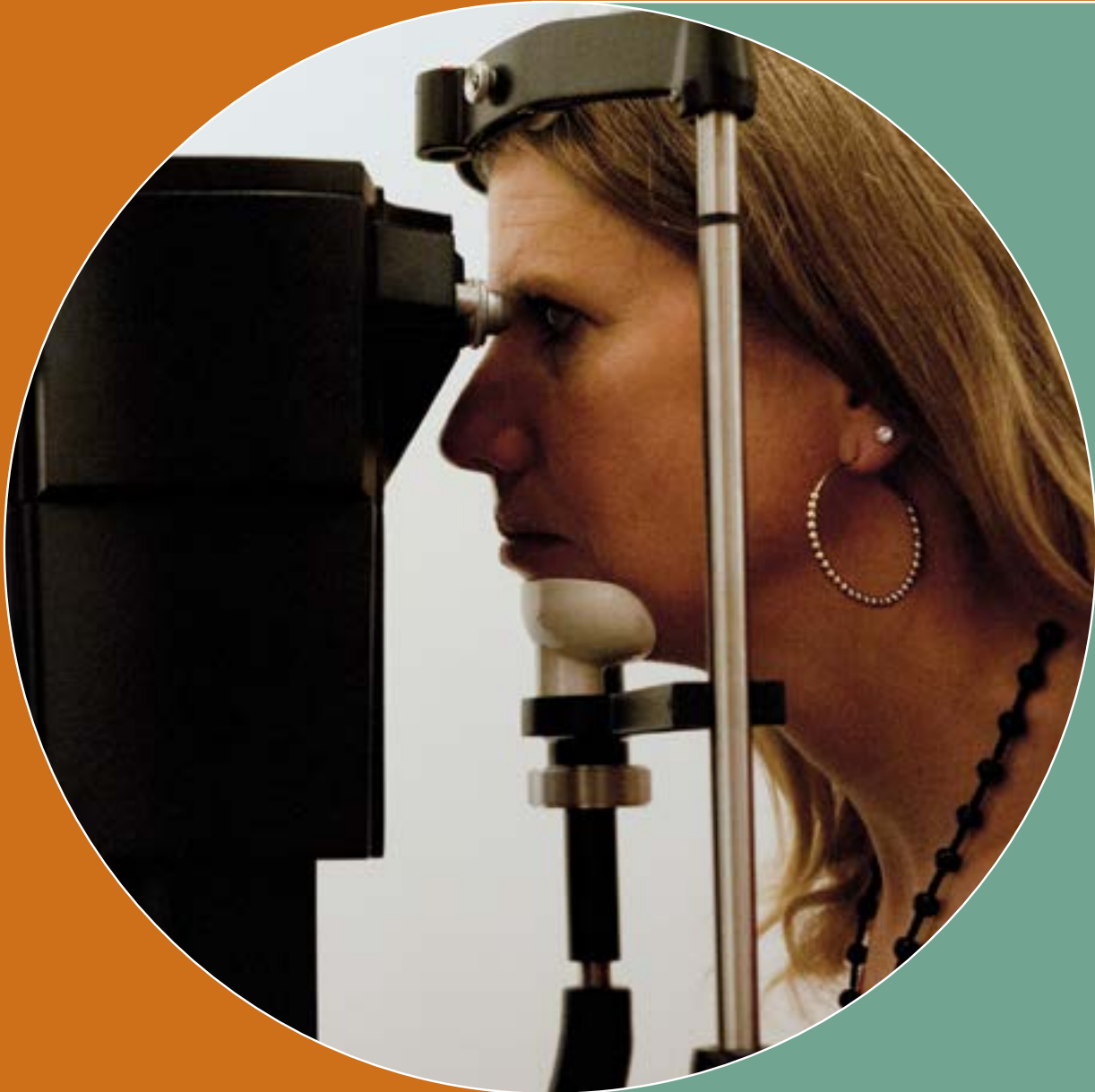
Another highlight for the Council was the success of the Love Your Lenses Week from 25-31 March 2017, which saw both patients and the optical industry coming together to promote good contact lens care. The campaign highlighted that contact lenses and water don't mix and encouraged contact lens wearers to have regular check-ups.

In addressing future challenges, the GOC staff will continue to work hard for the benefit of public protection against the backdrop of a fascinating and fast-changing landscape, with new technologies, new treatments and new ways of working, transforming the roles that optometrist and dispensing opticians play in delivering eye care.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to our outgoing Chief Executive and Registrar, Samantha Peters, for her hard work and dedication over the last six years. I wish her all the best for the future. I would also like to welcome our new Chief Executive and Registrar, Vicky McDermott, who joined us in September and will ensure we address the challenges of the future.

Gareth Hadley
Chair of the GOC

How We Deliver Public Benefit





Introduction

The trustees present their report on the activities we have undertaken over 2016/17 to fulfil our statutory role and charitable purpose, and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2017. In preparing this report, the trustees have complied with the Charities Act 2011 and applicable accounting standards. The statements are in the format required by the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) FRS 102. We have complied with the guidance of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission in determining the activities we undertake.

We are the regulator for the optical professions in the UK. As of 31 March 2017, there were 29,291 optometrists, dispensing opticians, student opticians and optical businesses on our register, who are known as our 'registrants'. Our charitable purpose and statutory role is to protect and promote the health and safety of members of the public by promoting high standards of professional education, conduct and performance among optometrists and dispensing opticians and those training to be optometrists and dispensing opticians.

We have four core functions, all of which are directed toward public benefit:

- Setting standards for optical education and training, performance and conduct;
- Accrediting and quality assuring qualifications leading to registration;
- Maintaining a register of individuals who are qualified and fit to practise, train or carry on business as optometrists and dispensing opticians; and
- Investigating and acting where registrants' fitness to practise, train or carry on business is impaired.

Most of our income comes from registrant fees, which is used to further our charitable purpose. **Table one** sets out the annual fees which registrants are required to pay for entry or retention on our register. In 2016/17, we implemented a small increase, with the fees for students frozen at £25. While recognising the impact this has on our registrants, the increase was required to ensure that we have sufficient resources to meet, among other areas, the additional work arising from an increased number of FTP complaints.

Table one: annual registrant fee

Fee levels	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14
Optometrists	£320	£310	£290	£260
Dispensing opticians	£320	£310	£290	£260
Corporate bodies	£320	£310	£290	£260
Students	£25	£25	£25	£20
Low income fee	£220	£210	£190	£160

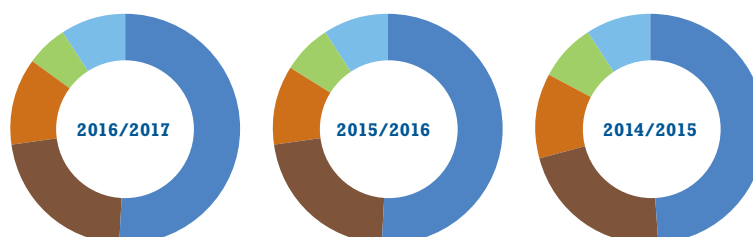
Table two shows a breakdown of registrants across the UK measured on 31 March 2017 and compares this with the previous two reporting years. We report separately on the diversity of our registrants and registrants subject to FTP investigations, which is available on our website: www.optical.org/en/news_publications/Publications/equality-and-diversity-reports.cfm

Table two: total number of registrants in each GOC category

	2016/17	%	2015/16	%	2014/15	%
Optometrist	15,151	51%	14,776	51%	14,354	49%
Dispensing optician	6,705	22%	6,541	22%	6,430	22%
Student optometrist	3,489	12%	3,341	11%	3,614	12%
Student dispensing optician	1,898	6%	1,933	7%	2,289	8%
Business registrant	2,640	9%	2,545	9%	2,475	9%
TOTAL	29,883	100%	29,136	100%	29,162	100%

Registrant categories

- Optometrist
- Dispensing optician
- Student optometrist
- Student dispensing optician
- Business registrant





Our strategy and performance

Our strategic plan 2014–17 (www.optical.org/en/about_us/strategic_plan/index.cfm) provided the focus for our work in delivering public benefit. Our objectives are summarised in **Figure one** below.

Figure one: summary of strategic objectives



Performance against our strategic objectives

Overall we delivered a significant amount of change and made good progress with our strategic objectives. Our progress has been limited by the following challenges:

- Improving our handling of FTP while managing a higher level of complaints;
- Developing our infrastructure to ensure we are able to be effective and efficient in the delivery of our responsibilities;
- Delivering improvements to improve the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and internal control, including improving our information governance processes and embedding a compliance culture; and
- Ensuring the organisation is able to keep up with our extensive change management programme.



How We Deliver Public Benefit



How we are promoting higher standards across the optical professions

We set standards of practice for our registrants, who have a duty to maintain a good standard of practice and care and show respect to all people. Our registrants must use their professional judgement to apply the standards in their personal and professional conduct at all times to maintain the health, safety and well-being of patients.

Our new standards for fully-qualified registrants came into effect on 1 April 2016. We also created guidance to support registrants in meeting our standards around the duty of candour and gaining patient consent.

Through our system of accrediting and quality-assuring optical education training and qualifications, we set standards to ensure that those who register with us, having successfully completed their training and achieved the required qualification, are competent to practise. This year we conducted a series of quality assurance visits to education providers: five optometry; two dispensing optics; two contact lens; and two therapeutic prescribing. We also initiated a review of our accreditation and quality assurance processes to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.

Once qualified, it is essential that all registrants keep their skills up to date, including taking account of changes in optical practice, in order to maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of patients. Continuing Education and Training (CET) provides the lifelong learning that will help keep knowledge and skills up to date and support registrants to practise safely and effectively throughout their careers.

How we are increasing trust and awareness

It is important that patients are able to make informed decisions about their optical care and easily raise any concerns with us. We do this by ensuring that our public

registers remain accurate and accessible. This year we strengthened our processes for maintaining the integrity of our registers, leading us to pass the PSA's third registration standard¹ which we had not done so in 2014/15. We plan to make further identified process changes to ensure the integrity of data held on the Register in the year ahead and continue to review the information held on the Register to identify further improvements.

We undertake activities to maintain public trust and confidence in the optical professions, which includes protecting the public from unregistered persons who are not bound by our standards, as well as from dishonest individuals who mislead patients as to their registration status. This year we have continued to implement our strategy toward tackling illegal practice in the optical sector by dealing with complaints about illegal practices and working with a range of our stakeholders to promote safe contact lens wear. Our *Love Your Lenses Week* achieved significant coverage across traditional and social media, highlighting the importance of seeing an optometrist or contact lens optician for regular aftercare, and of getting across the message that contact lenses and water do not mix. We also worked collaboratively with the Trading Standards Institute to raise awareness of the dangers of zero-powered contact lenses (ZPLs) (also known as cosmetic or fashion contact lenses).

In accordance with our statutory responsibilities, it is vital that we keep the information we hold secure. This year we have improved our approach to information governance to develop our collective knowledge and strengthen our culture in handling data. During the year, there was one data breach reported to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The ICO recognised the swift and appropriate action we took to minimise any arising risk and, as a result, did not take any enforcement action against us.





How we are improving complaints handling

To protect the public, we investigate allegations that any of our registrants may not be fit to practise, acting against those who fail to meet our standards of practice. This year we continued to take quick action in cases that present the most serious patient safety risks and have maintained the time it takes us to impose an interim order (IO) at three weeks. Our independent audit of case decisions has provided a good level of confidence in the integrity and quality of our decisions.

In 2015 we initiated a FTP complaints strategy project to deliver changes to our process with the aim of speeding up the time it takes to reach a FTP decision for the benefit of both patients and registrants. This year we made a number of changes: we believe that these will lead to long-term, sustainable improvements in both the quality of service we provide to registrants and complainants and in our end-to-end timescales. These changes include:

- Implementation of a new triage system;
- Implementation of a streaming process for cases that proceed from triage to investigation;
- Implementation of a pilot to 'front-load' more serious/complex cases (to eliminate the need for investigative work post-referral to the FTP Committee);
- Appointment of an in-house optometrist clinical advisor; and
- Implementation of a new Listing Protocol to ensure that cases are listed for hearing by the FTP Committee at the earliest possible opportunity.

Having improved our end-to-end median time for progressing complaints through to a final FTP Committee decision in 2015/16, we are disappointed that the median time has slipped in 2016/17. However, we are pleased to have seen improvements in the time it has taken to progress new cases through the triage and investigation stages of the process, where improvement work has been most focused to date. Further information on our FTP work is included in section two of this report.

In order to ensure patient concerns are dealt with by the appropriate body, we work effectively with others to share information regarding concerns. This year we continued to share information with NHS England. We established links with NHS Action Fraud and have improved our communication links with the larger optical businesses. Amongst other things, these links will enable us to obtain patient records more quickly in urgent (potential interim order) cases.

We have continued to work closely with the Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS) in the handling of optical consumer complaints. The OCCS received 1,399 enquiries in 2016/17 – an increase of 45 percent from 2015/16 – reaching a resolution in 98 percent of cases. More information about the work of the OCCS is contained in their annual report, available from their website².

As part of our work to protect the public from unregistered persons, we revised our prosecution protocol to clarify our approach to handling illegal practice complaints on a risk-based approach, targeting our resources at those cases that provide the greatest risk of harm to the public. We opened 113 cases and closed 329, mostly related to ZPL complaints.

During the year, we have improved our corporate complaints process so that we can monitor trends easily, identify and implement lessons learned and be clearer and more transparent in our responses. We have received positive feedback from a number of complainants on our new approach. In total, we investigated and responded to 23 corporate complaints. We are grateful to those who raise their concerns with us, as it helps us identify learning which we use to inform future policies and practice.

How we are delivering high-quality services to the public and the professions

We place great importance on being open and responsive in our dealings with registrants and the public. We believe it is important that the people affected by our work have a say in how we operate and that it is vital that patients and the public have a strong input into our work. We are pleased about the extent to which stakeholders engaged with our public consultations³ on:

- Our Education Strategic Review;
- Our Strategic Plan;
- Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy; and
- Guidance on consent and the duty of candour.

In addition to public consultation, we spoke and exhibited at conferences which enabled us to connect with people and organisations with whom we work. We visited universities with a roadshow for first and final year students on GOC-approved courses, helping them to understand our role and answer any questions.

This year we made greater use of online services to receive and handle complaints and maintain our Register by running our registration and retention process online. We understand how important it is for registration to be accessible, user-

¹ The PSA's annual review of our performance for 2015/16 was published on 11 May 2017 and can be found on their website at www.professionalstandards.org.uk

² www.opticalcomplaints.co.uk/docs/default-source/Literature/occs-report-2016-2017.pdf?sfvrsn=4

³ Details of these consultations are available via our website: www.optical.org/en/get-involved/consultations/past-consultations.cfm



friendly and carried out in a timely manner. In order to improve these processes, we initiated an internal review of all public-facing registration documentation to ensure it is accessible and informative. The increased use of digital services led to a saving of £50,000 and to more registrants renewing their registration with us on time.

To further our transparency, we publish papers and minutes of Council meetings held in public, the register of interests for Council and committee members and a register of gifts and hospitality. During the year we received 42 Freedom of Information requests and this year we started to publish our responses on our website. We completed 38 (91 percent) of requests within the statutory timeframe. We received eight subject-access requests made under the Data Protection Act 1998 (52 in 2015/16) and responded to them all within the statutory timeframe. In this area, we have developed a more customer-focused approach to handling requests, explaining the process and the information that we would provide under the relevant legislation, signposting to relevant organisations where required. This approach has attracted positive feedback from requesters.

How we are implementing a targeted and proportionate system of regulation

We recognise the importance of having an effective system of regulation to ensure we can protect and promote public health and safety. The basis on which we regulate is set out in the Opticians Act 1989, which we believe requires updating in order to allow us to introduce a new, more relevant and proportionate model of regulation for the optical sector, introduce more efficiency to our FTP process, and to better protect patients and the public. In order to make the changes to our legislation, we will need to persuade Parliament to revise the Opticians Act 1989.

Over the past year we have continued to engage with the Government and the devolved administrations to develop proposals for the future of professional regulation, including revisions to the Opticians Act, to ensure that legislation will support continued public protection against the backdrop of an optical sector that is changing rapidly. In particular, we consider that the provisions of the Act which require us to register undergraduate students are no longer necessary and we have previously identified that the current approach to business regulation is not fit for purpose.

How we are improving our evidence base

Our role in protecting and promoting the public's health and safety means that we must ensure our work is informed by an understanding of the public's perspective and our decisions are based on sound evidence. We have a rolling programme of dedicated research, designed to gain the views of registrants, patients, the public and stakeholders, to inform our policy development and measure our performance.

This year, we published our second public perceptions survey to understand the public's opinion of the optical

professions and their expectations of us as a regulator. The research considered the views and experiences of 3,000 members of the public (patients and non-patients). It enabled us to put ourselves in the public's shoes, to understand their experience of going to the opticians and why some might be deterred from doing so, and their experience if something goes wrong when receiving optical services. We will use this research to inform the future development of our standards and guidance and to identify any areas where we consider there may be room for improvement in optical practice and reputation.

We also conducted surveys of all our registrants, and 30 of our key stakeholder organisations. This research helped us to develop a targeted and proportionate strategic plan for 2017-20 and identify areas where we can improve our service delivery.

We commenced our Education Strategic Review with a 'call for evidence'. The review is designed to ensure that education programmes and qualifications leading to GOC registration, properly equip optical professionals to meet the changing needs of patients, and the challenges of a dynamic sector.

Carrying out impact assessments as part of our policy development work is an important way of ensuring that our policy proposals are informed by sound evidence. During the year we developed an impact assessment tool to ensure that privacy, equality and human rights impacts are considered alongside regulatory impacts.

As part of our stakeholder engagement strategy, we increased our engagement across all four nations of the UK and with groups representing patients and the public. We engaged extensively in the devolved nations, particularly around the future of education.

How we are achieving organisational change

We are clear that we need to change and improve in order to continue to protect the public and regulate the optical professions effectively. We approach this challenge with an open mind – we are ready to embrace new ways of working: we do not assume that regulating the optical professions by carrying out our functions in the traditional way automatically leads to the best outcomes for the public.

We understand the importance of ensuring that our employees and members have the support and training they need to carry out their roles effectively, and offering opportunities for them to develop and grow.

We have run three employee surveys to help us measure employee engagement, gain insight and improve organisational performance. We have continued to give employees the opportunity to contribute. Our surveys showed that the score for employee engagement is above the BMG benchmark.



We are pleased that our employee turnover level has reduced from 21 percent last year to 18 percent this year, a significant improvement from 41 percent in 2013/14, and believe that all our work to change and improve has contributed to this reduction.

In order to ensure our finances are stable and well-managed, we have strengthened the links between our budgeting and business planning processes and enhanced our financial reporting, budgeting, modelling and forecasting.

We have reviewed our IT infrastructure and security practices and have a number of changes and improvements to ensure our IT infrastructure is fit for the challenges of the organisation and to establish a formal policy framework for IT security.

We are committed to ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are understood, embedded and promoted within our organisation. We are pleased to have achieved a number of key outcomes including:

- Publication of our annual EDI monitoring report⁴ which includes progress in embedding EDI across all aspects of our work and planned actions, as well as diversity monitoring information;
- Development of our EDI strategy 2017-2020;
- Continuing to work with a translation and interpretation provider *The BigWord* to make us more accessible to the public;
- Providing unconscious bias and EDI training to employees and members (we believe this contributes to fairer processes and decision-making, more diverse member representation and a more inclusive culture);
- Improving the quality of our impact assessments and understanding of our employees; and
- Improving our capacity for EDI monitoring to enable us to better monitor the fairness of our policies and processes.

In conducting our public business in Wales, we treat the Welsh and English languages on the basis of equality. Our Welsh language scheme identifies how we administer this principle. We view bilingual provision as an important aspect of service quality rather than solely as a legal requirement. We have also engaged with the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Welsh Government around their forthcoming Welsh Language Standards.

How we measure our performance

We have a performance framework which enables us to draw on a range of sources of information and analysis in order to assess our performance. We are developing our approach to performance measurement and are keen to ensure that we measure the quality of our work and outcomes in terms of delivering public benefit, as well as pursue stretching and meaningful performance targets.

On a quarterly basis, we monitor our performance in the delivery of our business plan and use a range of key performance indicators to assure the delivery of our regulatory responsibilities and progress towards achieving our strategic objectives. Our performance reports are published on our website and we welcome the public to our quarterly Council meetings to hear the discussion.

How our performance is measured externally

Like all other UK healthcare regulators, our performance is assessed externally by the PSA. The assessment focusses on whether we have met the PSA Standards of Good Regulation, which describe the outcomes the PSA expects to achieve through our regulatory functions.

The most recent PSA performance review in 2015/16 assessed us as having met 22 of their 24 Standards of Good Regulation, including all standards and education standards⁵. This is an improvement on the previous review in 2014/15 when we met 21 of their 24 standards.

The Authority's report notes a number of changes that we have made to our registration processes to improve the accuracy of the Register. These improvements enabled us to pass the third registration standard, which we did not in 2014/15. We are pleased that they have recognised the significant work undertaken to improve the quality assurance of our Register.

The standards we did not meet relate to information governance and the total time taken to process fitness to practise complaints. The review covered the period 1 April 2015 – 30 September 2016. We have already made significant improvements in our information governance since the period under review. The ICO has recognised the swift and appropriate action taken to minimise any risk arising from breaches and, as a result, did not take any enforcement action against us. We are part way through delivery of an FTP complaints strategy project to change our process with the aim of speeding up the time it takes to reach an FTP decision for the benefit of both patients and registrants.

⁴ www.optical.org/en/news_publications/Publications/equality-and-diversity-reports.cfm

⁵ The PSA's annual review of our performance for 2015/16 was published on 11 May 2017 and can be found on their website at www.professionalstandards.org.uk

The GOC response to the PSA report can be found here www.professionalstandards.org.uk/docs/default-source/publications/performance-reviews/general-optical-council-comments-on-psa-performance-review-2016-relating-to-adjustable-focus-spectacles.pdf?sfvrsn=4



Our plans for 2017/18

In 2017/18 we begin our next three-year strategic plan focused on the following three strategic objectives.



Learning and development of optical professionals

Deliver a strategic review of optical education and training and implement changes to ensure that optical professionals are equipped for future roles



Targeted approach to regulation

Build our evidence base and use the full range of our regulatory levers in a proportionate way to address risks to the public



Organisational transformation

Deliver high quality, efficient services to the public and registrants underpinned by a culture of evaluation and continuous improvement

Our business plan for 2017/18 (www.optical.org/en/about_us/strategic_plan/index.cfm) identifies how we will work towards these strategic objectives by focusing on the following nine projects. We will also be focused on the effective and efficient fulfilment of our regulatory, statutory and support functions, and on building our capacity and capability to ensure that we are equipped to deliver our strategic plan.





Project	Objectives and outcomes	Planned activity
Education strategic review	Deliver a strategic review of optical education and training and implement changes to ensure that education programmes and qualifications leading to GOC registration equip students to meet patients' future needs, as technological change and the increased prevalence of enhanced services alter the roles that optometrists and dispensing opticians play in delivering eye care.	Issue a statement on the call for evidence, develop and consult on proposals for change.
Continuing Education and Training (CET) scheme evaluation	Evaluate the effectiveness of our CET scheme and implement changes to ensure the scheme operates effectively and registrants are safe to practice and encouraged to focus on continuous professional development.	Evaluate the scheme, publish provider and develop and develop proposals for change.
Review of non-UK registration process	Ensure our processes for registering non-UK applicants are fit for purpose and comply with existing legislation so that non-UK qualified registrants meet the UK requirements for registration and are safe to practise.	Develop and implement our non-EEA process and appoint assessors.
Review of the Opticians Act	Review the Opticians Act to identify opportunities and changes required to ensure we have a set of powers that can improve patient safety and organisational effectiveness and efficiency.	Publish a report evaluating the Opticians Act, and consider required changes.
Standards Strategic Review	Evaluate the impact of standards for individual registrants and develop new standards for optical business registrants which reflect good practice and are flexible enough for care to evolve, so we are confident that individual registrants practise in accordance with our standards.	Undertake research and analysis to support development of business standards, evaluate the implementation of individual standards and develop draft business standards.
Safe contact lens use	Increase public awareness of the risks from poor contact lens care and encourage businesses to adopt good practice to ensure public harm is reduced.	Evaluate our <i>Love Your Lenses</i> awareness campaign, plan and implement a second campaign and examine how to improve provision of the aftercare advice.
Fitness To Practise Complaints Strategy	Review our FTP processes and implement changes to ensure we manage FTP complaints in a fair and timely manner.	Evaluate the FTP complaints pilot, implement end-to-end processing and develop, consult on and implement policy changes.
Compliance with the GDPR	Review and implement changes to our information governance processes to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations by May 2018.	Conduct a readiness review and carry out an implementation plan, including the development of consent and information security processes.
Quality Assurance Framework	Develop an organisation-wide quality assurance framework and review, document and streamline processes to ensure we have an effective framework for quality assuring our decisions.	Evaluate FTP controls, illegal practice, and CET processes.



Our risks

Our approach to risk management is set out in our risk management policy. Both Council and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee discuss and review the principal risks and uncertainties regularly throughout the year. The Senior Management Team also regularly monitors existing and emerging corporate risks and mitigating actions. We capture and monitor operational risks through corporate and departmental risk registers.

We continue to maintain robust systems and procedures to mitigate the risk of failure to deliver our statutory functions, which are at the heart of protecting the public. This includes, for example, attention to the areas where individuals:

- Seek fraudulently to gain access to the Register;
- Provide misleading information in an FTP case; or
- Do not comply with the requirements of our standards for CET.

Horizon scanning and being alert to emerging operational and strategic risks are parts of ongoing business oversight.

Some of our key risks come from the external environment, which means we have limited control of the actions that may need to be taken. We continue to monitor and discuss:

- The impact of potential changes in legislation;
- Legislative reform proposals in the UK;
- The implementation of the Welsh Language Standards Regulations 2015; and
- Continuing uncertainty over the structure of the terms and subsequent impacts of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Social risks

We recognise that consumer behaviours and patterns are changing. Consumer spending on optical goods and the number of people buying contact lenses online is likely to increase. There is an associated risk that this will lead to more people buying contact lenses from suppliers outside of the UK which are outside of our jurisdiction and may not comply with UK law. To manage this, we view our illegal practice strategy, including the *Love Your Lenses* campaign, as being important to ensuring that consumers understand how to buy and wear contact lenses safely.

There are plenty of opportunities for optometrists and dispensing opticians to deliver more care in a community high-street setting. However, according to our research, most members of the public still consider opticians primarily to be retailers rather than healthcare professionals. This perception will need to change if the professions are to reach their full potential in delivering care.

Technological risks

In terms of developments within the sector, technological innovation is certain to challenge the boundaries of existing scopes of practice and have an impact on the types of services provided by optical businesses. As the regulator we need to be aware of any changes that might impact public protection. Our Education Strategic Review will ensure that the education of optical professionals keeps pace with these changes; ensuring practitioners are equipped to carry out future roles rather than roles they may have played in the past.

Education risks

The optical education sector continues to change, with an increasing number of academic providers and diversity in the delivery of optical education. This poses challenges for us – to ensure we continue to carry out the effective accreditation and quality assurance of providers and to make sure that our educational standards are being met by providers. To manage this risk, we are reviewing our accreditation and quality assurance processes to ensure they remain fit for purpose and this will continue in 2017/18.



Our people

Our people are central to achieving our charitable purpose and strategic objectives. This section sets out our organisational values – which determine how we undertake our work – and the ways in which our employees and members demonstrate those values.

Our people review

We have seen our employees settle into their new modern environment. The single floor, open plan layout combined with holding all FTP hearings on site has enhanced the way we work together.

We continue to monitor staff engagement using an evidenced based approach through an annual staff satisfaction survey conducted by an independent consultancy. Overall staff engagement, which draws on answers to several questions (LEVI model), has risen to 64 percent from 57 percent at the same time last year. This also compares favourably to the benchmark of 42 percent which is drawn from data across similar organisations. We will continue to survey staff engagement annually, review and learn from the results to continue to foster good employee engagement.

The health and safety of those that work for us is of paramount importance. We are pleased to report that we had no health and safety incidents reported during the year.

Our values

We have three core organisational values that inform our work: how we work within the organisation and how we work with registrants and stakeholders. We are:

- Responsible;
- Forward thinking; and
- Principled.

More details on our organisational values are available on our website:

www.optical.org/en/about_us/mission_and_values/index.cfm



How We Deliver Public Benefit



Set out below are some of the ways in which our people have demonstrated our values over the last year.

Responsible	Forward thinking	Principled
Our new Standards of Practice, including guidance on consent and the duty of candour, will help registrants to understand and meet our expectations of them.	Our Education Strategic Review will equip registrants to meet the challenges of the future in a fast-changing sector, delivering a high standard of care for patients.	Our ongoing staff surveys and 'eye 2 eye' focus groups continue to allow staff an input into how the organisation is run, including involvement in the development of our new strategic plan.
We have made significant progress in improving our information governance to project registrant and public data.	<i>Love Your Lenses Week</i> was an innovative approach to raising patient awareness of how to buy and wear contact lenses safely.	We have continued to consult and engage thoroughly with our stakeholders on all work that affects them, including our new Standards and our Education Strategic Review.
We continue to support closer integration between our business planning and budgeting processes. Our work in this area is invaluable in ensuring we apply resources in the right way.	Our research programme has helped us to better understand the risks in the optical sector and target our resources appropriately.	We continue to prioritise speeding up our FTP complaints handling process in the interests of patients and registrants alike.

Council would like to thank all those working for us for their support and endeavour during 2016/17.





Our structure, governance and management

We are constituted as a body corporate under the Opticians Act 1989, as updated by amending legislation which came into effect on 30 June 2005. We are also registered as a charity by the Charity Commission in England and Wales (registered charity number 1150137). We are accountable to Parliament through the Privy Council, to the Charity Commission, and to our beneficiaries. We aim to be transparent in the work we undertake and how our work delivers public benefit, including through this annual report.

Our Council

Our Council is the governing body of the GOC and Council members are the charity trustees. They are collectively responsible for directing the affairs of the GOC, ensuring that it is solvent, well-run, and delivers public benefit. All Council members share the same duty of public protection and oversee the full range of regulatory processes.

The primary functions of Council are:

- **Policy and strategic direction.** Providing strategic direction and making decisions in the interests of public protection;
- **Performance monitoring.** Ensuring our statutory functions are delivered effectively and efficiently by holding the Executive to account, monitoring performance and ensuring an equality of opportunity, accountability, openness and transparency;
- **Financial stewardship.** Oversight of financial performance and providing active financial stewardship to further the organisation's purposes and achieve value for money; and
- **Accountability, communication, and stakeholder engagement.** Publishing an annual report, ensuring effective communication with the public, registrants, professional bodies, the government, and other interested parties and promoting public confidence in regulation.

Our Council is comprised of twelve members, of whom six are registrants and six are lay members (see page 26). Members are drawn from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Biographies can be viewed on our website. One Council member is appointed as a Senior Council Member (SCM) to carry out the Chair's appraisal, provide a sounding board for the Chair, and serve as an intermediary for Council members, the Executive and stakeholders as necessary. Brian Coulter fulfilled this role until September 2016 and Fiona Peel from October 2016 to March 2017.

In September 2016, Brian Coulter concluded his second term of office. Council expresses its gratitude to Brian for the service he has provided over the last eight years. We are delighted to confirm the appointment of Sinead Burns as

Brian's successor; Sinead commenced her first term of office on 1 October 2016.

On 31 March 2016, Paul Carroll, Peter Douglas, Liam Kite and Fiona Peel concluded their second terms of office. Council expresses its gratitude to them for the service they have provided over the last eight years. We were delighted to confirm the appointment of four new Council members: Josie Forte, Mike Galvin, Clare Minchington and Roshi Samra, who joined Council on 1 April 2017. During the year, our Chair, Gareth Hadley, and two Council members, Helen Tilley and Scott Mackie, were each reappointed for second four-year terms.

All Council members are appointed by the Privy Council. We are responsible for managing the process of appointment and reappointment. Prior to appointment by the Privy Council, the PSA assesses whether the process we have used in recommending the appointment has met the principles of merit, fairness, transparency, openness and credibility. In the appointment of Council and committee members, we aim to ensure that members have a variety of backgrounds, skills and experience in order that Council can be as effective as possible.

Effectiveness of governance

We believe that effective and robust governance ensures probity in the decisions we make and serves to increase confidence in our work. We consider that our practice complies with the principles set out in Good Governance: *A Code for the Voluntary and Community Sector*⁶ to the extent that it is applicable. Council conducts its business in accordance with the seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

This year we undertook the following activities to further enhance the effectiveness of our governance:

- **Management of interests policy:** We recognise it is important to manage interests to ensure probity in our decision-making. This policy provides additional guidance concerning the identification, declaration and management of interests for employees and members.
- **Training on equality, diversity, inclusion and unconscious bias:** We conducted a comprehensive training programme for all employees and members on EDI and have delivered unconscious bias in decision making to groups of decision makers. We are seeing greater awareness of equality and diversity issues and taking steps to ensure our approach is embedded.
- **Speaking up (whistleblowing):** We revised our approach to handling organisational whistleblowing concerns demonstrating our commitment to ensuring

⁶ www.governancecode.org/



all employees, members and those working on our behalf are able actively to contribute to the way in which the organisation is run, and that they are empowered to speak up and raise their concerns. The policy provides key information on who to talk to and how the GOC, as an employer, is committed to promoting a culture of safety and learning where it is safe to raise matters.

Council evaluation

Following good governance practice, Council undertook an annual evaluation of its performance. There were high levels of satisfaction with contribution and decision making and displaying the right values and behaviour. There were lower levels of satisfaction with corporate performance and risk management. The main outcomes of the review are detailed below which were taken into account in developing our new strategic plan.

Induction, appraisal and development

All Council and committee members are inducted, developed and appraised in accordance with our published policies. We hold an annual induction session for newly appointed members as an opportunity for them to meet each other and understand our challenges and priorities. Council members are appraised annually and, in general, committee members biennially. Appraisals are used to support any recommendation for reappointment and identification of development requirements. The member development plan is designed to supplement areas of skills and knowledge that have been identified by members.

Members' conduct

Council (in their role as members and trustees) and committee members have a duty to act impartially and objectively and to

Outcome	Action
Organisational and culture change management	Become a learning organisation, undertaking more performance evaluation and data analysis, and developing capacity and capability to lead change, develop and improve processes. Keep a focus on quality improvement rather than quality assurance. Encourage innovation, act on feedback, and build a culture of customer service. Increase the frequency of checking progress with Council and committees.
Project management	Develop a consistent approach to project management, ensuring projects are resourced appropriately. Ensure projects are a manageable size and project managers have appropriate scoping and planning skills. Ensure all projects have oversight, ownership, clear objectives, a benefits realisation strategy and realistic timelines. Focus on finishing and evaluating projects, with breakpoints to review performance and identify learning.
Council and Executive working together	Increase the amount of combined thinking time, ensuring fresh ideas are considered. Focus on identifying priorities and planning. Ensure the Executive team can lead and make delegated decisions. Embrace and utilise external skills/experience/expertise of Council members and redefine the Council champion role in providing assurance and learning for the rest of the Council and take collective responsibility to make it work. Ensure Council members challenge each other more.
Strategic Risk Management	Develop a strategic risk register and increase Council's oversight of the following key risks to achieving its desired strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GOC's ability to regulate effectively given new developments; • Relationships with key corporate players; • Proper management of regulatory functions; • Leading the profession within the sector and supporting the profession to embrace change; and • The optical professions' knowledge of the changing landscape and associated implications.
Being strategic	Increase the amount of thinking time on strategic issues, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting priorities and strategic direction; • Identifying required resources; • Engaging stakeholders; and • Utilising intelligence.



take steps to avoid putting themselves in a position where their personal interests conflict with their duty to act in the interests of the charity, unless they are authorised to do so, and take steps to avoid any conflict of interest arising as a result of their membership of, or association with, other organisations or individuals. To make this fully transparent, we publish a register of members' interests on our website.

Fees

New member fees were agreed to come into effect on 1 April 2016⁷, following a comprehensive benchmarking exercise in 2015 to ensure that fees were in line with comparator market rates, whilst ensuring value for money.

Attendance

The attendance record of Council members at Council and committee meetings and the fees and expenses of Council members are shown on page 21. There were eight Council

meetings held during the year: four held in public and four held in private. Council considers that it has met sufficiently regularly over the course of the reporting year to discharge its duties effectively. Council is committed to conducting as much of its business as possible in public session; business will usually be transacted in private only if the matter being discussed is commercially or legally sensitive or if the matter being discussed concerns an individual or specific group.

All Council members are required to take part in other activities such as induction, development, strategy, corporate performance and evaluation. All members are required to engage in their own performance appraisal.

Scheme of delegation

Our scheme of delegation sets out those functions retained by Council, delegated to a committee, or delegated to the Chief Executive and Registrar. Council is able to delegate any of its functions with the exception of approving rules.

Fees and expenses

	Registrant or lay member	Home location	Fees £	Expenses £	Attendance ⁸	Committee meeting attendance
Gareth Hadley	Lay (Chair)	England	56,593	566	8/8	Rem 4/4, Nom 3/4 ⁹
Sinead Burns ¹⁰	Lay	Northern Ireland	6,730	874	2/4	
Brian Coulter ¹¹	Lay	Northern Ireland	8,300	1,022	4/4	Rem 0/2, Education 2/3, Nom 1/1
Paul Carroll	Registrant	England	13,460	3,003	6/8	Nom 4/4
Peter Douglas	Lay	England	13,460	1,134	8/8	ARC 3/4
Rosie Glazebrook	Lay	England	13,460	137	8/8	ARC 4/4, Registration 2/2
Liam Kite	Registrant	England	13,460	2,341	8/8	Rem 2/4, Registration 1/2
Scott Mackie ¹²	Registrant	Scotland	16,152	4,890	6/8	Education 4/5
David Parkins	Registrant	England	13,460	–	8/8	Standards 3/3
Fiona Peel ¹³	Lay	Wales	14,960	2,611	8/8	Rem 3/3, Companies 2/2, Education 5/5, Nom 1/1
Helen Tilley	Registrant	Wales	13,460	2,541	8/8	Companies 2/2, Standards 2/3
Glenn Tomison	Registrant	England	13,460	5,667	8/8	ARC 4/4, Standards 3/3
Selina Ullah	Lay	England	13,460	3,044	8/8	Nom 4/4, Education 3/5, Standards 3/3

Key

Committees: Rem – Remuneration, Nom – Nominations, ARC – Audit and Risk Assurance

⁷ www.optical.org/en/about_us/our-governance/index.cfm

⁸ All Council members are required to take part in strategy days, evaluations and performance appraisals, for which they receive no additional remuneration and which are not included in the attendance figures.

⁹ Gareth Hadley was not permitted to attend one meeting of the Nominations Committee which considered his own reappointment.

¹⁰ Sinead Burns was appointed to Council from 1 October 2016.

¹¹ Brian Coulter was the SCM until 30 September 2016.

¹² Scott Mackie's fees are paid via the purchase ledger and include VAT.

¹³ Fiona Peel was appointed as the SCM from 1 October 2016.

How We Deliver Public Benefit



The Executive

Our Chief Executive and Registrar, is responsible for the Executive, which is structured into three interlinked directorates. Decision-making powers are delegated to the Chief Executive and Registrar under the Opticians Act 1989 and other powers are delegated to her from Council. In order to exercise these powers, some are delegated to other members of the Executive.

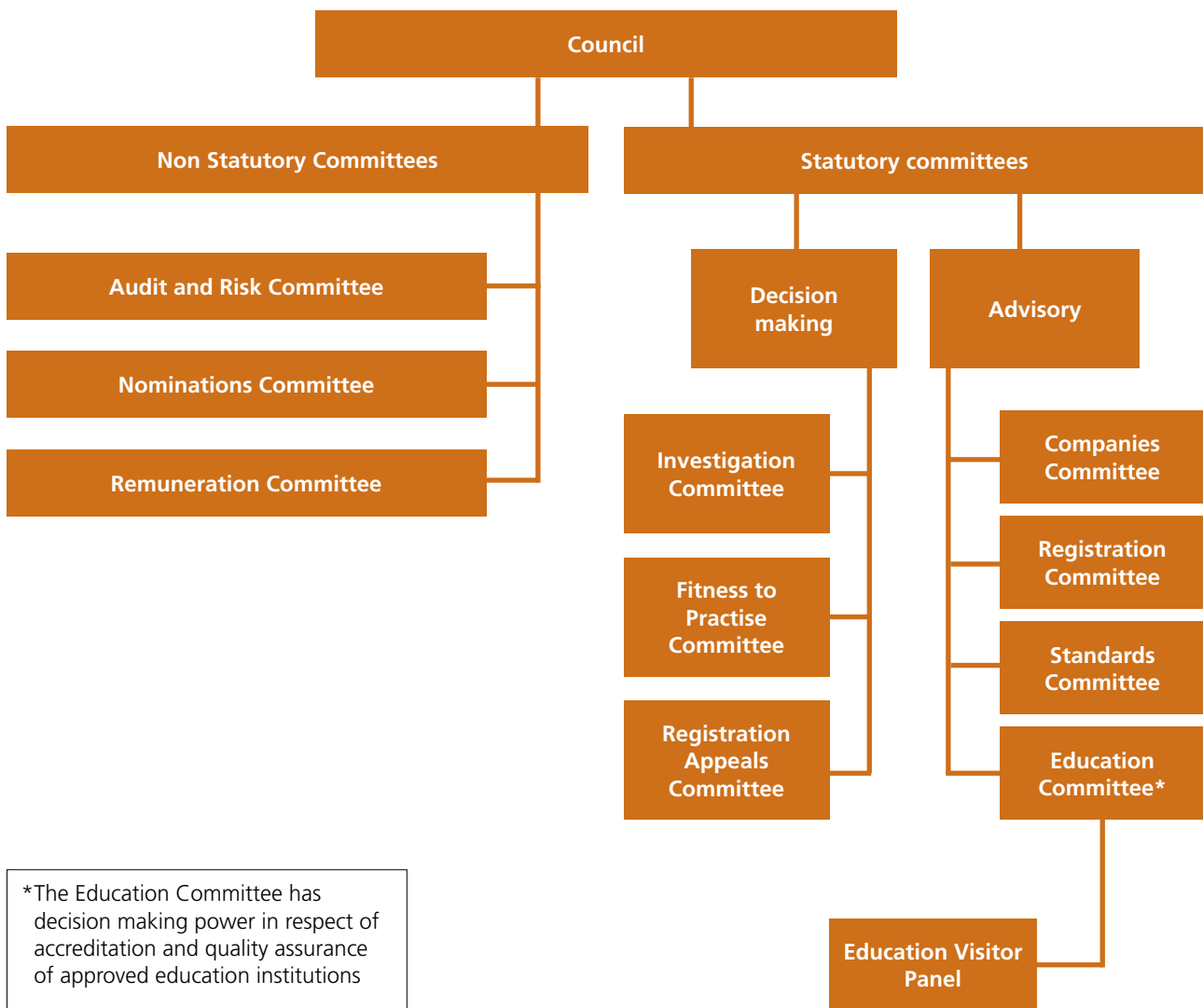
The Director of Strategy, Alistair Bridge, has responsibility for ten functions: education, continuing education and training

(CET), standards, policy, research, communications, governance, compliance, and planning and performance.

The interim Director of Fitness to Practise, Safia Iman (who has replaced Lisa Davis while she is on maternity leave), has responsibility for four functions: case progression, hearings, OCCS and legal compliance.

The Director of Resources, Mark Webster, has responsibility for five functions: registration, human resources, facilities, finance and information technology.

Our governance structure



*The Education Committee has decision making power in respect of accreditation and quality assurance of approved education institutions



In order to exercise its powers, Council delegates certain responsibilities to committees with clearly defined authority and terms of reference.

We view the advisory committees as a valuable source of stakeholder views – alongside views obtained from research, public consultants and other engagement – in shaping Council's thinking and decision-making.

Committees of Council

Council has three non-statutory committees which have been constituted in line with good governance practice.

Audit and Risk Committee

The committee advises and provides assurance to Council on audit, risk and some aspects of governance, and takes some decisions as delegated by Council. In addition to the Council members on the committee, Helen Dearden is appointed as an independent member and she attended all meetings during the year. The role of the independent member is to provide the committee with independent, objective and impartial advice and judgement on audit, risk, governance and charity governance matters. The Chair (Peter Douglas) satisfies the provision under the UK Corporate Governance Code that at least one member of the committee has relevant financial experience.

The committee undertook the following work during 2016/17:

- Reviewed our annual report and accounts, budget-planning timetable and guidance, and external audit findings report, accounting and internal control recommendations;
- Monitored the effectiveness of the internal audit function, including remit and fees, and assessed and approved the internal audit plan;
- Received internal audit reports and monitored the Executive's response;
- Monitored the effectiveness of the external audit provider and advised Council on their reappointment and fees;
- Advised Council on the adequacy of the various policies which fall under the remit of the Committee, approving directly or recommending approval by Council;
- Reviewed the corporate risk register and provided Council with assurances and, where necessary recommendations, relating to the management of risk and the internal control environment; and
- Provided Council with assurances relating to corporate governance and charity governance requirements.

We outsource our internal audit function to Moore Stephens who were appointed in March 2013 for a period of three years, subject to yearly reappointment. At its meeting in April 2016, the committee agreed to the annual reappointment of Moore Stephens to fulfil the internal audit function until 31 March 2017.



How We Deliver Public Benefit



haysmacintyre were appointed as the external auditors for a period of three years commencing 31 March 2014 and continuing for three financial cycles up to and including completion of financial reports for 2016/17. This is subject to annual reappointment. In February 2016, Council approved a recommendation that haysmacintyre be reappointed to undertake the 2016/17 audit.

In line with good governance practice, an effectiveness review of both the internal and external audit functions was undertaken in November 2016, including feedback from the Executive.

During 2016/17, haysmacintyre also carried out the non-audit function of tax filing services. haysmacintyre has procedures in place to ensure that their partners and professional staff comply with both the Ethical Standards and the Guide to Professional Ethics issued by The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. We are satisfied that there are no relationships between haysmacintyre and the GOC which would threaten the external auditors' independence or the objectivity of the audit partner or the audit staff.

Remuneration Committee

The committee advises Council on the payment of Council and committee member fees, the Chief Executive and Registrar and SMT's remuneration, processes to determine executive remuneration, reward and performance management, and takes some delegated decisions. In addition to the Council members on the committee,

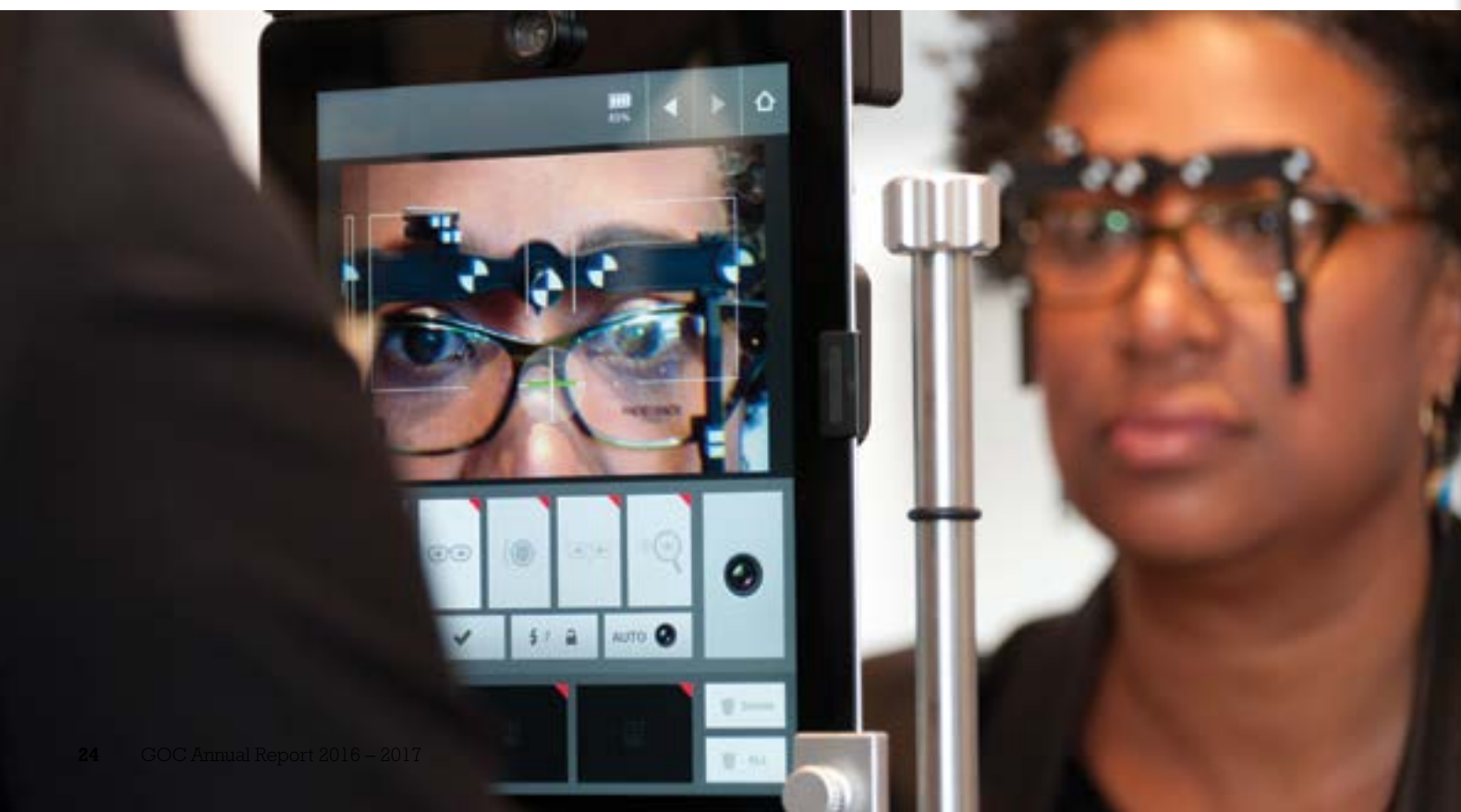
Helen Dearden is appointed as an independent member and she attended all meetings during the year. The independent member acts as an independent advisor on remuneration issues.

The committee undertook the following work during 2016/17:

- Provided assurance on the processes to determine executive remuneration, reward and performance management;
- Reviewed and recommended to Council the SMT appraisal process and remuneration;
- Approved the relevant sections of the 2015/16 annual report in relation to members' fees and expenses; and
- Agreed the remuneration for members of the Investigation Committee (IC) as of 1 January 2017.

Nominations committee

The committee advises Council and takes some delegated decisions in areas of appointment, reappointment, appraisal, evaluation, induction and development of members. In addition to the Council members on the committee, Penny Bennett is appointed as an independent member and she attended all meetings during the year. The independent member provides independent, objective and impartial advice and judgement. In addition, the independent member acts as an independent assessor for appointment and reappointment processes and undertakes the appraisal of our hearing panel Chairs and the Investigation Committee (IC) Chair.





The committee undertook the following work during 2016/17:

- Approving the appointments process for the Education Visitor Panel Chairs, four Council members and a number of statutory advisory committee members;
- The reappointment of the Council Chair and two Council members;
- The reappointment of members to our statutory advisory committees;
- Consideration of member appointment, development and induction processes; and
- Considering how to promote diversity to ensure that the composition of our Council and committees is reflective of the optical profession and wider society.

Statutory Advisory Committees

Six of our committees are statutory as defined under the Opticians Act and related Rules. Some (Education, Investigation, FTP and Registration Appeals) are permitted to make decisions as specified in the Opticians Act 1989 and the other committees are wholly advisory. To ensure that there is cohesion between Council and its committees, each committee (with the exception of the Investigation, FTP and Registration Appeals committees) is chaired by a Council member and their membership includes at least one other Council member. Our committees include members appointed by virtue of the knowledge, skills and experience that they bring. They are appointed by Council, via the Nominations Committee, using open appointment processes based on the principles of merit, fairness, honesty, openness and credibility, and are subject to statutory annual reappointment. During 2016/17 recruitment was undertaken to appoint new members to the Education visitor panel, Education, Standards, Registration and Companies committees.

Education Committee

The committee provides advice and assists Council on matters relating to optical training, education and assessment, including the approval of training establishments and qualifications. The committee reviews our requirements for the content and standard of education, including the CET scheme and recommends changes. The committee met five times during the year. The current members of the committee can be found here: www.optical.org/en/about_us/how_we_work/Education_Committee.cfm.

Standards Committee

The committee provides advice and assists Council on the standards of conduct and performance expected of current and potential registrants, including business registrants. The Committee met three times during the year. The current members of the committee can be found here: www.optical.org/en/about_us/how_we_work/Standards_Committee.cfm

Companies Committee

The committee provides advice and assists Council on matters relating to business registrants (other than in relation to FTP issues). The committee met twice during the year. The current members of the committee can be found here: www.optical.org/en/about_us/how_we_work/Companies_Committee.cfm

Registration Committee

The committee provides advice and assists Council on matters relating to registration, including the rules governing registration and publication of the registers. The committee met twice during the year. The current members of the committee can be found here: www.optical.org/en/about_us/how_we_work/Registration_Committee.cfm

Investigation Committee

When case examiners cannot agree, the committee investigates allegations that a registrant's fitness to practise, carry on business or undertake training is impaired and decides whether the allegation should be referred to the FTP committee and, if not, what the next course of action should be. It considers requests by case examiners for a registrant to be subject to an assessment of their performance or health. The committee met four times during the year. The current members of the committee can be found here: www.optical.org/en/about_us/how_we_work/Investigation_Committee.cfm

Fitness to Practise Committee and Registration Appeals Committee

The FTP committee considers allegations that a registrant's fitness to practise, carry on business or undertake training is impaired. These allegations are referred to the committee by our Investigation committee or case examiners.

The Registration Appeals committee (RAC) is constituted for the purpose of hearing and determining appeals against any decision of the Registrar refusing to enter the name of an individual or body corporate in the Register, or, where the registrant has previously been subject to a sanction of erasure, to restore it to the appropriate Register.

Members of the FTP committee and the RAC are selected from a group of hearing panel members (www.optical.org/en/about_us/People/Hearings_Panel_members.cfm).

Council would like to thank all members who have supported us during 2016/17.



Reference and administrative details

The GOC is the statutory regulator for the optical professions in the UK and is constituted as a body corporate under the Opticians Act 1989, as updated by its section 60 amending legislation which came into effect on 30 June 2005. On 12 December 2012, the GOC was registered as a charity by the Charity Commission in England and Wales (registered charity number 1150137).

GOC registered office and operational address	10 Old Bailey, London, EC4M 7NG																																		
Bankers	Lloyds Banking Group (incorporating Bank of Scotland) 4th Floor, 25 Gresham Street, London, EC2V 7HN																																		
Internal auditors	Moore Stephens LLP 150 Aldersgate Street, London, EC1A 4AB																																		
External auditors	haysmacintyre 26 Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4AG																																		
Investment advisors	Brewin Dolphin Limited 12 Smithfield Street, London, EC1A 9BD																																		
Council	<table> <tr> <td>Gareth Hadley (Chair)</td> <td>(reappointed 19 February 2017 until 18 February 2021)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sinead Burns</td> <td>(appointed 1 October 2016 until 30 September 2020)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Brian Coulter</td> <td>(retired from Council on 30 September 2016)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Paul Carroll</td> <td>(retired from Council on 31 March 2017)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Peter Douglas</td> <td>(retired from Council on 31 March 2017)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rosie Glazebrook</td> <td>(appointed 1 January 2015 until 31 December 2018)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Liam Kite</td> <td>(retired from Council on 31 March 2017)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Scott Mackie</td> <td>(reappointed 1 April 2017 until 31 March 2021)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>David Parkins</td> <td>(appointed 15 March 2016 until 14 March 2020)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fiona Peel</td> <td>(retired from Council on 31 March 2017)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Helen Tilley</td> <td>(reappointed 1 May 2017 until 30 April 2021)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Glenn Tomison</td> <td>(appointed 1 January 2015 until 31 December 2018)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Selina Ullah</td> <td>(reappointed 1 September 2014 until 31 August 2019)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Clare Minchington</td> <td>(appointed 1 April 2017 until 31 March 2021)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Josie Forte</td> <td>(appointed 1 April 2017 until 31 March 2021)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mike Galvin</td> <td>(appointed 1 April 2017 until 31 March 2021)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Roshni Samra</td> <td>(appointed 1 April 2017 until 31 March 2021)</td> </tr> </table>	Gareth Hadley (Chair)	(reappointed 19 February 2017 until 18 February 2021)	Sinead Burns	(appointed 1 October 2016 until 30 September 2020)	Brian Coulter	(retired from Council on 30 September 2016)	Paul Carroll	(retired from Council on 31 March 2017)	Peter Douglas	(retired from Council on 31 March 2017)	Rosie Glazebrook	(appointed 1 January 2015 until 31 December 2018)	Liam Kite	(retired from Council on 31 March 2017)	Scott Mackie	(reappointed 1 April 2017 until 31 March 2021)	David Parkins	(appointed 15 March 2016 until 14 March 2020)	Fiona Peel	(retired from Council on 31 March 2017)	Helen Tilley	(reappointed 1 May 2017 until 30 April 2021)	Glenn Tomison	(appointed 1 January 2015 until 31 December 2018)	Selina Ullah	(reappointed 1 September 2014 until 31 August 2019)	Clare Minchington	(appointed 1 April 2017 until 31 March 2021)	Josie Forte	(appointed 1 April 2017 until 31 March 2021)	Mike Galvin	(appointed 1 April 2017 until 31 March 2021)	Roshni Samra	(appointed 1 April 2017 until 31 March 2021)
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SMT	<p>Samantha Peters, Chief Executive and Registrar Alistair Bridge, Director of Strategy Mark Webster, Director of Resources Lisa Davis/Safia Iman, Director of Fitness to Practise</p>																																		

Our Fitness To Practise Annual Report





Introduction

In order to meet our statutory function and our overarching objective to protect the public, we investigate and act where a registrant's fitness to practise, train or carry on business is alleged to be impaired. We recognise that all professionals may make mistakes during the course of their practice. Our FTP process is designed to assess whether that mistake, conduct or behaviour could reoccur or is so serious that we ought to take action to place restrictions on a registrant's registration.

A concern that a registrant may not be fit to practise can be because of one or more different factors, including:

- Poor professional performance;
- Physical or mental health problems affecting their work;
- Inappropriate behaviour;
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs at work;
- Fraud or dishonesty;
- A criminal conviction or caution; or
- A finding by another regulatory body.

The main offences established by the Opticians Act 1989 are:

- Testing sight when not a registered optometrist;
- Fitting contact lenses when unregistered;
- Selling spectacles, prescription contact lenses or ZPLs without meeting the requirements in the Opticians Act 1989 and/or the Sale of Optical Appliances Order of Council; and
- Misusing a protected title or otherwise pretending to be registered.

We undertake an initial assessment of all concerns raised, to determine whether the matters constitute an allegation of impaired fitness to practise and relate to a registered individual or business. Complaints that do not meet these criteria may be referred elsewhere (for example, to the Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS)). For complaints that meet these criteria, we conduct an investigation to gather relevant information. We keep the referrer informed and provide the registrant with an opportunity to offer a full response to the allegations before case examiners (or the Investigation Committee) determine whether the matter should proceed to a full hearing.

Highlights

During 2016/17 we have undertaken a significant amount of work to review our FTP processes and implement pilot processes for new ways of working. We believe these changes will lead to long-term improvements in both the quality of service we provide to registrants and complainants and to our end-to-end timescales.

We have improved our median time for making a triage decision (whether a full investigation should be opened) from 28 days in 2015/16 to 21 days in 2016/17 (17 days for decisions made under the new process). We have also

improved the time we take to complete the investigation stage of the process from 43 weeks in 2015/16 to 40 weeks in 2016/17. Although we have improved our median time at both triage stage and investigation stage, we are conscious that these improvements may have been impacted by the increase in cases received and we expect to see further improvements (especially at investigation stage) in the coming year. We are disappointed that our end-to-end median time for progressing cases from complaint to final FTPC decision slipped to 121 weeks in 2016/17. It will take time for the changes to impact positively on the end-to-end timescales.

We have continued to maintain the median time taken to impose an interim order at three weeks, protecting the public through quick action in cases that present the most serious patient safety risks. We have appointed an in-house optometric advisor to support our FTP team with the provision of early clinical advice in potentially high-risk clinical cases.

During the year, we have:

- Reviewed our interpretation of the definition of 'employer' as set out in S13B of the Opticians Act 1989 and widened its scope to further improve public protection through a wider notification system.
- Initiated work on a consensual determination process which would permit a small number of cases to be concluded more quickly with a shorter FTPC hearing.
- Explored whether we might implement 'threshold criteria' to ensure only allegations that present a clear potential risk to the public are subject to FTP investigation. This has proved challenging given the way our legislation is worded but we propose to revisit this in the coming year.

In June 2016, we held a clinical training day at the Institute of Optometry. This was attended by employees and lay case examiners/IC members. The objective was to improve understanding among employees and decision-makers of clinical matters and to improve understanding of serious clinical matters and associated risks.

complaints received in 2016/17

We received 425 complaints about the fitness to practise of our registrants, from which we opened 293 investigations. This is a 24 percent increase in the number of new complaints received and a 31 percent increase in the number of investigations opened in the prior year. As in previous years, less than one percent of registrants were subject to complaints about their FTP and, of these, even fewer were referred for a formal hearing. From this, it can be inferred that the vast majority of our registrants provide an excellent service to patients and are likely never to be subject to any action on their registration.



Table five shows the types of complaints investigated over the last three years, categorised by the primary category into which the complaint falls.

Table six: types of complaint received

Type of complaint	2016/17	%	2015/16	%	2014/15	%
Spectacle prescription	41	14	18	8.1	24	9
Other clinical	31	10.6	24	10.8	27	10
Personal conduct	28	9.6	31	14	43	15
Conviction/caution	28	9.6	16	7.2	22	8
Procedures – business	28	9.6	6	2.7	17	6
Contact lenses	16	5.5	2	0.9	5	2
Fraud	12	4.1	4	1.8	10	3.6
Macular degeneration	12	4.1	11	5	5	2
Retinal detachment	11	3.8	4	1.8	12	4.3
Related to laser eye surgery	9	3.1	5	2.2	7	2.5
Ill health	9	3.1	6	2.7	4	1.4
Multiple (clinical/conduct)	8	2.7	14	6.3	13	4.6
Cataracts	8	2.7	10	4.5	18	6.5
Complaint handling – business	7	2.4	10	4.5	2	0.7
Multiple (clinical)	7	2.4	12	5.4	9	3.5
Exam/qualification fraud	7	2.4	0	0	2	0.7
Glaucoma	6	2	9	4	12	4.3
Tumour	5	1.7	10	4.5	14	5
Management of child patients	5	1.7	6	2.7	3	0.1
Other miscellaneous	4	1.4	1	0.4	3	1
Theft	4	1.4	1	0.4	1	0.4
Breach of Opticians Act	3	1	4	1.8	2	0.7
Restricted activities	2	0.7	0	0	0	0
Testing unregistered	1	0.2	1	0.4	11	3.9
Fitting/dispensing	1	0.2	7	3.1	2	0.7
Domiciliary	0	0	5	2.2	5	2
Supervision of student	0	0	5	2.2	4	1.3
Non-declaration to Primary Care Trust	0	0	0	0	1	0.4
Non-declaration of a criminal conviction to the GOC	0	0	0	0	1	0.4
Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)	0	0	1	0.4	0	0
Testing unsupervised	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	293	100%	223	100%	279	100%



Table six sets out the number of investigations opened against each registrant category over the last three years.

Table five: FTP investigations opened against each GOC registrant category

	2016/17	%	2015/16	%	2014/15	%
Optometrist	170	58	158	71	193	69
Business registrant	67	23	23	10	38	14
Dispensing optician	37	13	28	13	31	11
Student optometrist	12	4	12	5	10	4
Student dispensing optician	7	2	2	1	7	2
Number of complaints	293	–	223	–	279	–
Total number of registrants	29,291	–	29,136	–	29,162	–
Number of registrants subject to complaints	293	–	223	–	287	–
Percentage of registrants subject to complaints	1.00%	–	0.77%	–	0.98%	–

Registration figures as of 31 March of each year.

Registrant categories

- Optometrist
- Dispensing optician
- Student optometrist
- Student dispensing optician
- Business registrant

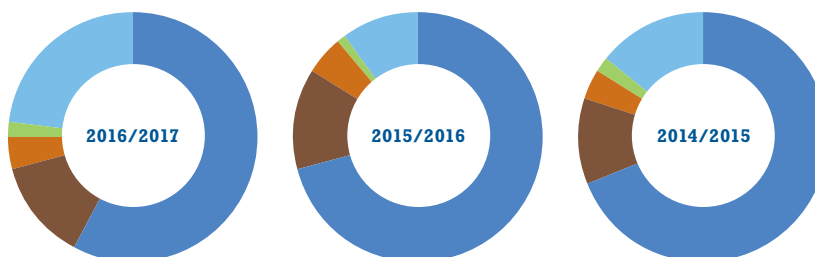




Table seven shows the source of concerns received during the last three years. The figures include the number of concerns raised by way of protected disclosure (whistleblowers) and those raised anonymously (if a concern falls into both categories, it will be classified as a protected disclosure).

Table seven: source of FTP concerns received

Source of concern	2016/17	%	2015/16	%	2014/15	%
Individual	179	61.1	150	67.3	188	67
Self-declaration	54	18.4	24	10.8	36	13
Employer/ex-employer	16	5.5	10	4.5	13	4.7
GOC	10	3.4	12	5.4	14	5
Primary care organisation	11	3.8	7	3.1	4	1.5
Professional/educational body	8	2.7	6	2.7	6	2.2
Whistleblower	7	2.4	7	3.1	10	3.6
Anonymous	4	1.4	3	1.3	2	0.8
Police	1	0.3	1	0.4	2	0.8
Other	3	1	2	0.9	0	0
ASA	0	0	0	0.0	0	0
Counter-fraud services	0	0	1	0.5	4	1.4
TOTAL	293	100%	223	100%	279	100%

Source of Complaint

- Individual
- Self-declaration
- Employer/ex-employer
- GOC
- Primary care organisation
- Professional/educational body
- Whistleblower
- Anonymous
- Police
- Other
- ASA
- Counter-fraud services

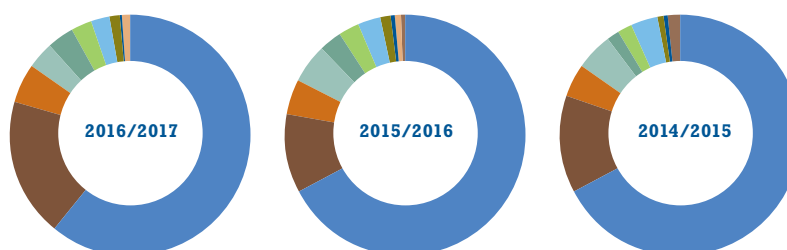




Table eight shows the decisions made by case examiners or the IC over the last three years. The numbers include all cases considered in these periods, including those where cases were opened before the period. Our case examiners and IC considered 314 cases (some cases are considered more than once) including reconsiderations pursuant to Rules 15 and 16 and all interim decisions. 58 percent of the cases resulted in no further action. Only 27 percent were referred to a full hearing. This is broadly consistent with prior years.

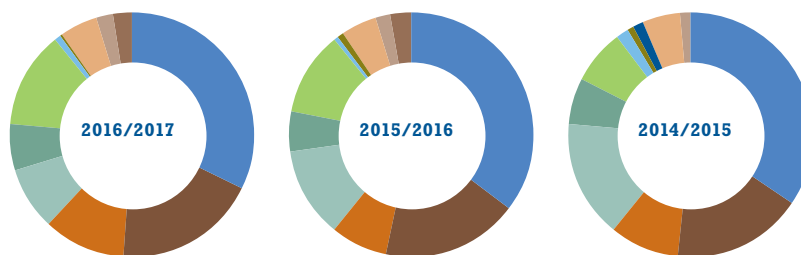
Table eight: outcomes decided by case examiners and the IC

Outcome	2016/17	%	2015/16	%	2014/15	%
No further action	102	46*	131	48*	78	45*
Referral to FTP committee (FTPC)	59	27*	66	25*	39	23*
Warning	34	15*	28	11*	21	12*
No further action with advice	26	12*	44	16*	35	20*
Further investigation required	19	n/a	20	n/a	14	n/a
Minded to issue a warning	40	n/a	41	n/a	16	n/a
Direction for a performance assessment	3	n/a	2	n/a	4	n/a
Direction for a health assessment	1	n/a	3	n/a	2	n/a
Withdrawn by complainant	0	n/a	0	n/a	3	n/a
Termination of referral to FTPC	16	n/a	17	n/a	11	n/a
Confirmation of referral to FTPC	7	n/a	7	n/a	3	n/a
Review of decision not to refer to FTPC	7	n/a	10	n/a	0	0
TOTAL	314		369		226	

[*as a percentage of substantive decisions]

Outcome

- No further action
- Referral to FTP committee (FTPC)
- Warning
- No further action with advice
- Further investigation required
- Minded to issue a warning
- Direction for a performance assessment
- Direction for a health assessment
- Withdrawn by complainant
- Termination of referral to FTPC
- Confirmation of referral to FTPC
- Review of decision not to refer to FTPC





Interim Orders

The GOC Registrar has the legal power to refer a matter directly to the FTP committee for consideration whether to impose an interim order (IO) on the registrant's practise. Both case examiners and the IC also have the power to direct the Registrar to take this step. An IO is an immediate order which is used where the FTP committee is satisfied that it is:

- Necessary to restrict the registrant's practise to protect the public;
- Otherwise in the public interest; or
- In the interests of the registrant.

Fitness to Practise Committee

In reaching a decision, the FTP committee considers whether it is necessary to take action to protect individual members of the public and whether taking action is necessary for the wider public interest: for example, in order to maintain public confidence in the professions or to declare and uphold proper standards of conduct and behaviour. If the FTP committee finds that the registrant's fitness to practise or undertake training is currently impaired, one of the following outcomes is available to it:

Erasure of the registrant's name from our Register	The registrant's name is taken off the Register and they cannot work or train as an optometrist or dispensing optician or run a registered business in the UK. If they want their name restored to the Register, they have to go through a separate process which includes considering the reasons for their removal and any remediation that may have taken place. A registrant can apply for their name to be put back on the Register no earlier than 22 months following the date of erasure.
Suspension from our Register	The registrant's name is temporarily taken off the Register and they cannot work, train or run a registered business in the UK for a fixed period of time. If someone tries to work while being suspended or erased they are committing a criminal offence.
Conditional registration	The registrant can stay on the Register provided they comply with certain conditions such as doing extra training or being supervised.
Payment of a financial penalty	Imposition of a financial penalty in conjunction with any other directions which it has imposed, up to a maximum of £50,000.
Warning	If the registrant's fitness to practise or undertake training is considered not impaired, they can still warn the registrant about their future behaviour or performance. A warning can be for varying periods of time and will be appended to the registrant's online registration.





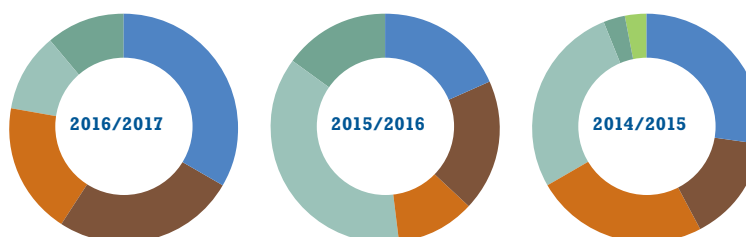
Table nine shows the outcomes of cases decided by the FTP committee over the last three years. In 2016/17, the FTP committee considered 27 substantive hearings involving 29 registrants and 15 substantive reviews.

Table nine: outcomes decided by the FTP committee

Substantive hearings						
Outcome	2016/17	%	2015/16	%	2014/15	%
No further action/No case to answer	9	33.3	5	18.5	9	27.3
Suspension	7	26	5	18.5	5	15.2
Warning	5	18.5	3	11.1	8	24.2
Erasure	3	11.1	10	37.0	9	27.3
Conditions	3	11.1	4	14.9	1	3.0
Financial penalty	–	–	–	–	1	3.0
TOTAL	27	100%	27	100%	33	100%

Outcome

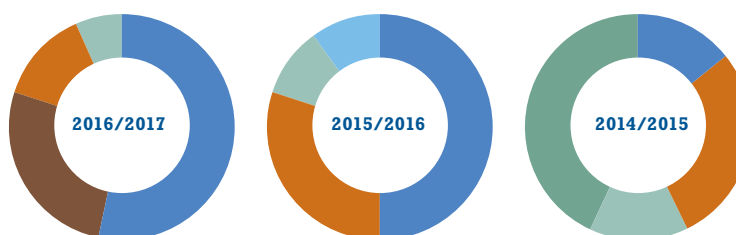
- No further action/No case to answer
- Suspension
- Warning
- Erasure
- Conditions
- Financial penalty



Substantive reviews						
Outcome	2016/17	%	2015/16	%	2014/15	%
No impairment following review hearing	8	53.3	5	50	1	14.2
Erasure following review hearing	4	26.7	0	–	0	0.0
Conditions to continue following review hearing	2	13.3	3	30	2	28.6
Conditions changed to suspension following review	1	6.7	1	10	1	14.3
Suspension changed to conditions following review hearing	–	–	0	–	3	42.9
Suspension to continue following review hearing	–	–	0	–	0	0
Undertaking	–	–	1	10	–	–
TOTAL	15	100%	10	100%	7	100%

Outcome

- No impairment following review hearing
- Erasure following review hearing
- Conditions to continue following review hearing
- Conditions changed to suspension following review
- Suspension changed to conditions following review hearing
- Suspension to continue following review hearing
- Undertaking





Registration Appeals Committee

In circumstances where a registrant is erased from the Register, any application for restoration is heard by the RAC. The applicant cannot make an application until 22 months have passed since the order for erasure took effect and the restoration hearing cannot take place until at least 24 months have passed. Prior to making the application, the applicant must have acquired the required number of CET points. This does not apply to optical students. During 2015/16, there were two applications for restoration by registrants previously erased by the FTP committee. Both applications were refused.

The RAC also considers appeals against decisions made by the Registrar not to allow registration. During 2015/16, the RAC heard three appeals: one against the Registrar's decision not to allow initial registration (drugs conviction) which was upheld, one appeal for practising whilst unregistered which was also upheld, and one for a failure to declare a criminal conviction for drink-driving which was overturned.

Section 29 referrals

The PSA has the discretion to refer a decision of the FTP committee to the High Court when it considers that the decision is unduly lenient or the penalty imposed does not reflect the seriousness of the misconduct found. The PSA can also refer the case if a decision should not have been made and it would be desirable for the protection of members of the public for the PSA to take action.

During 2016/17, the PSA did not refer any of the decisions of the FTP committee under this process. Learning points from all cases are integrated into training programmes if and when cases are referred in this way.

Audit

Each year, we commission an independent audit of the FTP decision-making of the case examiners/IC and FTP committee, which contains sections on the auditor's findings, compliance with previous recommendations and learning points. Once the management response has been agreed, the audit report is submitted to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee for scrutiny before submission to the PSA. This is in compliance with the PSA's eighth FTP Standard of Good Regulation¹⁴ which states:

'All FTP decisions made at the initial and final stages of the process are well reasoned, consistent, protect the public and maintain confidence in the profession.'

This year the audit was conducted by Radcliffes Le Brasseur, solicitors and auditors. A total of 86 decisions were audited and the audit report identified a small number of learning points, all of which we accepted and acted upon. In summary, the auditors concluded: *'We confirm that the findings made in this audit demonstrate substantial compliance with the Council's statutory provisions. They also demonstrate compliance with the Council's own procedural requirements and guidance.'*

Feedback

We also benefit from feedback, comments and questions sent from a variety of sources such as:

- Patients and registrants who have been involved in an FTP case;
- FTP decision makers, i.e. case examiners, IC members and hearing panel members;
- PSA feedback points after considering FTP committee determinations;
- Regular and frequent meetings and training sessions with our panel solicitors; and
- Meetings with other stakeholders.

¹⁴ The Performance Review Standards, Standards of Good Regulation, June 2010 (updated 2012), Section 5: Fitness to Practise.

Financial Review





Financial review of the year ended 31 March 2017

Section 32 (2) of the Opticians Act 1989 provides that, *'the accounts for each financial year of the Council shall be audited by auditors to be appointed by them and shall as soon as may be after they have been audited be published and laid before Parliament'*. Council prepares an annual financial report which identifies its financial position and which is submitted to the government for scrutiny.

The Audit and Risk Committee meets at least four times a year, reviews the systems of Council's internal financial controls and receives an annual report from the internal and external auditors. It also reviews the operational and compliance controls and risk management.

In 2016/17, financial performance (measured by net income) reduced compared with the previous year. During the year we incurred £0.01m of net expenditure (2015/16 £0.1m of net income).

Income for the year was £8.1m (2015/16 £7.6m). £7.5m (2015/16 £7.1m) was related to annual renewal fees, while £0.3m (2015/16 £0.3m) was a registration fee for new registrants.

During the year, we incurred £9.3m expenditure (2015/16 £7.6m). Increase in volume and complexity of FTP cases and increase in hearing days have been the main contributory factors for the increase in expenditure levels. Expenditure was incurred in line with the annual business plan and was monitored using an enhanced programme of cost control and review.

Net gains on investments during the year was £1.1m (2015/16 £0.1m) which were mainly unrealised gains.

We have robust amounts of cash resources and the trustees have a reasonable expectation that there are adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future as a going concern.

Reserves policy

The Council is responsible for making judgments about the appropriate levels of reserves for the organisation to hold. This is to ensure that there are prudent levels of reserves to provide for unexpected variations in spending or income patterns or to fund exceptional future spending. Council will review these reserves at least annually at the time of setting the budget for each financial year in consultation with the Chair of the Audit and Risk committee.

All of our reserves are unrestricted. As at 31 March 2017, the total reserves were £9.2m. The total unrestricted funds net of tangible fixed assets are £7.7m (2015/16 £7.4m). At the start of the current year, in addition to the income and expenditure reserve, four reserves had been designated for specific purposes:

- The legal costs contingency reserve which may be utilised for specially identified types of legal expenses in line with the reserves policy;
- The strategic reserve which is reserved for 'invest to save' projects;
- The special reserve (established to meet the cost of providing in-year resourcing and delivery of the reward project); and
- The investment reserve which is set up expressly to manage the proceeds from the sale of the Harley Street property, ensure that these cash assets generate a suitable income stream and are utilised appropriately to support the functions of the organisation over the longer term.

The reserves policy has been reviewed and aligned with the new strategic plan also taking into consideration the significant reserves created by the vacating of Harley Street which has resulted in total reserves as at 31 March 2017 in excess of £9 million.

The definition of the legal cost reserve has been broadened to cover large fluctuations in the volume of cases/complaints received by GOC. The value of legal cost reserve is increased from £0.5m to £2m to reflect the new definition. The strategic reserve of £3.5m is maintained to support specific strategic projects and initiatives outlined in the GOC's three-year strategic plan and beyond. The re-alignment of reserves to reflect this new policy is summarised in Note 15 of the accounts.

The revised reserves policy, which was approved in May 2017, sets a target for the income and expenditure reserve (available to manage variations in expenditure) equivalent to three months' normal expenditure, which amounts to £2.2m based upon the 2016/17 budget.

Investment policy

The existing investment policy was only applicable to managing the working capital requirements of the GOC. This has been revised and renamed The Working Capital Policy and recognises that all deposits must be secure, liquid and not exposed to currency risk.

A new Investment Policy Statement recognises the additional needs of the GOC as it seeks to ensure that the funds generated by the one-off sale of Harley Street provide reasonable returns within acceptable risk profiles.

Trustees have the wide powers of investment outlined in the Trustee Act 2000, which includes the power to delegate some responsibilities to an investment manager. We have appointed Brewin Dolphin as investment advisers to ensure we can make best use of the proceeds for future financial stability. The investment officer (Director of Resources) continues to manage the short-term cash reserve and liaise with the investment managers in respect of the investment strategy.



Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and the United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom accounting standards), including Financial Reporting Standard 102, the financial reporting standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the income and expenditure of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- Observe the methods and principles of the Charities Act;
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- State whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis, unless it is inappropriate to assume that the charitable company will continue on that basis.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions, disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the charity's constitution. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and the financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Each of the trustees, who held office at the date of approval of this trustees' report, has confirmed that there is no information, of which they are aware, which is relevant to the audit but of which the auditor is unaware. They have further confirmed that they have taken appropriate steps to identify such relevant information and to establish that the auditors are made aware of such information.

Approved by the trustees on 26 July 2017, and signed on their behalf by

Gareth Hadley
Chair of the GOC



Independent auditor's report to the trustees of the General Optical Council

We have audited the financial statements of the GOC for the year ended 31 March 2017 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow statement and the related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable by law and United Kingdom accounting standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice), including Financial Reporting Standard 102, the financial reporting standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

This report is made solely to the charity's members, as a body, in accordance with section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and regulations made under section 154 of that Act. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's trustees those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity's trustees as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and auditor

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, set out on page 38, the trustees are responsible for the preparation of financial statements which give a true and fair view.

We have been appointed as auditor under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with regulations made under section 154 of that act. Our responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and international standards on auditing (UK and Republic of Ireland). Those standards require us to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's *Ethical Standards for Auditors*.

Scope of the audit of the financial statements

A description of the scope of an audit of financial statements is provided on the Financial Reporting Council's website at www.frc.org.uk/auditscopeukprivate.

Opinion on financial statements

In our opinion the financial statements:

- Give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2017, and of its net movement in funds, for the year then ended;
- Have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- Have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 and the Opticians Act 1989 (as amended).

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Charities Act 2011 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- The information given in the trustees' annual report is inconsistent in any material respect with the financial statements;
- Sufficient accounting records have not been kept;
- The financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- We have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

haysmacintyre
Statutory Auditor

26 Red Lion Square
London
WC1R 4AG

Date:

haysmacintyre is eligible to act as an auditor in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.



Statement of financial activities

For the year ended 31 March 2017

	Notes	Unrestricted funds	Total £ 2016/17	Total £ 2015/16
Incoming from				
Charitable activities	2	7,880,891	7,880,891	7,434,976
Other trading activities		-	-	477
Investments	3	232,222	232,222	50,508
Other income				
Gain in disposal of 41 Harley Street		-	-	53,484
Other	4	-	-	25,057
Total		-	8,113,113	7,564,502
Expenditure on				
Raising Funds	11	49,481	49,481	11,751
Charitable activities	5	9,203,343	9,203,343	7,540,945
Total resources expended		9,252,824	9,252,824	7,552,696
Net gains/(losses) on investments				
	11	1,130,519	1,130,519	108,557
Net (expenditure)/income		(9,192)	(9,192)	120,363
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward		9,165,233	9,165,233	9,044,870
Total funds carried forward		9,156,041	9,156,041	9,165,233

There are no recognised gains or losses other than those recognised above.

All activities are continuing.

All the transactions in 2015/16 were unrestricted.

The notes on pages 43 to 53 form part of these financial statements.



Balance sheet

For the year ended 31 March 2017

	Notes	2016/17 £	2015/16 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible fixed assets	10	1,465,889	1,775,032
Investments	11	9,834,939	8,751,591
Total fixed assets		11,300,828	10,526,623
Current assets			
Debtors	12	500,242	520,803
Short term deposits		6,200,000	5,675,000
Cash at bank and in hand		783,031	1,392,137
Total current assets		7,483,273	7,587,940
Current liabilities			
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	13	(9,628,060)	(8,949,330)
Net current assets		(2,144,787)	(1,361,390)
Total assets less current liabilities		9,156,041	9,165,233
Net assets		9,156,041	9,165,233
Represented by			
Unrestricted funds:			
Designated funds	15	5,497,572	6,011,926
General funds	15	3,658,469	3,153,307
Total funds		9,156,041	9,165,233

The accounting policies and notes on pages 43 to 53 form part of these accounts.

The financial statements were approved and authorised by the Council on 26 July 2017 and were signed on its behalf by:

Gareth Hadley
Chair of the GOC



Cash flow statement

For the year ended 31 March 2017

	2016/17 £	2015/16 £
Cash flows from operating activities		
Reconciliation of net (expenditure)/income to net cash flow from operating activities:		
Net income/expenditure for the reporting period (as per the statement of financial activities)	(9,192)	120,363
Depreciation	386,928	331,605
Loss on disposal of fixed assets	-	10
(Gains)/losses on investment income	(1,130,519)	(108,557)
Dividends, interest and rents from investments	(232,222)	(50,508)
Decrease/(Increase) in debtors	20,561	6,871,605
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	678,730	766,012
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	(285,714)	7,930,530
Cash flows from investing activities		
Dividends, interest and rents from investments	232,222	50,508
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	(77,785)	(1,485,456)
Proceeds from sale of investments	530,168	-
Movement in short term deposit account	(525,000)	(950,568)
Movement in Cash held in investment	3,420,825	(4,331,848)
Purchase of Investments	(3,903,822)	(4,311,186)
Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities	(323,392)	(11,028,550)
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period	(609,106)	(3,098,020)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	1,392,137	4,490,157
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	783,031	1,392,137
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		
Cash at bank and in hand	783,031	1,392,137

The notes on pages 43 to 53 form part of these financial statements.



Notes to the financial accounts for the year ended 31 March 2017

General Information

The GOC is constituted as a body corporate under the Opticians Act 1989, as updated by amending legislation which came into effect on 30 June 2005. We are also registered as a charity by the Charity Commission in England and Wales (registered charity number 1150137). Our registered office is at 10 Old Bailey, London EC4M 7NG.

1. Accounting policies

The principle accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with accounting and reporting by Charities SORP, applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102, effective 1 January 2015), Charities SORP FRS 102, and the Charities Act 2011.

We are required to submit the accounts to the Privy Council who lay them before Parliament.

The GOC meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

Judgements in applying accounting policies and key sources of estimation uncertainty

Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. Although these estimates are based on management's best knowledge of the amount, events or actions, actual results may ultimately differ from those estimates. The trustees consider the following item to be an area subject to estimation and judgement.

Depreciation:

The useful economic lives of tangible fixed assets are based on management's judgement and experience. When management identifies that actual useful economic lives differ materially from the estimates used to calculate depreciation, that charge is adjusted retrospectively. Historically, no changes have been required.

(i) Going concern

The trustees (Council members) consider there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. With respect to the next reporting period, 2017/18, the most significant areas of uncertainty that affect the carrying assets held by the charity are the level of investment return and the performance of the investments markets (see the investment policy and the risk management sections of the Council members' annual report for more information). The review of our financial position, reserves levels and plans gives Council members' confidence that guarantees the charity remains a going concern and the financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis.

(ii) Income

All income is recognised. Once the charity has entitlement to income, it is probable that income will be received and the amount of income receivable can be measured reliably.

Our income mainly comprises fees from registered optometrists, dispensing opticians and bodies corporate. Fees charged for annual retention are payable in advance between January and March each year and are recognised in the period to which they relate.

We also receive registration fees from students, which are payable for the year or period ending 31 August in line with the academic year and credited in the accounts for the year to which they relate.

Investment income is recognised on a receipts basis.

(iii) Resources expended

Resources are expended directly in pursuit and support of the charitable aims. Expenditure on charitable activities comprises of FTP, legal compliance, registration and education and standards related cost.

Expenditure is allocated to the particular activity where the cost relates directly to that activity. However, the cost of overall direction and administration of each activity is apportioned based on staff time attributable to each activity.

Support costs include governance costs and other support costs. Governance costs include those incurred in the governance of the organisation and its assets and are primarily associated with constitutional and statutory requirements. Costs include direct costs of the external audit, legal fees and other professional advice.

Support costs have been apportioned between all activities based on staff head counts. The allocation of support and governance costs is analysed in note 6.

Resources expended are included in the statement of financial activities on an accruals basis. All liabilities are recognised as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to expenditure.

(iv) Fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost, net of depreciation.

Expenditure is capitalised where the cost of the asset, or group of assets, exceeds £500.

Website planning costs are charged to the statement of financial activities as incurred. Other website costs are capitalised as a fixed asset only where they lead to the creation of an enduring asset delivering tangible future benefits whose value is at least as great as the amount capitalised.



An impairment review is undertaken of the net asset value of the website at each balance sheet date. Expenditure to maintain or operate the development website is charged to the statement of financial activities.

(v) Depreciation

Assets are depreciated in equal instalments over the following periods:

IT equipment	3 years
Website/intranet/online retention	3 years
Office furniture and equipment	10 years
Leasehold improvements (office fit-out)	Over the lease term (15 years)

Depreciation is provided so as to write off the cost, less residual value, of the assets evenly over their estimated useful lives.

(vi) Investments

Investments are a form of basic financial instruments and are initially shown in the financial statements at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date. Movements in the fair values of investments are shown as unrealised gains and losses in the statement of financial activities.

Investments comprise shares, funds, cash or deposits held as investments. The investments are limited to cash in instant access or term deposits, and permitted investments in line with the investment policy.

(vii) Financial instruments

The Charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value.

(viii) Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

(ix) Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short-term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

(x) Creditors and provisions for liabilities

Creditors and provisions are recognised when the charity has a present legal or constructive obligation as a result of a past event. They are recognised when it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required to settle the obligation and a reliable estimate can be made of the obligation.

Where a present obligation exists for FTP cases because of a past event and an estimate can be made of the obligation, then this is provided for. The accuracy of the provision will depend on the assumptions made about the progress of individual cases and is subjected to a significant degree of uncertainty.

(xi) FUNDS AND RESERVES

All our funds are unrestricted, and can be expended at our discretion to help deliver our objectives.

We have set designated funds aside as follows:

- Legal Costs Reserve – established to cover large fluctuations in the volume of cases/complaints received by the GOC which need to be reviewed and consequently investigated.
- The Strategic Reserve – established to support specific strategic projects and initiatives outlined in the GOC's recently approved three-year Strategic Plan and Budget and beyond.

(xii) Taxation

We are not registered for VAT and VAT on expenditure is expensed as part of the cost of the goods or services supplied.

(xiii) Operating leases

The annual rentals are charged to the statement of financial activities over the term of the lease.

(xiv) Employee benefits

- **Short-term benefits**
Short-term benefits, including holiday pay, are recognised as an expense in the period in which the service is received.
- **Employee termination benefits**
Termination benefits are accounted for on an accrual basis and in line with FRS 102.
- **Pension scheme**

Council contributes to a defined contribution pension scheme for the benefit of its employees under an auto-enrolment scheme, the assets of which are administered by Royal London. The assets of the scheme are held independently from those of the Charity in an independently administered fund. The pensions costs charged in the financial statements represent the contributions payable during the year.



	2016/17 £	2015/16 £
2. Income from charitable activities		
Annual renewal fee	7,507,880	7,100,311
Registration fee	345,373	317,091
Continuing Education Training provider	27,638	17,574
Total	7,880,891	7,434,976

	2016/17 £	2015/16 £
3. Income from Investment		
Interest from fixed deposits	28,337	25,853
Dividend income	203,885	24,655
Total	232,222	50,508

	2016/17 £	2015/16 £
4. Other income		
Staff secondments	-	25,057
Total	-	25,057

	Direct Cost £	Support Cost £	Total 2015/16 £	Total 2014/15 £
5. Charitable activities				
Fitness to practise (Note 5a.)	3,548,350	1,421,482	4,969,832	3,587,735
Registration	921,119	653,589	1,574,708	1,497,958
Education & standards	993,898	512,906	1,506,804	1,547,916
Policy	446,471	254,988	701,459	540,749
Communications	245,378	205,162	450,540	366,587
Total	6,155,216	3,048,127	9,203,343	7,540,945

The following table details the FTP costs.

	2016/176 £	2015/16 £
5a. Fitness to practise including Legal compliance		
Legal fees on investigations	1,233,604	586,631
Other investigation costs	879,431	927,850
Hearing costs	927,729	732,639
Dispute mediation	184,930	149,000
Legal compliance	322,656	160,061
Support costs	1,421,482	1,031,554
Total	4,969,832	3,587,735



	Management £	Governance £	Facilities £	HR £	Finance £	IT £	2016/17 Total £	2015/16 Total £
6. Support costs								
Fitness to Practise	191,067	389,628	350,613	138,223	102,654	249,297	1,421,482	1,031,554
Registration	87,852	179,148	161,210	63,554	47,200	114,625	653,589	631,643
Education and Standards	68,942	140,587	126,510	49,874	37,040	89,953	512,906	479,347
Policy	34,274	69,892	62,894	24,795	18,414	44,719	254,988	222,686
Communications	27,576	56,235	50,604	19,950	14,816	35,981	205,162	172,403
Total	409,711	835,490	751,831	296,396	220,124	534,575	3,048,127	2,537,633

Governance cost includes fees and expenditure incurred in relation to Council and the committees, external and internal audit fees and staff cost related to supporting the governance activities. Support cost is allocated to different activities on the basis of staff numbers.

The details of the governance cost included under support cost are as follows.

	2016/17 £	2015/16 £
Governance costs		
Members' fees and expenses	333,541	288,126
Staff cost	358,075	296,196
External audit fees	16,800	17,856
Internal audit fees	22,485	24,407
Other governance costs	104,589	20,328
Total	835,490	646,913

Members' fees and expenses include Council (trustees) and committee members.

	2015/16 £	2014/15 £
7. Net income for the year is stated after charging		
Fees paid to external auditors – haysmacintyre:		
external audit fee (excl. VAT)	14,000	14,880
external audit fee – under provision (excl. VAT)	3,000	-
taxation advice	2,160	3,000
Internal audit fees	22,485	24,407
Depreciation of fixed assets	386,928	331,605



	2016/17 £	2015/16 £
8. Staff costs		
Staff employment costs:		
Salaries	2,788,229	2,243,584
National Insurance	289,318	239,379
Pension costs	194,233	167,024
Total	3,271,780	2,649,987

	2016/17	2015/16
Average number of staff		
Chief Executive's office	3	2
Management team	6	5
Fitness to practise	16	12
Registration	8	9
Education & standards	6	6
Policy and communications	5	5
Governance, compliance, performance planning	8	6
Resources (Facilities, HR, Finance and IT)	10	9
Total	62	54

The number of staff whose taxable emoluments fell into higher salary bands was:	2016/17	2015/16
£60,000 but under £70,000	5	2
£70,000 but under £80,000	-	1
£80,000 but under £90,000	1	-
£90,000 but under £100,000	-	1
£100,000 but under £110,000	1	1
£110,000 but under £120,000	-	1
£120,000 but under £130,000	-	1

During the year, Council paid £58,524 for eight members of staff in this category (2015/16 £44,019 for five members of staff) to a defined contribution pension scheme. The trustees (Council members) consider the SMT to be key management. The trustees are also paid fees and reimbursed expenses for their travel and subsistence. The details are in note 9. No amounts are paid directly to third parties that are not already disclosed in note 9.



Remuneration and benefits received by key management personnel (SMT) are as follows:

	2016/17 £	2015/16 £
Key management personnel		
Gross Pay	419,140	384,390
Employer national insurance contributions	52,802	47,064
Employer pension contributions	39,117	37,424
Benefits	8,134	9,944
Total	519,193	478,822

	Fees £	Fees Inc. VAT £	Expenses £	2016/17 Total £	2015/16 Total £
9. Trustees' expenses					
Peter Douglas*	13,460	13,460	1,134	14,594	13,349
Paul Carroll*	13,460	13,460	3,003	16,463	15,074
Liam Kite*	13,460	13,460	2,341	15,801	13,674
Fiona Peel*	14,960	14,960	2,611	17,571	14,453
Rob Hogan**	-	-	-	-	14,825
Brian Coulter*	8,300	8,300	1,022	9,322	20,251
Selina Ullah	13,460	13,460	3,044	16,504	15,793
Gareth Hadley	56,593	56,593	566	57,159	40,496
Helen Tilley	13,460	13,460	2,541	16,001	18,168
Scott Mackie***	13,460	16,152	4,890	21,042	19,611
Glen Tomison	13,460	13,460	5,667	19,127	15,711
Rosie Glazebrook	13,460	13,460	137	13,597	13,173
David Parkins	13,460	13,460	-	13,460	560
Sinead Burns****	6,730	6,730	874	7,604	-
Total	207,723	210,415	27,830	238,245	215,138

Number of trustees

13

13

Opticians Act 1989, schedule 1 of the act, paragraph 11 (2) b allows us to pay fees to trustees for attending Council meetings.

* Brian Coulter retired on 30 September 2016 while Paul Carroll, Peter Douglas, Liam Kite and Fiona Peel retired on 31 March 2017.

** Rob Hogan retired in 2015/16.

*** Scott Mackie is paid fees via the purchase ledger and charge VAT on his fees.

**** Sinead Burns was appointed on 01 October 2016.



	Office, furniture and equipment £	Refurbishment £	IT hardware £	IT software £	Assets under construction – CRM £	Total £
10. Tangible fixed assets						
Cost as at 1 April 2016	267,041	1,057,510	281,987	1,319,644	53,260	2,979,442
Add: Cost of additions	21,052	-	19,761	-	36,972	77,785
Less: Disposals	-	-	(91,959)	(22,668)	-	(114,627)
Transfers	-	-	-	90,232	(90,232)	-
Total at 31 March 2017	288,093	1,057,510	209,789	1,387,208	-	2,942,600
Less: Depreciation						
As at 1 April 2016	(8,968)	(24,593)	(189,140)	(981,709)	-	(1,204,410)
Charged in the year	(27,933)	(73,780)	(44,496)	(240,719)	-	(386,928)
Disposals	-	-	91,959	22,668	-	114,627
Total at 31 March 2017	(36,901)	(98,373)	(141,677)	(1,199,760)	-	(1,476,711)
Net book value 31 March 2017	251,192	959,137	68,112	187,448	-	1,465,889
Net Book Value 31 March 2016	258,073	1,032,917	92,847	337,935	53,260	1,775,032



	2016/17 £	2015/16 £
11. Investment		
Investments b/f	4,419,743	-
Additions	3,903,822	4,311,186
Disposals	(530,168)	-
Realised gains	32,763	-
Unrealised gains	1,097,756	108,557
Investments c/f	8,923,916	4,419,743
Cash	911,023	4,331,848
Total portfolio	9,834,939	8,751,591

Total portfolio includes cash held with equity managers.

During the year, £49,481 (2015/16 £11,751) was incurred as investment management fees and has been disclosed on the Statement of Financial Activities as Raising Funds.

	2016/17 £	2015/16 £
12. Debtors		
Trade debtors	-	36,954
Prepayments	173,807	132,449
Other debtors	326,435	349,648
Accrued income	-	1,752
Total	500,242	520,803



	2016/17 £	2015/16 £
13. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year		
Trade creditors	330,856	320,180
Deferred income (note 13a)	7,821,382	7,371,562
Accruals	1,340,690	1,143,605
Other tax and social security	104,651	88,094
Other creditors	30,480	25,889
Total	9,628,060	8,949,330

Accruals include rent accrual amounting to £713,314 (2015/16 £511,725).
Income from registrant renewal fees is deferred and released as income in 2017/18.

	2016/17 £	2015/16 £
13a. Deferred income		
At 1 April	7,371,562	6,959,538
Amount deferred during the year	7,821,382	7,371,562
Amount released to Statement of Financial Activities	(7,371,562)	(6,959,538)
Total	7,821,382	7,371,562

	2016/17 £	2015/16 £
14. Financial Instruments		
Financial assets measured at fair value (a)	9,834,939	8,751,591
Financial assets measured at amortised cost (b)	7,309,467	7,455,491
Financial liabilities measured at amortised cost (c)	(9,523,409)	(8,861,236)
Net financial assets measured at amortised cost	7,620,997	7,345,846

(a) Financial assets measured at fair value include investments.

(b) Financial assets measured at amortised cost include: short term deposits and cash in hand, trade debtors, other debtors, and accrued income.

(c) Financial liabilities measured at amortised cost include: trade creditors, other creditors, accruals and deferred income.



	Balance brought forward £	Income £	Expenditure £	£	Balance carried forward £
15. Funds					
Unrestricted funds					
Designated funds					
Legal cost reserve	500,000	-	(12,899)	1,512,899	2,000,000
Strategic reserve	635,652	-	(274,150)	3,136,070	3,497,572
Designated resources reserve	438,274	-	(240,204)	(198,070)	-
Investment reserve	4,438,000	-	-	(4,438,000)	-
Total designated funds	6,011,926	-	(527,253)	12,899	5,497,572
General funds					
Income and expenditure reserve	3,153,307	8,113,113	(8,725,571)	1,117,620	3,658,469
Total funds	9,165,233	8,113,113	(9,252,824)	1,130,519	9,156,041

The legal reserve (previously named as legal contingency reserve) is now broadened to cover large fluctuations in the volume of cases/complaints received by the GOC. The previous definition of the reserve was extremely narrow which meant that the likelihood of actually utilising this reserve was remote. The strategic reserve has been designated to support specific strategic projects and initiatives outlined in the GOC's three year Strategic Plan and beyond. At the end of the year, the designated resources reserve and Investment reserve were allocated to the above reserves.

Spending on all designated reserves was in line with our plans. Prior to the restructuring of the reserves, £13k was transferred from our income and expenditure reserve to our legal cost contingency reserve, in order to maintain the reserve at £500k.

	Restricted funds £	Unrestricted funds £	Total 2016/17 £	Total 2015/16 £
16. Analysis of net assets by fund				
Tangible fixed assets	-	1,465,889	1,465,889	1,775,032
Investments	-	9,834,939	9,834,939	8,751,591
Current assets	-	7,483,273	7,483,273	7,587,940
Current liabilities	-	(9,628,060)	(9,628,060)	(8,949,330)
Total net assets	-	9,156,041	9,156,041	9,165,233



17. Pension commitments

We operate a defined contribution auto-enrolment pension scheme on behalf of certain employees. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of Council in an independently administered fund. The total expense incurred during the year was £194,233 (2015/16 £167,024). There were £28,440 in outstanding contributions in 2017, (2015/16 £20,198) included in the balance sheet.

18. Commitments under operating leases

At 31 March 2017, the charity had the following future lease payments under operating leases.

	2016/17 £	2015/16 £
Land and buildings		
Within one year	620,273	620,273
In two to five years inclusive	2,481,091	2,481,091
Over five years	4,496,978	5,117,249

	2016/17 £	2015/16 £
Office Equipment lease		
Within one year	17,602	18,411
In two to five years inclusive	26,035	43,368

The total charge of all operating leases to the statement of financial activities as at 31 March 2017 was £530,135. (2016 £575,361).

19. Related party transactions

During the year, the Council members were paid for the attendance of Council meetings and related expenditure through Council payroll (refer to note 9 for details).

In addition to Council related payments, the following Council members were involved in related parties with which the GOC had the following transactions during the year:

- Scott Mackie provided services as a CET approver. During the year, we paid Scott £5,408 for services as a CET approver. Scott's spouse and business partner, Dr Roisin Mackie also provided CET services as a CET approver. During the year we paid her £7,386.
- David Parkins' spouse, Dr Susan Blakeney is a case examiner. During the year we paid Susan £7,374 in fees for her services and £26 for related expenses.

Glossary of Terms

Acronym or title	Full name or description
ASA	Advertising Standards Authority The UK's independent regulator of advertising across all media.
BMG	BMG Research An independent research agency that provides high-quality research to both public and private sectors.
Body corporate	A body corporate is a limited company or limited liability partnership that has been incorporated with Companies House. Bodies corporate registered with the GOC are known as business registrants.
Business registrant	A business registrant is a body corporate that has registered with the GOC.
CET	Continuing Education and Training Training that our registrants must do to keep their skills and knowledge up to date.
CLO	Contact Lens Optician A person who assesses the suitability of, and provides for, the supply of contact lenses.
CRM	Customer Relationship Management Software for managing our interactions with our past, current and future stakeholders.
Dispensing optician	A person who fits and supplies optical appliances including low vision aids.
DPA	Data Protection Act The DPA regulates the processing of information relating to individuals, including the obtaining, holding, use or disclosure of such information.
EU	European Union
EEA	European Economic Area
FoI	Freedom of Information Freedom of Information laws allow access by the general public to data held by national governments and public bodies.
FSA	Financial Services Authority The regulator of all providers of financial services in the UK. The FSA was replaced by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) on 1 April 2013.
FTP	Fitness to Practise A registrant's ability to carry out their professional duties as outlined in the Opticians Act 1989.
GMC	General Medical Council The regulatory body for doctors in the UK.
GOC	General Optical Council The regulatory body for optometrists, dispensing opticians, student opticians and optical businesses in the UK.
GOsC	General Osteopathic Council The regulatory body for osteopaths in the UK.
HCPC	Health Care Professions Council The regulatory body for the 15 healthcare professions not covered by their own regulator in the UK, and social workers in England.
HR	Human Resources
IC	Investigation Committee A GOC committee which investigates allegations about registrants.
ICO	Information Commissioner's Office The office responsible for the enforcement of the Data Protection Act 1998, and also responsible for Freedom of Information.

Acronym or title	Full name or description
IP	Independent prescriber A speciality that is open to optometrists only. Independent prescribing enables optometrists to clinically assess a patient, establish a diagnosis, determine the clinical management required and prescribe where necessary.
Law Commission(s)	The statutory independent body created by the Law Commissions Act 1965 to keep the law under review and to recommend reform where it is needed. The aim of the commission is to ensure that the law is fair, modern, simple and as cost effective as possible. There are three law commissions: one in England and Wales, one in Scotland and one in Northern Ireland.
Lay member	In the GOC's case, a lay member is a member of Council or one of its committees who does not hold an optical qualification.
Member	Individuals who work with the GOC who are neither employees nor contractors (as defined by their contract with us); for example, committee members.
OCCS	Optical Consumer Complaints Service The GOC-funded body which deals with complaints relating to issues (refunds, broken glasses, etc.) that do not call an optician's FTP into question.
Optometrist	A person who tests your sight and can diagnose eye conditions. They can also fit and supply spectacles, low vision aids and contact lenses.
PCI	Payment Card Industry The Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) is a set of requirements designed to ensure that all companies that process, store or transmit credit card information maintain a secure environment.
Privy Council	The part of Her Majesty's Government which advises on the exercise of prerogative powers and certain functions assigned to the Queen and Council by an act of Parliament.
Protected title	Titles legally reserved for use by GOC registrants. Protected titles are: (registered) optometrist, (registered) dispensing optician, registered ophthalmic optician and (registered) optician(s).
PSA	Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care Oversees the work of the GOC and the eight other UK healthcare regulators.
Registrant member	A member of the GOC (or its committees) who holds an optical qualification and whose name appears on the GOC register.
SCM	Senior Council Member Acts as a sounding board for the Chair of Council, serves as an intermediary for other Council members and formally manages the appraisal of the Chair's performance annually.
SMT	Senior Management Team The GOC's SMT comprises the Chief Executive and Registrar, the Director of Resources, the Director of Strategy and the Director of Fitness to Practise.
SRP	Statement of Recommended Practice Provides recommendations for accounting and reporting.
Trustee	A member of a charity's board or management committee. In the GOC's case, its trustees are its 12 Council members.
UK Corporate Governance Code	Sets out standards of good practice in relation to board leadership and effectiveness, remuneration, accountability and relations with shareholders.
ZPL	Zero Powered Lenses Cosmetic or fashion contact lenses with plano lenses.



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The GOC is a charity registered in England and Wales (1150137)