



14th February 2008

Response to CAA Consultation

Dear Sirs

Together the Association of British Dispensing Opticians, the Association of Optometrists, the College of Optometrists and the Federation of Ophthalmic & Dispensing Opticians represent the 10,000 optometrists, 5,000 dispensing opticians and optical businesses who provide high quality and accessible eye care services in the UK.

Many thanks for giving us the opportunity to comment on the Comprehensive Area Assessment. As independent contractors, most of whom practise on the high street, optometrists and dispensing opticians have a business as well as a professional interest in keeping their patients, who are also customers, happy. The competitive optical market helps to ensure that patients have unrivalled choice and access to optometric and dispensing optical services. We welcome the reduction in rolling programmes of major inspections, which can divert precious resources towards fulfilling the inspection criteria rather than enhancing patient care.

The competitive nature of the optical marketplace means that patients can (and do) vote with their feet if they are not happy with a service. As a result practices are encouraged to continually improve the services they offer and the risk of poor service is consequently reduced.

We notice that the CAA will include an assessment of the use of resources by primary care trusts. Optometrists are currently involved in various clinical services outwith the contract for General (soon to be Primary) Ophthalmic Services. As well as providing excellent value for money, these services enable ophthalmic care to be delivered out of hospitals nearer to the patients' home at a convenient time to the patient. There is an optical practice on almost every high street.

We generally support the aims in the document. We would ask that any assessment of local needs not forget the health inequalities surrounding vision and visual impairment, and the susceptibility of certain ethnic groups to diseases such as glaucoma which if left untreated, can lead to blindness. The profession and public health colleagues are currently developing a model to identify the levels of need for the major eye health conditions for every PCT in the country. The modules for low vision, glaucoma, cataract and AMD will be available soon and will provide a key resource for local needs assessment. Optometrists and dispensing opticians are the obvious professions to address these issues, given appropriate resources. If you require any more information about the optical sector and how optometrists and dispensing opticians can improve the quality of local healthcare please contact:

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Yours faithfully

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