



ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS
Promoting the Profession | Protecting the Professional

A Five Year Strategy

Adopted by AOP Council 16th May 2007

Vision

Our vision:

Optometrists will increasingly offer a range of primary eye care services, building on their role as a principal provider of eye care in the community;

A developing scope of practice for optometry;

The profession will be appropriately rewarded.

Aims and values of the AOP

The Association aims to represent, promote and protect its members in the provision of eye care and associated services.

Optometrists need to be able to deliver a service which ensures that patients have access to eye care and to their choice of provider, whether in the community, in their own home for the housebound or in eye clinics.

The AOP will campaign to remove barriers that prevent patients accessing eye care including over-restrictive regulations, the under-funding of the NHS sight test and insufficient primary eye care provision in England and Northern Ireland.

In carrying out our core purposes, the AOP will operate in a cost effective and efficient manner and act ethically in our dealings with members, the public and with other bodies.

In seeking to bring about our vision, the AOP will wherever possible work collaboratively with the other optical bodies and relevant organisations to achieve unity in all major areas of work, and ensure available resources are used effectively.

The AOP helped to found Eye Care UK and the Eye Health Alliance. We will continue to lobby and to plan our work with these bodies.

5-year background assumptions

UK Economy

The UK will continue to have an aging population. Those in work will do so for longer, making more frequent career changes through their lives. The number of students may fall, with graduates facing higher levels of personal debt.

People will enjoy more choice in an atmosphere of greater materialism and with a greater proportion of goods being imported from the Far East and traditional marketing methods becoming less relevant. Internet outlets will continue to increase their market share.

Government will continue to devolve decision making to a local level.

The World we live in

NHS bodies

There will be further mergers of Primary Care Trusts in England and Health Boards in the rest of the UK. They will integrate services across borders as they come under greater political pressure to meet public expectations.

The new Strategic Health Authorities will seek to exercise authority locally, but may not be able to live comfortably with the increasingly strategic role of PCTs/Health Boards.

There will be a significant growth of commissioning from PCTs and in Practice Based Commissioning.

Local Optical Committees in England, Area Optical Committees in Scotland and Regional Optical Committees in Wales will be better organised, more professional and therefore more effective. They will be properly financed and better supported centrally.

Patients and the profession

There will be more, older, patients who will be increasingly demanding, better informed and have greater expectations. Optometrists and practice staff will need to be better equipped to answer patients' questions. If they perceive that something has gone wrong they are more likely to be litigious.

Optometric practices will increasingly differentiate their offers. Some will offer a fashion or dispensing led service, but an increasing number of practices will attract patients because of their range of professional services. Loyalty can no longer be expected and will have to be earned. There will be increased price competition and more sales by internet and mail order.

The AOP

The optical bodies will increasingly speak and operate as one as they seek to achieve unity across all areas of eye care and the relevant professions.

AOP core services, notably insurance and legal defence, will be augmented by additional services tailored to the different types of member, i.e. employed, self employed and hospital optometrists.

There will be increased political activity and lobbying as an increasingly joint activity with other bodies and through the Eye Health Alliance.

The AOP will have further expanded its provision of CET and CPD, and will be engaged in wider education provision to the profession.

Achieving our vision

The AOP will work towards achieving the vision by grouping their planning and activity into three broad areas:



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<p>The AOP plays a significant role in the European Council of Optometry and Optics which it helped to form and in the World Council of Optometry. We will continue to make a contribution to their work and strategic thinking.</p>	
<p>National negotiations</p> <p>The AOP represents the profession on the committees that negotiate the sight test fee and consider the principles and detailed wording of the GOS regulations. It is vital work to every optometrist in practice and is given a high priority by the AOP.</p> <p>We will continue to seek the best possible terms of service and remuneration for the profession and we will back up our negotiations with appropriate epidemiological data and economic analysis.</p>	<p>Public Affairs Committee</p> <p>Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Executive</p>
<p>Support for Local Committees</p> <p>For as long as anyone can remember, the AOP has been a valuable source of advice to LOCs and AOCs. With a changing NHS there is an urgent need for the profession to increase its local effectiveness and we are collaborating with the other bodies to form a support unit to back up their work.</p> <p>The AOP website for local committees is presented on behalf of the optical bodies and we will transfer the control of the site to the new unit when it is established.</p> <p>LOC & AOC support goes to the heart of the ability of the sector to achieve its primary eye care ambitions, and as such needs to be properly funded. It is envisaged that the unit will be funded from the statutory levy.</p> <p>The unit will provide essential support to local committees to help them meet their objectives. The sponsoring bodies will retain responsibility for setting the objectives for the unit, employing the staff, developing the national political framework and maintaining the necessary networking and political contacts.</p>	<p>Chief Executive/ Head of Professional Services</p>
<p>Developing eye care services</p> <p>The AOP will re-focus the remit of the professional services staff and committee with an emphasis on identifying potential optometric roles and developing the optometric workforce. The AOP will continue to develop materials to help the profession achieve a continued expansion of primary eye care services building on a number of successful AOP initiatives such as the Primary Care Resource Pack and the Primary Care Toolkit.</p> <p>We will campaign for optometric solutions where there are eye care needs not adequately being met, such as the elderly in their own homes, children starting school and drivers over 50.</p>	<p>Head of Professional Services/ Professional Adviser</p> <p>Professional Services Committee</p>

<p>Representative of the profession</p> <p>The AOP will re-examine its membership benefits to further improve the offer for practitioners working in all modes of practice, self-employed, employed, hospital optometrists and university lecturers.</p>	<p>Membership Committee</p>
<p>Properly resourced and staffed</p> <p>The AOP will regularly re-appraise its services, its organisation and methods of working. We will ensure that achieving the vision is central to our activities and reflected in the use of resources.</p> <p>The AOP will work to ensure that it maintains Quality Management registration with the BSI, and remains an Investor In People.</p>	<p>Head of Finance/ Head of Administration</p>
<p>Financially secure and cost effective</p> <p>All areas of expenditure will be regularly reviewed and savings made where possible to ensure that subscription income is used cost effectively.</p> <p>The AOP will maintain sufficient financial reserves to enable it to take any necessary action to protect the profession such as in the High Court, a VAT Tribunal or before the European Court of Justice.</p>	<p>Finance Sub-Committee</p>
<p>Open to collaborative working</p> <p>The theme of collaborative working runs through this Vision and Strategy. It is central to the way the AOP will conduct its affairs. In seeking to achieve any part of this strategy our initial thinking will examine opportunities to work with optical bodies and others.</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p>
<p>Structural flexibility</p> <p>We will redefine the role of AOP Councillors to ensure that we benefit more from their expertise and commitment, and facilitate them to act as a communications conduit with the areas they represent.</p> <p>We will pro-actively re-assess our committee and staffing structures as the world we live in changes. If our world and our priorities change then we will change.</p> <p>Standing Committees and the Board will be asked to consider their progress in delivering their strategy annually and to produce an action plan setting out the progress they expect to make in the coming year.</p> <p>The Board will review the Vision and Strategy by 2010.</p>	<p>President/ Chief Executive</p> <p>Standing Committees /Chief Executive</p> <p>Council</p> <p>Board</p>

Criteria for success

As part of the strategic discussion expected from each standing committee every year, committees should consider those areas set out below relevant to them, and agree a report to the Board setting out their own criteria for success which the Board should discuss and develop into an action plan for the coming year.

Support for the profession

- Providing a vision
- Leading the profession
- Influencing
- National negotiations
- Support for LOCs & AOCs
- Developing eye care services
- Working in partnership
- Educating the public and other health professions

Support for the professional

- Protection & defence
- Regulatory, clinical and legal advice
- Education, CET & CPD
- Business support
- Communicating with members

An effective AOP organisation

- Widely based membership
- Representative of the profession
- Properly resources & staffed
- Financially secure & cost effective
- Open to collaborative working
- Structural flexibility