



Optical Consumer Complaints Service

P O Box 219

Petersfield

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Tel: 0844 800 5071 Fax: 01730 265058

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Opticians in the UK provide an excellent service in supplying the public with spectacles and contact lenses, but occasionally something may go wrong and there is cause to complain. The optician, when informed of the complaint, will usually agree a satisfactory solution; but where this does not seem possible, the Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS) may be able to help.

The OCCS is an independent body set up to try to settle complaints from members of the public who are not satisfied with the goods and services received from an optical practice. Of course, it is always preferable for a complaint to be settled by agreement between the parties personally, but if this does not prove possible, the complainant can refer the matter to the OCCS and we will try to resolve the issues.

This leaflet tells you about how the OCCS works and explains what you should do if you are in any way unhappy about the goods or services that you have received from your optician.

The First Step

The first and most important thing to do if you feel you have cause to complain is to contact the practice and explain the problem.

In many cases, you will find that your concern can be resolved without difficulty. If it is not, ask if the practice is one of a group. If it is, the practice manager will give you the name and address to which to send your complaint. If you are still worried - and if your eyes were examined under the NHS - the local Primary Care Trust may be able to help you. The address will be available in the practice, as may be the the contact details of Consumer Direct (Tel: 08454 04 05 06) and the local Citizens Advice Bureau which will, if you wish, help to make the complaint.

The Second Step

If, after this, your problem has not been resolved, contact the OCCS and every effort will be made to try to mediate a solution between you and the practitioner. OCCS can only help you if you have tried, but failed, to solve the problem in the way described in the first step. When the OCCS receives your complaint, we shall do all we can to resolve it as quickly as possible.

OCCS will need the following information from you :

1. The name and address of the practice.
2. The name(s) of the practitioners involved.
3. The date(s) when the problem occurred.
4. A full explanation of the problem.

We then will approach the practice on your behalf and ask for full information about your case. We may need to seek further information from you and we may need to seek expert advice. However, we will keep you informed throughout the process.

Our objective, once the facts have been established, is to arrive at a solution which will satisfy you and the practice involved. We aim to do this through informal mediation and good communication. We listen to both sides in the complaint and try to approach the complaint in a fair and reasonable way.

Final Step

If the actions described so far fail to satisfy you, OCCS may still be able to help you. We can, at this point arrange for your complaint to be examined by an independent advisor.

The advisor will go through the records of your case, and may ask you or the practice for additional information. With all the facts, the advisor will arrive at a considered and unbiased recommendation on your complaint. The recommendation would be given to you and the practice, in writing. If you are not prepared to accept the recommendation, you would be free to take legal action on your own account.

Who can complain?

Anyone who is receiving, or has received, goods or services from an optical practice using the services of an optician* registered with the General Optical Council can lodge a complaint with the OCCS.

** 'Optician' means an Optometrist (Ophthalmic Optician), a Dispensing Optician or a company practising as either or both.*

To comply with data protection legislation, before registering a complaint, the OCCS will need an authority signed by or on behalf of the complainant. We can post or email a form to you, or you can download it from our website at www.opticalcomplaints.co.uk. If a patient is unable to complain for himself/herself, then someone else - usually a close relative or friend - can act on his/her behalf; but the OCCS will require written authority from the patient appointing the representative before we can proceed with the complaint.



How to complain

Whenever possible, a complaint should first be made without delay direct to the practice from which the goods or services were received to provide the opportunity for the optician to sort out the problem straight away.

If the matter cannot be resolved by a direct approach, or if you would prefer to talk to someone who is not involved with the practice concerned, then you should contact the OCCS as soon as possible after your approach to the practice fails to reach a solution that is acceptable to you.

Sometimes, we may find that your complaint may be better dealt with in another way, for example through:

- the General Optical Council
- County Court small claims procedure
- the NHS authorities

In such cases we will, of course, explain your options.

HOW TO CONTACT US

Our office is open Monday to Friday from 9 am until 5 pm.
An answerphone is available for messages to be left.

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