

Complaints statistics – 2010-2011

It will be seen from *Chart A* that there is a significantly increased contact with the OCCS office from 2008. This is because before 2008 only contacts that resulted in a case being opened were recorded in the statistics, and those dealt with by supplying information, an explanation or guidance on how otherwise to proceed were not recorded.

From 2008, all incoming contacts with the office are included in the statistics so that we have some idea of our volume of work and whether contact is by letter (including fax), telephone or email. Also in 2008, it was decided to change the OCCS accounting year, which was the calendar year, to coincide with the GOC contract year that runs from the 1st April to 31 March. The statistics are recorded by reference to the accounting year.

Exact comparison between 2006/2007 and 2008/2009/2010 cannot be made because of the changed statistical basis. However, it can be seen that the number of contacts has reduced over the last three years by about 38%. It is thought that the requirement for practices to have 'in-house' arrangements to deal with complaints has increased the opportunity for problems to be solved without the consumer feeling it necessary to contact the OCCS. Also, a consumer can now find the answer to frequently asked questions (FAQs) on the OCCS website, which is well used and the main source of introduction to the OCCS.

Chart B can be compared across the years shown and it indicates that the number of cases opened has increased since 2007 even though the number of contacts has reduced. In 2008 OCCS implemented a number of administrative and operational improvements, including relocation of the offices, improved publicity for the service, new staff and revised procedures, all of which contributed to a more comprehensive and effective service.

It is considered that these changes increased the availability of the service and extended the opportunity for mediation. It will be seen from reference to *Charts A & B* that the percentage of contacts resulting in a case being opened has increased each year since 2007. In 2008, 40% of contacts led to a case being opened, 2009 - 46% and 2010 - 51%.

Many of those contacting the OCCS do not proceed with a complaint following discussion.

This may be because after guidance is given to the complainant, he/she seeks to resolve the complaint personally with the practice before referring it to the OCCS; or a complaint is not pursued after consumer rights are explained in general terms; or the complaint is outside the remit of the OCCS, e.g. the complainant seeks to recover compensation, or the complaint relates to an unregistered supplier.

Chart A - Contacts logged - year on year

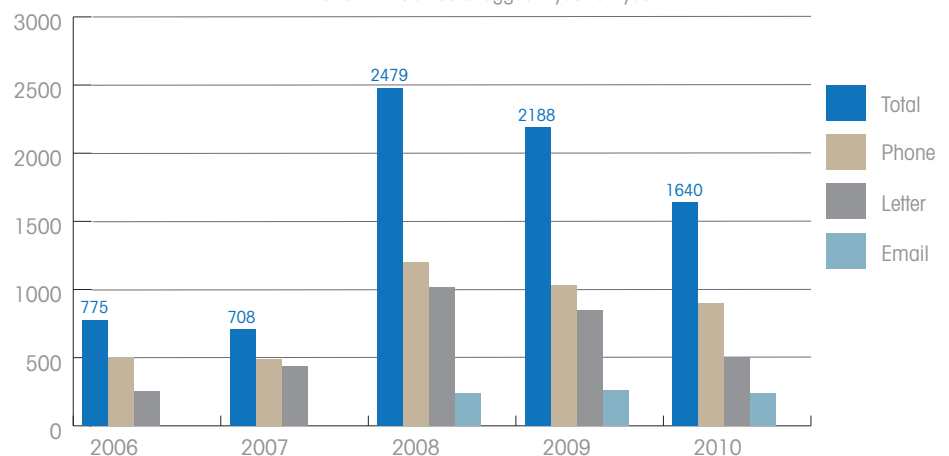
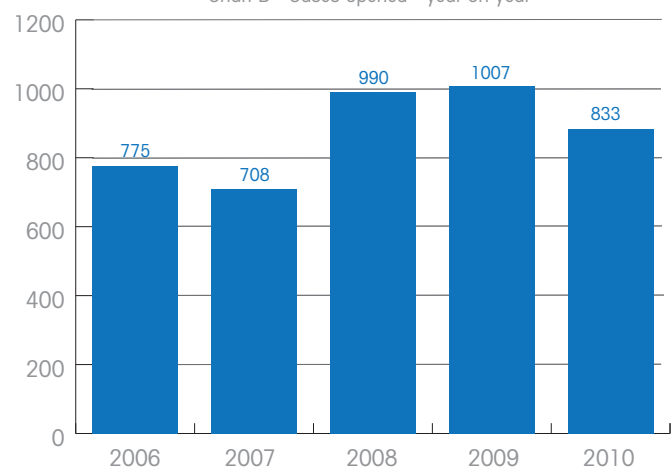


Chart B - Cases opened - year on year





Source of complainant's knowledge of the OCCS

The percentages in *Chart C* show that the Internet continues to increase as the principal source of complainants' knowledge of the OCCS. The Optical Bodies, principally the General Optical Council, are the next most frequent source of introduction to the OCCS and has increased significantly over the last couple of years. The percentage of references by a practitioner has shown an increase over recent years and include a growing number of enquiries from practitioners wishing to discuss complaints made to them. The term 'Other' includes complainants referred to the OCCS by the 'Which' magazine, public libraries, 'a friend', Age UK, doctors and hospitals.

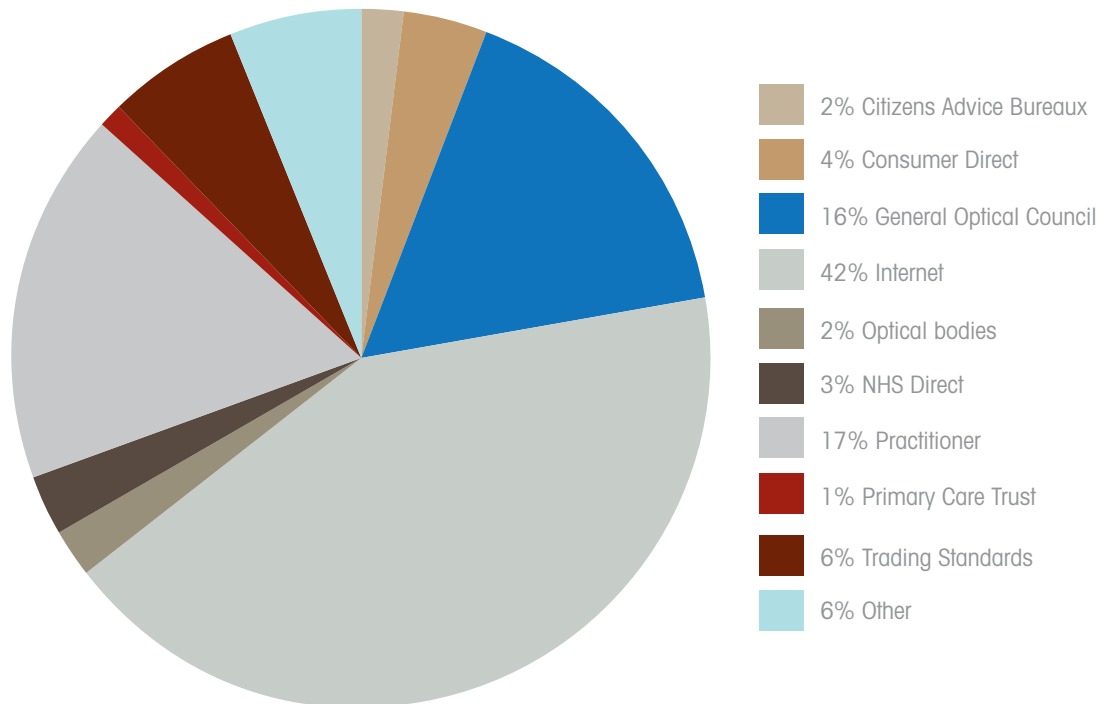
The public is increasingly using the world wide web to search for help and the OCCS website is frequently visited and the number of contacts after visiting the site has increased year on year.

The Annual Report and the Authorisation Form, which we require from a consumer before considering a complaint, can be downloaded from our website at:

www.opticalcomplaints.co.uk

We believe that all relevant organisations are aware of the service provided by the OCCS but further information can be supplied on request.

Chart C - Source of complainant's knowledge of the OCC



Reason for complaint

Although it is often not possible to identify the main issue of a complaint until a case is nearly resolved, e.g. when the sight test and dispensing are at different practices, the OCCS categorises complaints in order to identify trends, and we believe that we can continue to improve the process. Frequently, a complaint falls into more than a single category; or is not clearly within a specific category; or there are several different issues. In 2009 we added a category 'Fitness to practise' to record complaints that included an allegation suggesting misconduct or incompetence. In such cases, the complainant is informed that the matter is outside the remit of the OCCS and may be a matter for the GOC.

To improve the analysis and reduce the number of those categorised as 'Miscellaneous', three additional categories were introduced to record complaints that allege 'poor service or practice procedures', 'prescription not provided or refused' and 'sight test and dispensing at separate practices'. Revising the categories will assist analysis but it will mean that comparison year by year over preceding years is not possible or more difficult.

Chart D indicates the complaints in 2010 by category and it will be seen that the largest single category of complaints (23%) is 'Poor service/practice'. Further comment about this category is made in the Chairman's introduction. Chart E shows the categories of complaints over the last five years.

