Optical Consumer Complaints Service

Your End of Year Update from OCCS

It's been another busy year for the Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS). In our last newsletter of the year, we share our annual report findings, our most common complaint and look ahead to our CPD programme for 2025.

Annual Report Findings

In the summer, we published our 2023-24 annual report. The good news was that the numbers of complaints handled by the OCCS did not increase significantly year-on-year and that concerns relating to misdiagnosis fell from 60 to 33 complaints over the past two years.

However, our report also highlighted areas of growing concern. Issues relating to domiciliary provision doubled in the last year, which is particularly concerning given the vulnerable nature of many domiciliary consumers.

In addition, the veracity of complainants has escalated post-Covid and cost of living challenges are making the work of the OCCS harder than it has ever been. So, although volumes aren't up per se, the work required to resolve cases has increased significantly.

If you want to read our Annual Report in full, you can find it here.

Common Complaints Under the Spotlight

We are often asked, what are the most common complaints we receive. Although the nature of complaints can vary from year to year, we find that a significant proportion of our workload is related to the non-tolerance of new spectacles.

Recent research published by Jeremy Beesley and David Elliott at Bradford University is a great piece of work which highlights some of the common prescribing errors and causes of so-called 'non tolls'.

While the Beesley Elliott approach to reducing non-tolls is a good place to start, it's important to remember that the non tolls cases which reach the OCCS usually occur due to a breakdown in communication and trust between a patient and their optical professional.
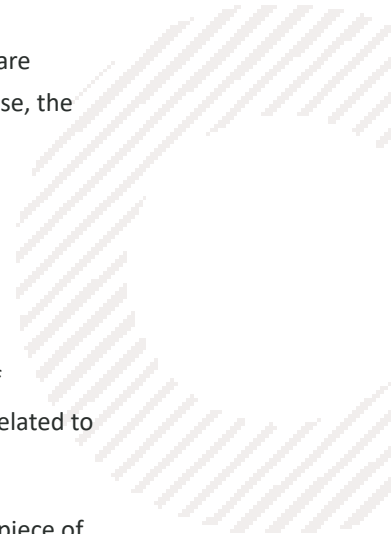
So, while reducing the likelihood of non-tolls is important, so too is having a robust, well-understood complaint handling policy so that these frequently arising issues can be resolved quickly and effectively without the need for escalation.

Important Dates for Your Diary

On 1 January 2025, new standards for optical businesses will be introduced by the General Optical Council.

These new rules will define the standards that are expected of optical businesses to protect the public and promote high standards of care. There are 12 standards in total, which apply to both behaviour and clinical care.

You can find a reminder of the new standards here.

CPD Training

Our new programme of CPD training sessions will begin in January, providing GOC registrants with an opportunity to acquire CPD points. Book one or more of the following sessions to start earning your points:

Learning from Complaints

The ideal introduction to the work of the OCCS, this session covers three case studies covering a range of scenarios that help delegates build their confidence in dealing with tricky situations and create a more systematic approach to complaint resolution.

Safe not Sorry

This session is currently receiving great feedback from LOCs! In this session, delegates will be walked through three redacted GOC/OCCS cases. This helps delegates understand which situations result in regulatory interest or action and those that don't.

Great Conversations in Myopia Management

Building on the success of Great Expectations in myopia management, this session updates delegates on the latest insights and research in this rapidly developing area of clinical practice.

Learning from Clinical Complaints

In this quickfire peer review, delegates are presented with four very topical clinical complaints from the OCCS archive and are challenged to consider how they would manage the situation, but also to discover what the key learnings to take away from each of the four cases are.

Contact Sue Clark sclark@nockolds.co.uk for more information or to book a CPD event.