



**Optical Consumer
Complaints Service**

OCCS Summer Newsletter:
Supporting the Optical
Profession Through Insight,
Learning and Early Resolution



Welcome

As we move into the summer period, we wanted to share some key insights from the latest 2025-26 OCCS Annual Report, along with practical learning points that may help practices strengthen communication, manage expectations, and reduce the risk of complaints.

The past year has been the busiest in the history of the Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS), with complaint volumes increasing by 31% and mediation activity increasing by 52%. Encouragingly, despite this growth, the OCCS improved performance and reduced average resolution times, demonstrating the value of early engagement and effective complaint handling.

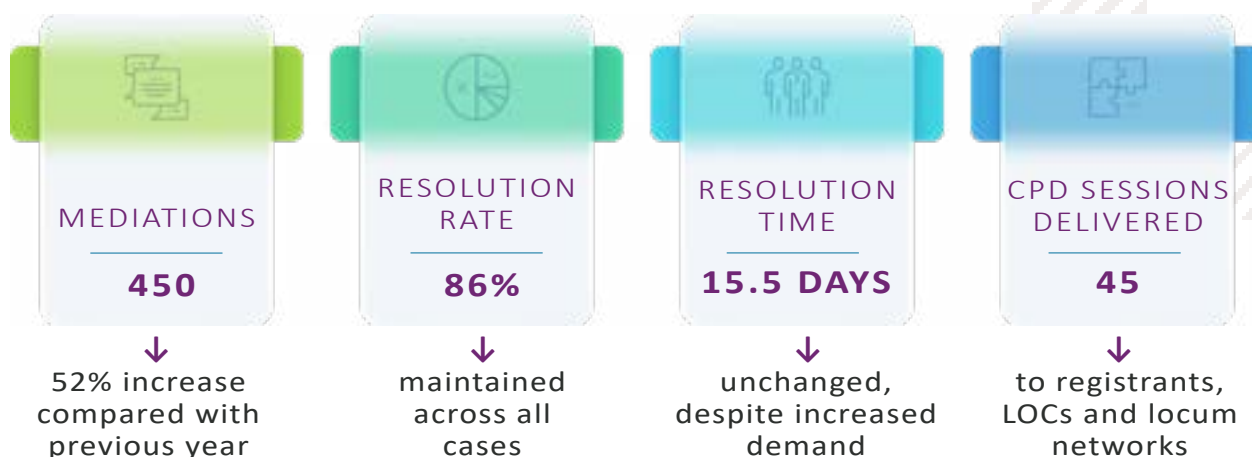
While complaint numbers have increased, the themes remain familiar: communication, expectation setting, clinical explanations, aftercare and transparency around costs continue to be at the heart of many consumer concerns.

To discuss anything further in this newsletter, do not hesitate to contact our OCCS team on enquiries@opticalcomplaints.co.uk



AT A GLANCE: 2025-26 IN NUMBERS

CASES RECEIVED: 2201
a 31% increase year-on-year



KEY COMPLAINT TRENDS

45%
CLINICAL CARE

39%
CUSTOMER CARE

Communication Still Matters Most

Clinical service remained the largest complaint category at 45%, with concerns often relating to examination processes, explanation of findings and situations where patients felt they had not fully understood the information provided.

Customer care and aftercare accounted for a further 39% of complaints, highlighting the ongoing importance of effective communication throughout the patient journey.

Cost Transparency Under the Spotlight

Complaints relating to costs and charges increased significantly, rising from 4% to 7% of all complaints. Consumers are paying closer attention than ever to value for money, pricing structures and understanding what is included within the services they receive. Clear conversations around fees, options and expectations remain essential.

Growing Consumer Expectations

The report highlights that consumers increasingly arrive with well-defined expectations about complaint outcomes, often supported by online research and AI-generated content. While greater awareness can be positive, practices may find they need to spend more time managing expectations, providing clear explanations and documenting conversations thoroughly.

Emerging Areas of Concern

The OCCS saw notable increases in complaints relating to:

Laser eye surgery
and contract-
related care

Myopia
management and
informed consent

External
prescription
and subsequent
dispensing concerns

Product guarantees,
warranties
and multifocal
adaptation issues

LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

One of the strongest messages from this year's report is that many complaints can be prevented through:

1	Early and clear communication
2	Effective expectation management
3	Transparent pricing discussions
4	Robust record keeping
5	Consistent information from all members of the practice team
6	Strong front-of-house complaint handling processes

The OCCS team continues to observe that practices which invest in communication and relationship building are often better placed to resolve concerns quickly and constructively.



OCCS CPD AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Training that Strengthens Practice and Reduces Complaints

Education continues to play a key role in complaint prevention, and during 2025-26, the OCCS delivered 45 CPD sessions focused on communication, record-keeping, and lessons learned from complaint cases.

The OCCS offers bespoke CPD and training for:

- Optometrists
- Dispensing Opticians
- Practice Managers
- Front-of-House Teams
- LOCs and Professional Networks
- Independent and Multiple Practices

Popular topics include:



Complaint prevention and early resolution



Managing patient expectations



Effective clinical communication



Record keeping and documentation



Handling difficult conversations



Learning from complaint case studies



Supporting front-of-house teams



Whether delivered in-person or online, sessions are designed to be practical, engaging and rooted in real OCCS case experience.

Interested in an OCCS CPD session for your team or network? Contact the OCCS team on enquiries@opticalcomplaints.co.uk to discuss tailored training opportunities and upcoming educational events.



Looking Ahead

As complaint volumes continue to rise across the optical sector, the importance of clear communication, transparency and early intervention has never been greater. Addressing concerns promptly, listening to patients' experiences and maintaining open, honest dialogue can often prevent misunderstandings from escalating into formal complaints. Alongside this, accurate record-keeping and a commitment to reflective practice remain fundamental to delivering high-quality patient care and building trust.

▶ The OCCS remains committed to supporting both consumers and optical professionals through independent mediation, education and the sharing of sector-wide insight. By identifying emerging trends, highlighting common themes and sharing lessons learned from complaint cases, we aim to help the profession strengthen practice, improve patient experiences and reduce the likelihood of future complaints.

We are grateful to the optical professionals, practices, Local Optical Committees (LOCs) and sector partners who continue to engage with the OCCS, participate in our educational activities and contribute to resolving concerns constructively. Your ongoing collaboration helps foster a culture of learning, openness and continuous improvement, ensuring that the insights gained from complaints lead to meaningful improvements for both patients and the profession.

