



Association of
Optometrists



ANNUAL REPORT 2016

2015 — a year of challenge, change and transformation

Promoting the profession, protecting the professional

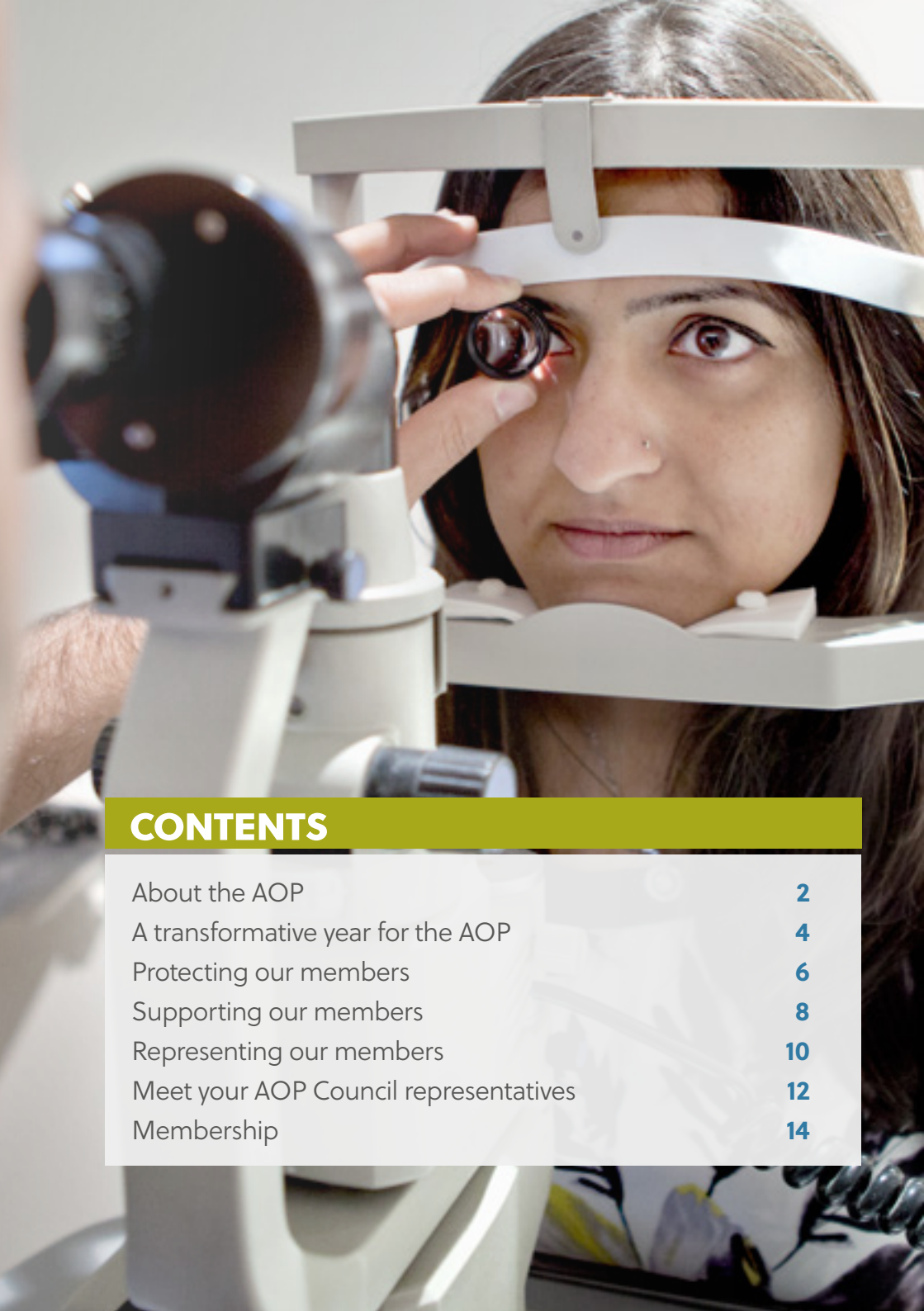
ABOUT THE AOP

Set up in 1946, the Association of Optometrists (AOP) is the leading professional membership organisation for optometrists in the UK.

We offer protection, support and representation to our 16,000+ members throughout their careers with a range of valued services and benefits including:

- Unrivalled legal and clinical expertise from our in-house team
- A comprehensive indemnity insurance package
- Extensive CET and networking opportunities at events across the country
- Career support and expert opinion pieces in our new-look monthly journal *Optometry Today (OT)*
- Daily updates with *OT*'s online news resource, including a dedicated 'In practice' section
- An influential voice on the issues that matter most

We are a founding member of the Optical Confederation, the body through which we conduct our public affairs work.



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A TRANSFORMATIVE YEAR FOR THE AOP

Henrietta Alderman, Chief Executive, and Kevin Thompson, Chairman of the Board, reflect on a transformative year for the AOP

What stands out for you about last year?

- HA** Delivering our communications strategy was the hallmark of 2015. At the centre is our fully integrated new website, with valuable member-exclusive content including the community forums and an outstanding online CET offering. *OT* also underwent a radical redesign, became monthly and is now restricted to members and subscribers.
- KT** Our existing Council took a brave and unprecedented step in streamlining itself, with many long-standing and well-respected members agreeing to step aside to allow a new, more representative Council to emerge.

What are you most proud of?

- HA** We continue to grow our membership and develop highly regarded services, with strong levels of member satisfaction. Outstanding member defence and legal support remains central to our offering.
- KT** We strengthened our position on a number of issues, such as sight test fees, through our newly formed Policy Committee, and worked at a national political level through our membership of the Optical Confederation.



HENRIETTA ALDERMAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE



KEVIN THOMPSON, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

What were the key issues for members?

- HA** The aggressive activity of those working on behalf of NHS England seeking to reclaim alleged inappropriate General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) claims dominated for many in 2015. AOP supported members, including performers in the High Court.
- KT** Legal and regulatory change has been a constant theme. There has been a steady push by the AOP to look outwards and influence, and to ensure that when regulatory change comes in any form, our members' views are reflected.

What are the AOP's aims for 2016?

- HA** Our strategy is defined under the three pillars of policy and politics, membership services and financial effectiveness. Within these, we will assist members to adapt to changing business and clinical opportunities, and the need to become an indispensable part of the NHS through enhanced services.
- KT** We will continue to develop our services and benefits for members including extending our activity in educating the public on the important role of the optometrist in eye health.

PROTECT

We are the leading provider of medical malpractice insurance for optometrists in the UK, and our in-house legal team vigorously defends the reputation and livelihood of our members

In-house legal and regulatory support



2015 was the legal and regulatory team's busiest year with over 3800 enquiries — an increase of 32% on 2014.

We support our members in all four nations on a wide range of issues including the defence of insurance claims, representation before the GOC and at NHS panel meetings and employment issues.

This year we have worked with the GOC on a number of issues including the increasingly important area of independent prescribing legislation and how the GOC interprets this. We also attended meetings with the

GOC and other insurers to discuss the potential impact of the new GOC *Standards of Practice*.

Our employment law team has expanded to include a designated employment paralegal in response to high demand for this service.

There was a marked increase in enquiries about the appropriateness or not of seeing patients earlier than the norm under GOS regulations. Area teams throughout England interpreted the regulations on an individual basis so our team had to respond to a significant number of enquiries.

“

Thank you so much for your advice today. I feel much more in control of the situation now and can see a way forward

AOP MEMBER SUPPORTED BY THE AOP LEGAL TEAM

TOP 10 ENQUIRIES IN 2015

- | | | | |
|---|--|----|--|
| 1 | EMPLOYMENT
883 enquiries | 6 | DVLA
126 enquiries |
| 2 | MISCELLANEOUS
481 enquiries | 7 | PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
113 enquiries |
| 3 | GOS
407 enquiries | 8 | PATIENT RECORDS
110 enquiries |
| 4 | PATIENT COMPLAINT
272 enquiries | 9 | INSURANCE/CONTACT LENS
92 enquiries each |
| 5 | REGULATORY (NON-GOS)
167 enquiries | 10 | COMMERCIAL
90 enquiries |

3844

ENQUIRIES IN 2015

39%

INCREASE IN
ENQUIRIES ABOUT
EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

32%

INCREASE IN
ENQUIRIES ON 2014

“

...a small token of gratitude for the priceless support I received at a difficult period of my life. I honestly couldn't have got through it without you all

AOP MEMBER SUPPORTED BY THE AOP LEGAL TEAM

**NEW
IN
2015**

We produced GOS sight test and primary eye examination guidance for our members in Scotland and the rest of the UK, outlining best practice procedures to follow

SUPPORT

We provide world-class CET and events, a monthly journal and high quality services and benefits to enable our 16,000+ members to fulfil their professional roles



In 2015 we delivered our communications strategy, addressing responses to the 2013 and 2014 membership surveys. A refreshed brand identity, a new-look *Optometry Today* (OT) with more CET, and a new, fully integrated and mobile-responsive website, combined to give members improved communications. We have also streamlined our social media presence, and seen a huge rise in interaction and engagement.



Our national CET and events programme

25

Events offering a total of 357 CET points

16

Peer discussion and legal roadshows attended by over 750 delegates

135

Delegates attended the Hospital Optometrists Annual Conference

200

Delegates attended the National Optical Conference

215

Students spent two days at our Student Conference

81

UK and international delegates attended London 2015 Education Destination

38

Delegates attended career development workshops, worth a collective 57 CET points

“ Great session with lots of interactive discussions, great way to improve optometric practice

AOP MEMBER, NKIRU NWEGBU, ATTENDED AN AOP PEER DISCUSSION

Optometry Today

OT carried out a large-scale reader survey, updated the look and frequency of the journal, and became a protected benefit for over 15,000 members and subscribers.

94%

RATED OT AS 'EXCELLENT' OR 'GOOD'

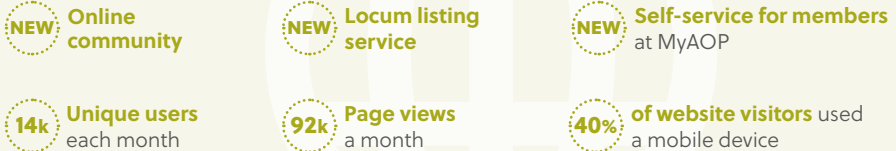
91%

VIEWED OT AS A 'VERY IMPORTANT' OR AN 'IMPORTANT' PART OF THEIR AOP MEMBERSHIP*

*From the 2015 OT reader survey



www.aop.org.uk

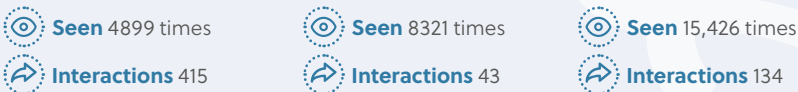


Social media – top tweets and Facebook posts

We caught up with Shamina Asif, OT contributor, for a photo at the NOC

Our blog warned that 1/3 of mascara products are bacterially contaminated

Geoff Roberson, AOP Professional Adviser, responded to Professor Dan Reinstein's inaccurate sight test comments



“ Highly recommend this legal roadshow as real-life scenarios used, very informative

AOP MEMBER, SAIMA BEGUM, ATTENDED AN AOP LEGAL ROADSHOW

REPRESENT

Our members have a voice. We seek their views, and work on their behalf, to help shape the optical profession, and promote the role of optometry

2015 saw a greater focus on policy work so that we can develop a stronger voice on behalf of our members.

- Council held elections to reform and become more representative, allowing for debates that lead to clear actions
- We established a Policy Committee which oversees our contributions to government consultations and the development of position statements
- We published five position statements on CET grants; children's eye care; fluorescein; illegal practice; and sight test fees
- We introduced community forums on our new website, an important vehicle for seeking members' views on policy matters
- We began a research project to identify how we can better support and protect our members

Our work as part of the Optical Confederation

We work as part of the Optical Confederation to represent the optical profession to parliament, government, GOC and other institutions. The Optical Confederation public affairs team:

- Responded to 29 consultations, covering a wide range of policy areas including learning disabilities, the NHS mandate, primary care and the NHS standard contract
- Briefed over 2100 prospective parliamentary candidates
- Facilitated 24 practice visits for MPs
- Attended the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat Party Conferences



Promoting the profession

National press coverage in 2015 included features in *The Times*, *Daily Express*, *Guardian* and *Daily Telegraph*. From safe viewing of the solar eclipse to the myopia boom, our experts worked with the media to raise the profile of the profession.

The AOP Awards recognised talent, helping raise awareness of optometrists as guardians of the nation's eye health through local press coverage. We continued to support the National Eye Health Week campaign, working with partners in the optical sector. As a result of the campaign, 1.5m UK adults said they were encouraged to book a sight test for themselves or a family member.*

NEW IN 2015

The new 'For patients' section on our website, www.aop.org.uk/patients, hosts:



Leaflets to help members with patient queries, including *Who's who in your optical practice* and *Top tips for healthy eyes*



Animated video to help inform the public about the importance of regular sight tests



Eye care blogs on topical patient issues, including the importance of a healthy diet, cosmetic lenses and make-up hygiene

*Populus Consumer Analysis Study commissioned by National Eye Health Week, conducted October 2015.

MEET YOUR AOP COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

Council members 2015-16 representing geographical areas

EAST OF ENGLAND



Emma Spofforth
BOARD MEMBER



Martin Sweeney



Tushar Majithia



Bhavik Parmar



Gordon Ilett



Jugjeet Singh Bansal

NORTH EAST ENGLAND



Jane Ranns



Kevin Thompson
CHAIR AND BOARD MEMBER



Andrea Kay



Ian White



Anne Freeman



Valarie Jerome

SOUTH WEST ENGLAND



Ed Bickerstaffe
BOARD MEMBER



Keith Pearce



Susan Bowers



Francesca Marchetti



William Ean Blair



Stewart Mitchell

WEST MIDLANDS

NORTHERN IRELAND



Julie-Anne Little



Brian McKeown

SCOTLAND



Alison McClune
BOARD MEMBER



Sohaib Shafiq



Kevin Wallace

WALES



Nadeen Joseph



Mike George
VICE CHAIR AND
BOARD MEMBER

Non-Council Board members



Vivian Bush
BOARD MEMBER



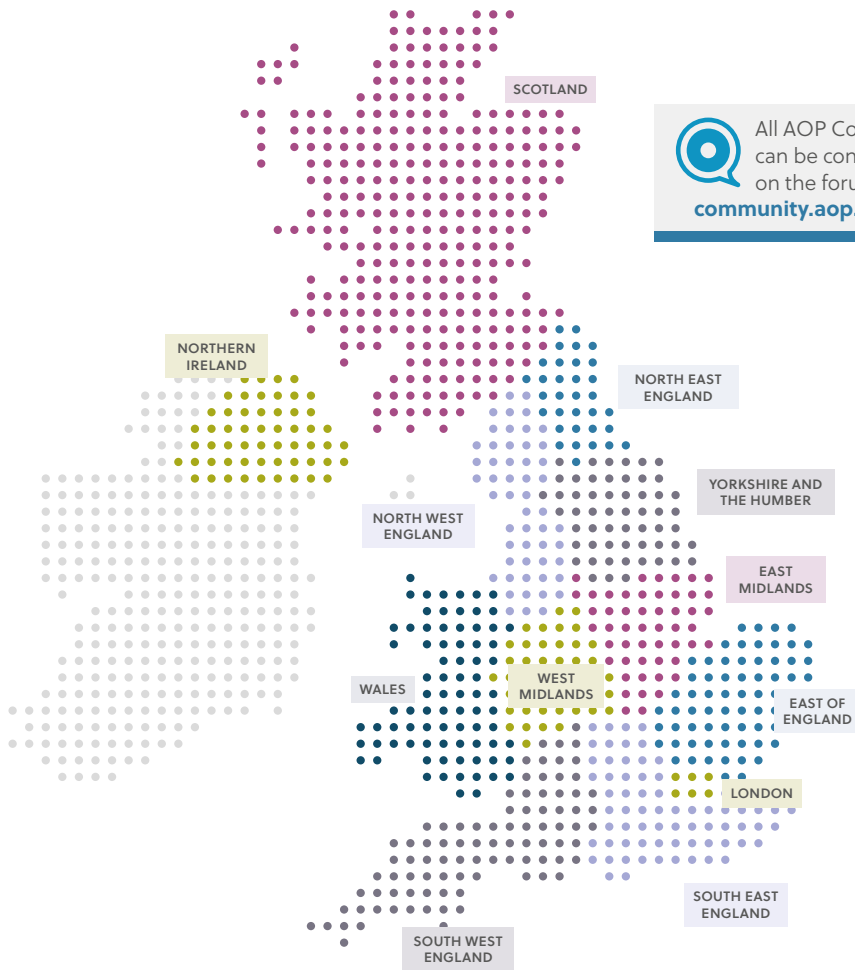
Michael Fegan
LAY BOARD MEMBER



Peter Hampson
BOARD MEMBER



Jeremy Holmes
LAY BOARD MEMBER




 All AOP Councillors can be contacted on the forums at community.aop.org.uk

Council members 2015-16 designated (appointed) positions



EARLY CAREER OPTOMETRIST
Fatima Nawaz



FRANCHISEE/ JOINT VENTURE OPTOMETRIST
Jonathan Bennett



UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT OPTOMETRIST
Fawzia Mohamad



PRE-REGISTRATION OPTOMETRIST
Karan Vyas



NEWLY-QUALIFIED OPTOMETRIST
Sana Asif



UNIVERSITY LECTURER
Will Holmes



DISPENSING OPTICIAN
James Dawson



HOSPITAL OPTOMETRIST
David Adams

MEMBERSHIP

Growth

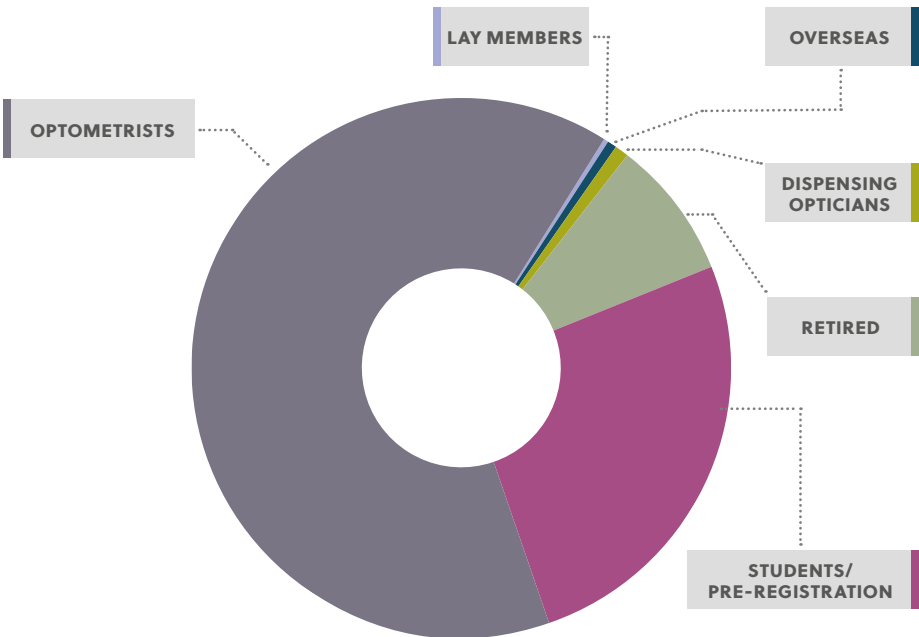
The AOP's strength is in our membership, enabling us to speak with a collective voice and provide valued benefits and services to members throughout their careers.

Recognising that 2015 was another challenging year for members, we froze our UK membership fees for the sixth consecutive year, and overseas members had their fees frozen for a second year.

Our membership continued to grow in 2015, with particularly strong growth in both the optometrist and student/pre-registration membership categories.

We continued to see an increase in total membership, with 6% growth across our paying member grades.

Who are our members?





Copies of the full annual financial statements, the auditor's report and the directors' report are available for members to download from our website

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