



Association of  
Optometrists

# ANNUAL REPORT 2018



# ABOUT THE AOP

Our mission is to protect members as individual professionals, promote their interests and provide unrivalled support enabling them to deliver high-quality eye care with confidence.

## WHAT WE DO

- Assist our members to prosper, in whatever their mode of practice
- Promote eye health and the work of our members, so it is recognised by the public as an important health benefit
- Provide unrivalled support for eye health practitioners and protect our individual members





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# HIGHLIGHTS OF 2017

## HENRIETTA ALDERMAN AOP Chief Executive



Health and wellbeing was a key theme, with our Peer Support Line (PSL) launching in May. Over 40% of calls to the PSL were about employment-related stress, which aligns with our survey findings. We are confident of the positive impact the service is having, with 100% of callers leaving feedback rating the service as 'supportive' or 'very supportive'.

Our continued investment in promoting the profession saw the launch of our Voice of Optometry panel. Members participated in a survey, providing valuable insight into the profession, which has already helped us to significantly raise the profile of eye health with the public. Our *Don't swerve a sight test* campaign was a success and 2018 will build on this, increasing awareness with the public, politicians and the media.

Our second legal drama *On the record: team under pressure* (with grateful thanks to the Central Optical Fund), released in 2017, highlights the pressures practices face, and the AOP support available.

With over 81% market share of optometrists, we are truly representative of the profession and we continue to invest in our core services to grow in alignment with member requirements.

We are fortunate to have a Board, Council, committees, volunteers and an in-house team committed to protecting, supporting and representing the interests of members.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Henrietta Alderman".

## MIKE GEORGE AOP Chair



Building relationships with a wide range of stakeholders and decision-makers has been key. Through our Honorary Associates programme we have a knowledgeable and influential cohort of eight eye health ambassadors, from the House of Commons and Lords, to enter debates and ask questions on our behalf.

Capita issues have continued to be a financial and administrative burden to members in England and we worked closely with LOCSU and other optical partners to ameliorate the blocks and find a more sustainable way forward. This will continue during 2018.

The GOC Education Strategic Review occupied a considerable amount of time. We have been active in this debate and it is essential that members are equipped for a future where technology will play a key part and clinical skills will be in greater demand.

We commissioned the Institute of Employment Studies to build on previous research related to workforce issues, including the supply of optometrists. This work will be completed in 2018.

Education for members, educating the public and also educating ourselves on our members' changing needs will lead the AOP's work for the coming year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mike George".



# PROTECTING OUR MEMBERS

The legal and regulatory team continued to provide the level of service our members expect and value, responding to an ever-widening range of enquiries in line with developments in the sector.

The team is recognised in particular for its individual and expert service to members facing GOC investigations and defending clinical negligence claims.

The depth and complexity of casework has grown, with an increase in requests for assistance and attendance at internal disciplinary and grievance hearings.

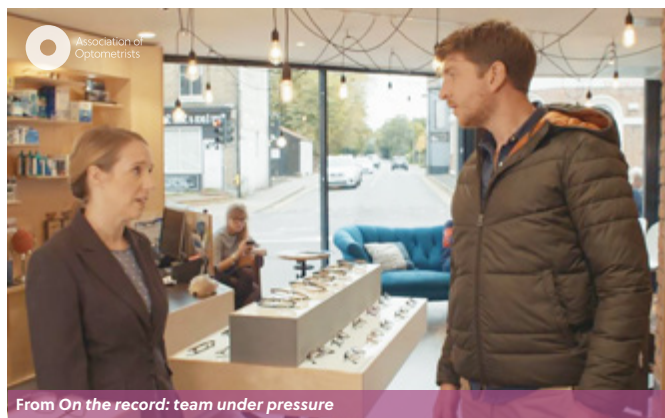
Our employment advice service concluded its fifth year in 2017 and has seen a 74% increase in cases since its inception.



The AOP legal and regulatory team

## NEW in 2017

- We released the legal film *On the record: team under pressure* with one CET point
- We developed an internal referral template to help locums manage patients appropriately
- We published guidance on the safe disposal of optometric waste
- We updated our guidelines for diagnosing and managing glaucoma in accordance with NICE guidelines



From *On the record: team under pressure*

Kindly supported by



**53%**  
increase

In requests for assistance and attendance at disciplinary and grievance hearings

**59%**  
increase

In DVLA enquiries

**59%**  
increase

In regulatory non-GOS claim queries

**18%**  
increase

In clinical queries

**11%**  
increase

In queries about patient complaints

**2%**  
increase

In employment enquiries from pre-registration optometrists



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**4305**

enquiries to the  
legal and regulatory  
team in 2017

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# SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS

In 2017 we launched our free, anonymous Peer Support Line (PSL) for anyone in optics experiencing stress, and wishing to talk it through with an empathetic peer.

Our members accessed a range of CPD and CET, for all competencies and specialisms online, at events and through our journal *Optometry Today* (OT).

We expanded our patient resources, which have proved popular at events and on social media.

We developed our online CET offering, enabling members to take, and retake, past CET exams for practice.

## AOP PEER SUPPORT LINE

0800 870 8401

29 mins  
average call  
length

100%  
positive  
feedback

The PSL was developed so that optical practitioners and students never feel alone in a time of need. The service provides a free, confidential space for individuals at any stage of their optical career to talk through issues, feelings and emotions with an empathetic, non-judgemental, listening peer.

**NEW** in 2017

### Resources for patients

- Six patient leaflets including contact lens care, conjunctivitis, and vision standards for driving
- Four videos: contact lens care, vision and driving, dry eye, and children's vision
- 10 blogs including healthy lifestyles, allergy advice and refractive surgery

### CET AND CPD IN 2017

NEW

7

OT video skills guides for revision or as a refresher



48

CET articles



7

CET videos



12

VRICS articles



3573

Exams taken each month on average



37,593

CET points gained



## SOCIAL MEDIA IN 2017



**7054** new Facebook followers

/AssociationOfOptometrists  
/OptometryTodayJournal

The AOP's most popular post in 2017

We believe the Mirror's recent article on buying prescription eyewear is unhelpful – read our response...



AOP responds to Mirror consumer advice to buy online

187 100 shares



**4650** new Twitter followers

@The\_AOP  
@OptometryToday

OT's most popular Tweet in 2017



UK surgeon finds 27 missing contact lenses in woman's eye  
<http://ow.ly/406A30dDpLT> #Contactlenses #Opticians  
#Eyetest #Health #Contactlens

1.1k 7.1k 9.1k

## EVENTS AND WEBINARS IN 2017



Students at City University freshers' fair

### NEW in 2017

- Pilot locums events in partnership with Johnson & Johnson Vision
- CPD webinar *Taking control of your career*
- Interactive CET webinar *Practising safely in unfamiliar surroundings*
- OSCE refresher course in partnership with the University of Bradford

### EVENTS IN NUMBERS

**137 members** attended locums events

**96 members** attended Therapeutics London

**358 members** took CET with our *Practising safely in unfamiliar surroundings* webinar

**214 members** attended our Hospital Optometrists Annual Conference

We visited **11 universities** during Freshers' week

**8051 visitors** attended 100% Optical



**Superb, constructive and informative**

SUDHIR PATEL, LEGAL ROADSHOW  
STIRLING, 22 MARCH 2017

# REPRESENTING OUR MEMBERS

## Deciding and explaining our positions

Our policy team works closely with our Policy Committee and Council to produce positions on new issues and consultations, and develop guidance for our members and the public.

Our major policy projects in 2017 included a response to the GOC's call for evidence to inform its Education Strategic Review. We also looked at the policy implications of our health and wellbeing survey, and began work on a follow-up workforce survey for 2018.

We also published new position statements on visible blue light, and on driving and vision.



## Representing members to Government

We continue to promote the interests of our members to Parliament, Government and other institutions, both in our own right and as members of the Optical Confederation.

In 2017 our team started working with the RNIB to give secretariat support to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Eye Health and Visual Impairment. The Group carried out an inquiry into capacity issues in hospital eye departments, which will report in 2018.

3

Party conferences attended

8

Parliamentarians appointed as  
AOP Honorary Associates

20

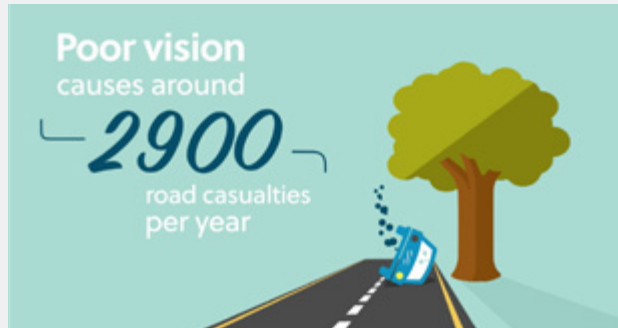
Public consultation responses



Our CEO and public affairs officer with Jim Shannon MP

## Representing the profession in the media

2017 saw the launch of our Voice of Optometry project. Over 1000 members took part in the first survey and we used the resulting statistics as a springboard for our media activity, with encouraging results. Our primary campaign *Don't swerve a sight test*, plus campaigns on safe contact lens care, children's eye health and UV protection, helped us achieve 327 pieces of media coverage in 2017, an increase of 174% on the previous year.



### *Don't swerve a sight test* campaign in numbers

- **Coverage on four national broadcast channels:**  
*BBC Breakfast, Sky News radio, BBC Radio 2 and LBC*
- **National coverage in six national newspapers:**  
*The Telegraph, The Times, Daily Mail, Daily Express, The Sun and The Mirror*
- Facebook video **viewed nearly 23,000** times and #DontSwerve tweets over **31,000 impressions**



The Daily Telegraph

THE TIMES

THE Sun

Daily Mail

DAILY Mirror

DAILY EXPRESS

# COUNCIL IN 2017

Our Council and Policy Committee considered a wide range of issues during 2017, drawing together insights and expertise from all parts of our membership and from across the UK. All our members were invited to contribute their views through the AOP website forums ahead of Council discussions in March, June and October 2017.

In March, Council agreed the AOP's response to the GOC's call for evidence in its Education Strategic Review. Our submission highlighted the pace of change in optics, and the need for the GOC to take a more outcome-focused approach to the education of eye care professionals. Many of our suggestions were reflected in the 'concepts and principles' consultation that the GOC published at the end of the year.



At the June Council meeting, Councillors discussed a position statement on the issue of driving and vision. Our new position paper sets out our members' concerns about the current legal standards for driving, and our view that drivers should have to prove their vision is adequate for driving at least every 10 years. These points were reflected in the AOP's *Don't swerve a sight test* campaign later in the year.

In October, Councillors debated a range of issues affecting the sector, including new member guidance on clinical topics and current issues in domiciliary care. The meeting also considered plans for a workforce survey to explore issues including members' views on relocating for work.

## OUR FORUMS IN 2017



"The profession needs to change to reflect the different levels of qualifications and care different practitioners can provide"

March 2017



"In short, a legal obligation to have drivers' eyesight checked regularly should be introduced"

June 2017



"I would certainly consider moving in future because I have seen how flexible work can be as a locum"

October 2017

# MEMBERSHIP IN 2017

We saw another year of continued growth, with qualified membership increasing by 5.7% and our market share of GOC-registered optometrists ending the year at 81.4%.

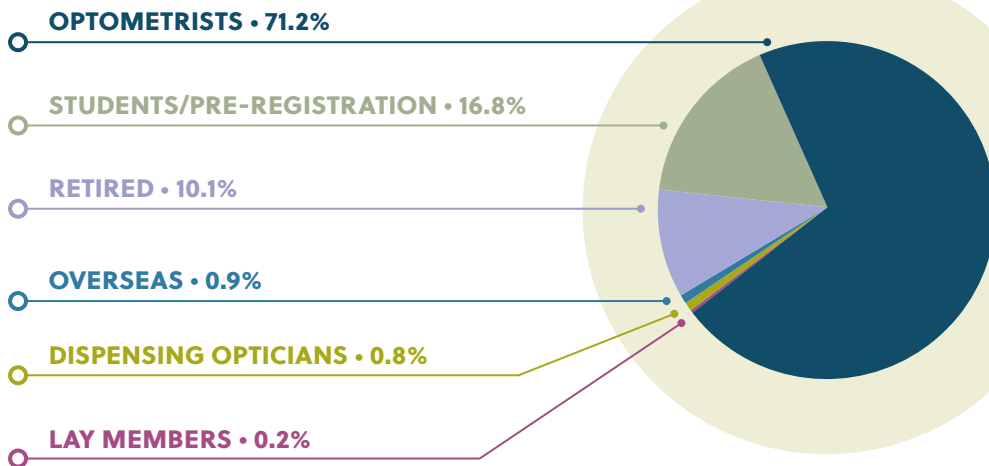
Our membership package continues to be highly valued, with just over 98% renewing for 2018.

We welcomed 882 new students into AOP membership.



Throughout the year, on average, 209 members per month utilised our new Parental Leave membership grade. We continue to monitor the take up of this grade to understand how we can support new parents in the profession.

## 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.





**PROMOTING THE  
PROFESSION**

**PROTECTING THE  
PROFESSIONAL**