

## **General Optical Council press release – 31 July 2007**

For immediate release

### **Complaints against opticians hit three-year low**

Complaints against opticians have fallen to their lowest number for three years. Figures released today by the General Optical Council (GOC) show that 129 complaints were made during 2006/7 compared with 182 in 2004/5, representing a decrease of 29 per cent.

Overall, just 32 per cent of complaints required further action. A further 14 per cent of cases were withdrawn by the complainant before being reviewed by the Council's Investigation Committee. Members of the public were responsible for 82 per cent of complaints received. Incorrect prescriptions were the single largest cause of complaints.

Chairman Rosie Varley commented: "These figures confirm that the majority of optometrists and dispensing opticians are practising safely and competently. UK optometry and dispensing optics continue to have high standards of education, as well as continuing education and training. Fair and effective procedures for dealing with the small minority who experience problems mean that the public can have confidence in eye care professionals."

The statistics are published in the Council's 2006/7 Annual Report, which also includes an overview of the year's registration figures. The number of full registrants has increased by just over two per cent to 16,002. Optometrist numbers have risen by almost three per cent to 10,699. There are now 5,303 dispensing opticians on the registers – an increase of one-and-a-half per cent.

Rosie Varley said: "It is encouraging that both professions continue to grow year-on-year. A steadily growing workforce should signal to the public that eye care services remain accessible and dependable."

Also included in the report is a summary of the successful first cycle of Continuing Education and Training (CET) and a feature on the Council's work in Europe.

The full 2006/7 Annual Report can be downloaded from the website, [www.optical.org](http://www.optical.org).

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### **Notes for editors**

1. Of 129 complaints received, 56 required no further action. A total of 18 were withdrawn, 22 referred to fitness to practise committee, 13 led to performance assessment or review, 18 are currently under investigation and the Council had no jurisdiction to proceed in two cases.
2. In the majority of cases, the subjects of complaints were optometrists (138 overall). A total of 21 dispensing opticians, four students and 15 bodies corporate were also the subject of complaints. NOTE: the number of registrants involved in complaints exceeds the total number of complaints as some cases involved multiple registrants.
3. During 2005/6, 146 complaints were made against registrants.
4. In 2005, there were 10,419 registered optometrists and 5,219 dispensing opticians.

### **About the General Optical Council**

The GOC is the regulator for the optical professions in the UK. Its purpose is to protect the public by promoting high standards of education and conduct amongst opticians. The Council currently registers around 22,000 optometrists, dispensing opticians, student opticians and optical businesses.