

The Opticians Act does not currently give the General Optical Council (GOC) any powers to carry out spot checks on the quality of eye tests carried out in the UK.

Our main role is to protect the public. We carry out regular quality-assurance visits to every institution providing courses and assessments in optometry and dispensing optics in the UK. These visits are carried out by independent panels of visitors. They are designed to ensure that high professional standards are maintained, and to give the public confidence that the practitioners who are on our registers have been appropriately trained, and therefore meet certain standards of conduct and performance. In addition, all practitioners must complete a minimum amount of Continuing Education and Training (CET) as an ongoing condition of registration.

The overall number of complaints we have received about opticians has fallen to its lowest number for three years. Recent figures show that 129 complaints were made during 2006/7 compared with 182 in 2004/5, representing a decrease of 29 per cent. During this time, 17.5 million sight tests were carried out in the UK.\* These figures indicate that the majority of optometrists and dispensing opticians are practising safely and competently.

When registrants do fall below the minimum standards for competence or conduct, we take appropriate and timely action, and increasingly provide support to help them to meet those standards.

The eye examination is an essential part of a regular health check. An eye test can be used to diagnose a number of health issues in addition to eye conditions such as glaucoma. As such, we encourage the public to continue having regular eye tests.

We urge anyone who is concerned about the quality of their eye test to register a complaint with our Fitness to Practise and Legal team on 020 7580 3898 (option 5). Information on how to make a complaint and a copy of our complaints protocol is available on our website, [www.optical.org](http://www.optical.org), or by contacting the GOC directly.

\* Based on Sight Tests Volume and Workforce Survey, Great Britain, 2005/06, The Information Centre for Health and Social Care, October 2006.