



# Vision and leadership in eye health

Annual Report 2021 - 2022



THE COLLEGE OF  
OPTOMETRISTS

#AdvancingOptometry



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# President's report



We want optometrists to be at the heart of patient-centred eye care in the UK, making full use of their current skills, and developing new ones so they can play a central role in leading and delivering new models of care for their patients.

**Professor Leon Davies FCOptom**  
President of The College of Optometrists

# A workforce fit for the future

**How eye care is delivered in the UK is changing rapidly. Technology and innovation are transforming our profession and, as the population ages, more patients will require eye health services.**

So much of what we have achieved this year highlights the aims of our Workforce Vision. This project sets out ambitious plans to shape the delivery of eye care services by our profession and build the evidence base needed to advocate on behalf of optometrists across the UK.

We are taking crucial steps in upskilling the workforce, providing our members with high-quality training, CPD and accredited post-registration higher qualifications to advance their practice. Our priority is to champion optometrists so that their skills and competences are better recognised and used to improve eye care.

As a trusted leader in professional formation and development, we are working with universities, the General Optical Council (GOC) and other key stakeholders to ensure future student optometrists benefit from fully-integrated partnerships between all stakeholders who contribute to their pre-registration journey. This includes delivering and overseeing work-based clinical placements under the new Education and Training Requirements (ETR).

This annual report testifies to all that we have achieved in the last year and highlights how this will provide the basis for the profession's future direction.

Our role in equipping optometrists, and making sure their voices are heard and their interests represented, is vital in ensuring that future eye healthcare needs can be met.



**Professor Leon Davies FCOptom**  
President of The College of Optometrists

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# Chief Executive's report

Over the past year, we have consistently represented and informed the profession, and supported our members in their professional journey.

**Ian Humphreys**

Chief Executive of The College of Optometrists



# Leading the way for our members

**This year, our activity has been focused on ensuring that optometrists are at the forefront of eye care provision as the sector evolves to meet the demands of changing demographics and new technology. Our work continues to provide our members with the support, guidance and resources they need to take on new and expanding roles.**

During the year, we provided a strong and clear voice for the profession and worked with key partners and decision makers to ensure that optometrists are at the heart of eye care provision. We delivered a comprehensive response to the GOC's call to evidence on the Opticians Act – particularly calling for refraction and the eye health check to continue to be carried out by one individual. Other successful collaborations have secured cross-sector support for our Workforce Data Modelling project, as part of our Workforce Vision.

The College's Clinical Management Guidelines (CMGs) are the essential references for the eye care providers, and we continue to ensure that they support our members through a changing landscape. This year, we improved the format of our highly-rated CMGs, and added 29 updates, with more in the pipeline. We also updated the myopia management evidence review and guidance.

Following the GOC's extensive consultation across the sector, the new route to qualification for dispensing optics and optometry was published in March 2021. The College has taken the lead on the delivery of work-based placement experiences in optometry, under the name of 'CLiP'.

Also this year, with our partners in SPOKE (Sector Partnership for Optical Knowledge and Education), we successfully delivered its first two projects, designed to support qualification providers with the roll-out of the GOC's new education and training requirements.

During 2022, we were able to return to face-to-face events and I was delighted to be able to meet with many of our members at Optometry Tomorrow 2022 in Telford, and to welcome 600 new College members at the Diploma Ceremony in November.

The invaluable support we receive from our members ensures that, as the professional body for optometry, we can deliver the vision and leadership to advance the optometry profession for the future.

Thank you.



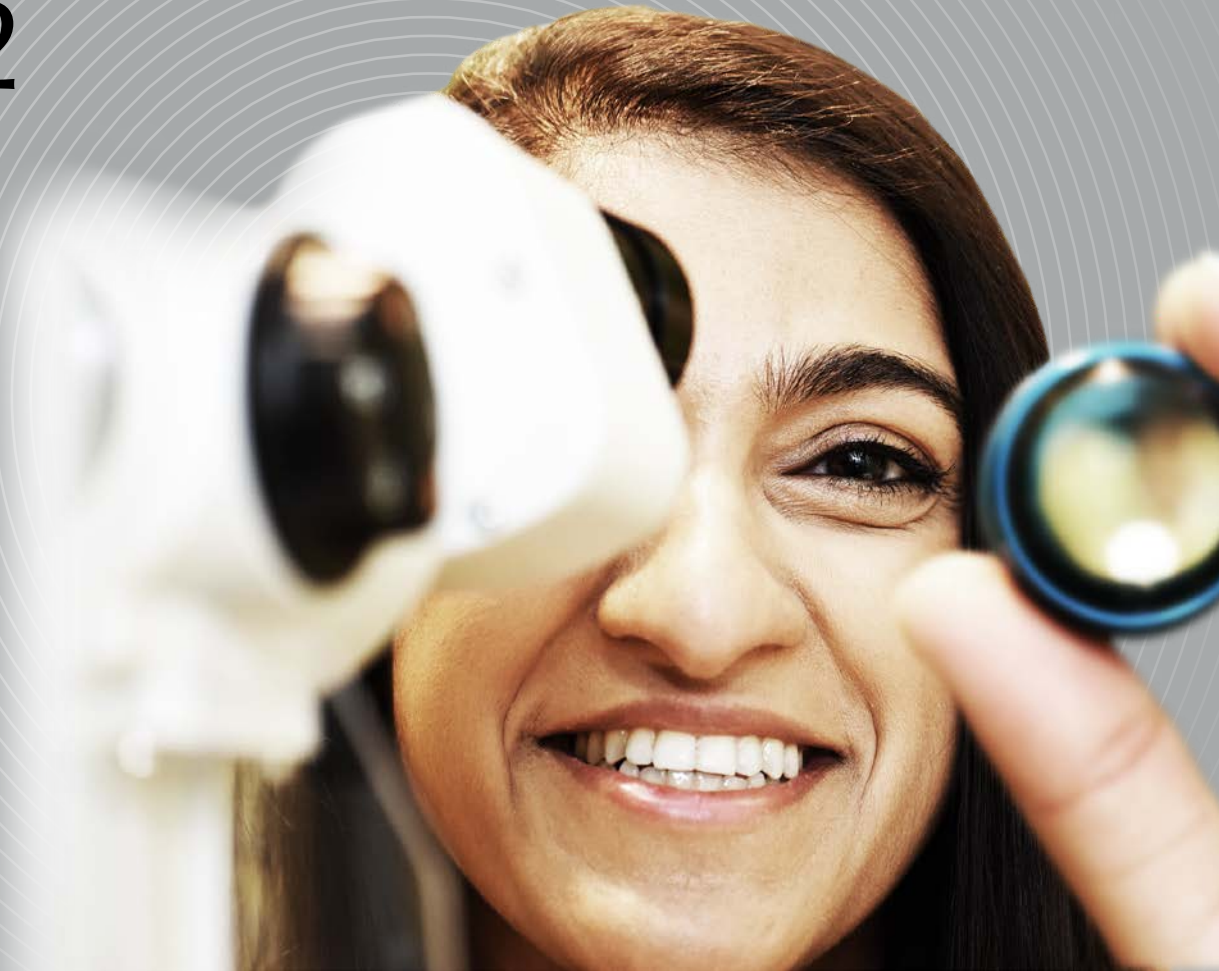
**Ian Humphreys**

Chief Executive of The College of Optometrists

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# A year in focus: Our key milestones 2021-2022

From launching public awareness campaigns and organising our first in-person events following the pandemic, to responding to policy consultations, this was a busy year at the College.



# 2021

- **Public awareness campaign:** Our top social posts this year were on contact lens safety at Halloween.
- We completed a review of our CMGs, which was informed by considerable member and stakeholder engagement.



## October



**Did you know:**  
it's illegal to sell contact lenses without prescription in the UK unless it is under the supervision of an optometrist, dispensing optician or doctor?

lookafteryoureyes.org

- We shared our response to the **DVLA's consultation on amending the Road Traffic Act 1988**, resulting in optometrists being able to complete DVLA medical questionnaires.



## November



- We published our response to the GOC consultation on changes to **independent prescribing**.



## December



- **Public awareness campaign:** We launched Vision and Driving - highlighting the importance of good vision for driving.



# 2022



- We published the first SPOKE project to support the development of new qualifications for optometrists and dispensing opticians.
- We collaborated with key optical bodies to release a joint statement of intent on long-term environmental sustainability.

## March



- **Public awareness campaign:** We provided healthcare tips for hay fever sufferers.

## May

## January

- We raised our concerns about overseas online suppliers that do not comply with UK legal requirements in our response to the GOC consultation on illegal practice.



## April

- We produced key principles to help optometrists to expand their scope of practice, when delivering new clinical procedures, activities or services.



# 2022

## ☀️ OPTOMETRY ☀️ TOMORROW ☀️ 2022

### June

- **Event:** We welcomed more than 450 attendees to Optometry Tomorrow 2022.
- We launched a new and improved format for Clinical Management Guidelines.

### July

- **Public awareness campaign:** We advised on eye safety in the sun.



### August

- SPOKE delivered the second project focusing on best practice approaches in education and training.
- We published our updated guidance and evidence review on myopia management.

### September

- We celebrated National Eye Health Week 2022 by creating a series of graphics to raise public awareness about the profession on social media.



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# How we made our mark

We engaged with our members in many ways; from CPD courses, articles and journals, in-person events and webinars to podcasts and on social media. Discover how our members benefited this year.



# Membership benefits

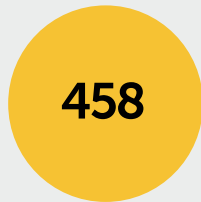
## CPD, events and patient leaflets



Courses completed on the College website.



Attended College online events.



Attendees took part in Optometry Tomorrow 2022.



Patient leaflets ordered.

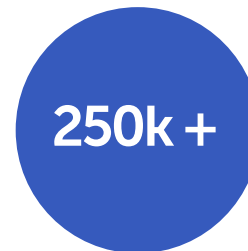


## Podcasts

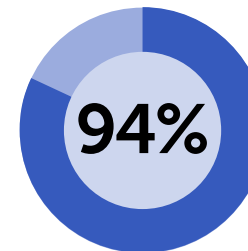
### Top five most popular podcasts 2022

- 1 Myopia guidance review - Part 2
- 2 Advanced clinical practice
- 3 Myopia guidance review - Part 1
- 4 Black History Month
- 5 Vision care for homeless people.

## Social media



Followers across all SM channels.



Increase in followers across all platforms.

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# Advice and guidance

Advances in OCT imaging and myopia management services enable me to provide a more bespoke service. The College's guidelines are a great resource for any optometrist providing these services.

Jai Ramchandani MCOptom



# Leading clinical guidance

**Our members continued to value our Clinical Management Guidelines (CMGs) as a current, trustworthy, and evidence-based source of information to use in their daily practice. In addition, our Guidance for Professional Practice is the essential reference for optometrists – providing the support and guidance they need to meet and maintain standards.**

## Clear and fit for the future

We carried out a review of our process for developing CMGs to ensure we were continuing to maintain high standards, and benefiting optometric practice. We gathered feedback through an online survey, focus groups involving IP optometrists, IP students and non-IP optometrists, and interviews with other professional bodies. This led to updates to the CMGs' content, look and structure to enhance our members' experience on both the website and app, and reflect evolving optometric practice.

### **We developed:**

- Content lists for quick access to sections
- Direct links to information on medicines listed in the Optometrists' Formulary
- Direct access to private prescription templates
- Drug shortage and discontinuation information
- Stepped management approach to support more advanced practice for IP optometrists.

## Patient safety first

By updating our Guidance for Professional Practice in response to changes in practice following the COVID-19 pandemic, we ensured that it aligned with each nation's public health advice, including the recommended respiratory infection prevention and control to minimise risk of transmission. This enabled optometrists to continue to provide eye care safely and effectively during the pandemic, and will support them in managing future public health emergencies, and to adopt the new practices that have evolved as a result of the pandemic.

### **We added:**

- A new section on remote consultations and remote prescribing of medicines, and ensuring the appropriate use of personal protective equipment
- Advice on what type of mask to wear and how to safely manage patients who present with a respiratory infection.

## Sharing expert eye care advice

In August, we were pleased to welcome Denise Voon MCOptom to our team of clinical advisers. Our three experienced eye professionals share their expertise to support members with advice and guidance, ensure our CPD and events align with the College's evidence-based guidance, and support stakeholders with their policy and guidance development.

Our advisers also played a valuable role in raising public awareness about eye care and shared their expertise on BBC regional radio programmes and day time TV shows.



Denise Voon MCOptom

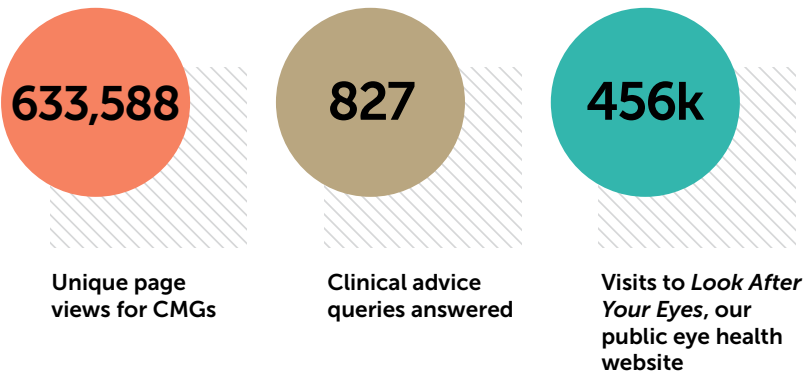


Dr Paramdeep Bilkhu  
MCOptom

We were especially proud that our Clinical Adviser, **Daniel Hardiman-McCartney FCOptom** was awarded an MBE for services to optometry. This represented an outstanding personal achievement, but it also reflected growing recognition, by decision-makers and the public, of the vital contribution to public health that all optometrists and optical teams make, and their tireless work and commitment throughout the pandemic.



### Member usage in figures



I passionately believe optometrists have a greater role to play in eye care, both in secondary and primary care. Along with our other clinical advisers, Daniel and Paramdeep, I hope to help improve the support, guidance and CPD for optometrists so that we can meet the changing demands on eye care provision.

**Denise Voon MCOptom**  
Clinical adviser at [The College of Optometrists](#)

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# Education



Our new courses will increase confidence, capability and capacity in supervision so everyone can benefit from being part of a multi-professional team.

**Professor Lizzy Ostler**

Director of Education, The College of Optometrists



# Shaping the future of the profession

**The College leads the way in the professional formation and development of optometrists. Our role in training, upskilling and developing the profession is expanding – creating partnerships to deliver the new Education Training Requirements (ETR), SPOKE networking and projects, a growing range of CPD courses, events and higher qualifications.**

## Education Training Requirements (ETR)

Following the publication of the GOC's new education requirements in March 2021, the College has been leading the sector in working with optical professionals from across the academic, regulatory and employment sectors to develop work-based clinical placement experiences as part of the new master's degrees.

The College will play a key role in the facilitation, oversight and assessment of work-based placements and will continue to support students and their workplace supervisors through this crucial stage of their training. The first students will be enrolling on the new ETR courses in 2023, and will be undertaking the College's Clinical Learning in Practice (CLiP) placements from early 2026. The College will continue to deliver the current Scheme for Registration during the period of transition which is expected to continue until around 2029. We are developing new and enhanced supervisor support, training courses and events to make sure that all trainees, whether on Scheme or CLiP, get the best possible experience.

## Supporting the sector with ETR developments

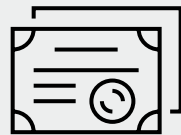
The Sector Partnership for Optical Knowledge and Education (SPOKE) is funded by the GOC to bring together all sector stakeholders to share good practice and develop guidance that underpins the new ETR qualifications.

This year, SPOKE delivered two projects to support ETR: indicative content guidance and assessment mapping to complement the GOC outcomes, and best practice approaches to teaching and learning for student optometrists.

# Education in figures



Higher qualifications



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# Policy and influence

By defining and supporting good clinical practice, and by participating in shared decision-making forums across the UK, the College is a key stakeholder in describing and determining how and where eyecare should be delivered at a system and regional level.

**Raymond Curran FCOptom**

Head of Ophthalmic Services, Department of Health Northern Ireland



# The trusted voice for optometrists

We are proud to have led the way, influencing policy matters in eye health, and importantly, by contributing to regulatory reform. This includes our member-informed response to the General Optical Council's call for evidence on the Opticians Act as well as the update of our guidance on myopia management.

## The Opticians Act reform and the GOC's call for evidence

In Spring 2022, we gathered views from our members on the GOC's call for evidence on the Opticians Act.



Sight tests must remain a protected function of the Act and can only be performed by an optometrist or medical practitioner. Eye health checks must remain a vital part of sight testing to protect against avoidable sight loss.

**Sarah Cant PhD**

Director of Policy & Strategy at  
The College of Optometrists



Based on our review of the evidence, as well as member survey feedback and focus groups, we submitted our response, which included the following recommendations:

- Testing of sight must remain a protected function of the Act that can only be performed by an optometrist or medical practitioner
- Refraction should not be separated from the eye health check, to protect the public from avoidable sight loss
- Refraction and the eye health check should be carried out by one individual to ensure quality and safety of care, and therefore refraction should not be delegated
- Better training is needed for all members of staff within an optical practice to ensure people in vulnerable groups are supported to use their appliances effectively, instead of legally restricting the sale and supply of optical appliances to additional groups of vulnerable patients
- Selling optical appliances to children under 16 and those registered visually impaired should remain restricted to registrants
- Registered, competent optical professionals must remain in control of clinical decision-making as they use new technologies and innovations
- Standards of care provided remotely should be developed and be equivalent to those that apply to face-to-face care.

## Updating myopia management guidance

We reviewed all the published evidence related to myopia management and updated our guidance. To make our position on myopia management clearer and offer guidance that's easier for our members to use, we have now separated our recommendations from the evidence review.



Whether or not myopia is within your scope of practice, you should make sure that you have the relevant knowledge and can hold a discussion with patients, or with the parents of younger patients, about myopia, how it is treated (including the evidence) and the benefits and risks of myopia management. This will help them make an informed decision.

**Dr Paramdeep Bilkhu MCOptom**  
Clinical adviser at The College of Optometrists



## Optometry 2030: a workforce vision for the UK

In June 2022, our new President, Professor Leon Davies FCOptom, launched our Workforce Vision. This sets out our ambition for the future of the profession and puts the optometric workforce at the forefront of eye care provision, education and research.

We are working with our members and key stakeholders in gathering data and insights to better understand the current eye care workforce and future eye care needs. This includes a new multi-professional eye care workforce data modelling project, which will be crucial in understanding workforce supply and patient demand, both now and in the future.

We will be encouraging more optometrists to get involved in research, contribute to educating the next generation through supervision and mentoring schemes, and will ensure high-quality and relevant post-registration higher qualifications in advanced practice, as well as training and CPD.

### Other key achievements for the year

We ensured that all primary care optometrists and optical staff had access to COVID-19 vaccines and boosters, and supported each UK nation's health system to move to Green phase COVID guidance.

Our influence helped to ensure the proposed Optometry Degree Apprenticeship was put on hold so all stakeholder feedback could be considered. We also contributed to new resources on Vision Impairment and Falls from the National Falls Prevention Group.

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# Research



We remain committed to developing the UK's outstanding research optometrists, whether in academic or clinical settings. Our "40 years of Research" report shows the impact that our work in this area has already had, and our Research Strategy sets out what we will do next.

**Dr Aleks Mankowska MCOptom**

Chair of Research Committee, Trustee, and Council  
Member - Yorkshire and Humber



# Leading and supporting excellence in research

Our flagship journal and research awards serve to highlight our members' achievements throughout the year.



## Research excellence awards

During the prestigious Diploma Ceremony in November, we recognised the outstanding work of talented and committed researchers working in the fields of optometry, optics and vision science.

**£72k**

Provided for research scholarships and bursaries.

## Developing the next generation of academics and research clinicians

We continued to support our PhD scholars and Research Fellows through the disruptions caused by COVID-19. The College's Research Committee reviewed proposals and awarded additional funding to enable scholars to protect their research and complete their work despite the interruptions and changes imposed by the pandemic.

## OPO - the world's leading optometry research journal

Ophthalmic and Physiological Optics (OPO) retained its position as the top-ranked optometry journal in the world. Impact ratings showed that articles from the journal are increasingly cited in peer reviewed literature.

OPHTHALMIC AND PHYSIOLOGICAL OPTICS  
**OPO**

# Council members and Trustees

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**John Kidd**  
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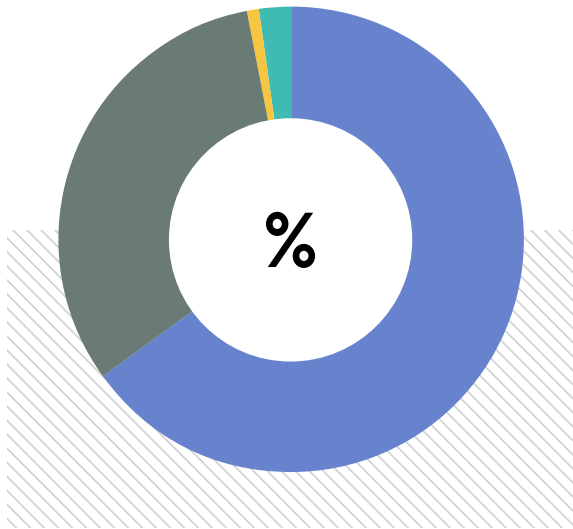
# Financials

## Income

Education	65%	5,708,504
Membership	32%	2,852,512
Research	1%	113,090
Investment income	2%	146,971
Other	0%	10,223

**Total income** **£8,831,300**

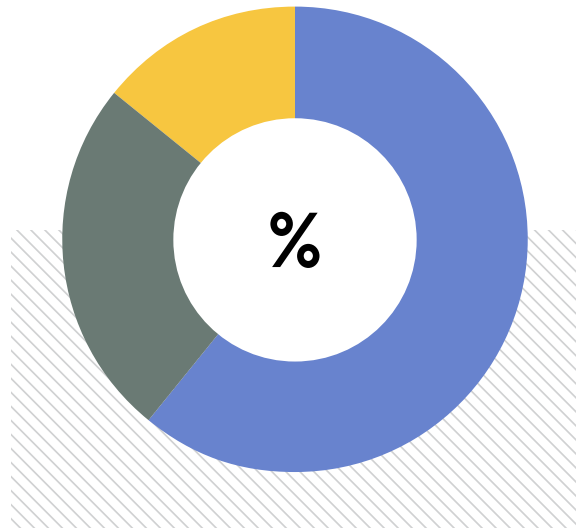
Losses on investments (€504,218)



## Expenditure

Education	61%	5,535,339
Membership	25%	2,251,167
Research	14%	1,258,682
Investment income	0%	45,149
Other	0%	0

**Total expenditure** **£9,090,337**



## Balance sheet

### Fixed assets

Tangible	1,867,473
Intangible	3,396,169
<b>Total fixed assets</b>	<b>5,263,642</b>

Investments 4,200,847

**Total** **9,464,489**

### Current assets

Debtors	816,740
Cash at bank and in hand	1,047,437

**Total** **1,864,177**

### Liabilities

Creditors due within one year (3,896,424)

**Net current liabilities** (2,032,247)

### Net assets

**£7,432,242**

### Restricted funds

Docet 435,725

**Total** **435,725**

### Unrestricted funds

Designated funds 5,644,276  
General funds 1,352,241

**Total charity funds** **£7,432,242**

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-  collegeofoptometrists
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