



ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

Optometrists at the heart of patient-centred eye care

The time is right for **new** and
different ways of working
across the eye care sector.

The College is shaping the future of eye care across the
UK by ensuring that optometrists are at the heart of it.



PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

Shaping the future of eye health care

The time is right for new and different ways of working across the eye care sector.

We believe that optometrists have the necessary clinical skills and experience to ensure that patients have access to timely and effective eye care closer to home.

At the beginning of the College year, we launched our ambitious Workforce Vision to ensure that optometrists' skills are recognised and constantly developed to meet new models of eye care and improve patient outcomes.

This includes the College-led Workforce Data Modelling project which is a major piece of work that will help decision-makers identify future local eye care needs and support evidence-based workforce planning and commissioning. The first phase, working with eye care professional groups and governments, will model the predicted eye care workforce and prevalence of 120 eye conditions over the next 5-10 years.

The reputation of our evidence-based clinical advice and guidance means that the College is regarded as a trusted voice for eye health care professionals and patients and we are increasingly called upon to inform and counsel government and national health services.

This year, we have been working with all four governments to raise the profile of our profession and ensure optometrists skills are better recognised and utilised across the UK.

Highlights of our work include providing policy expertise to MP Marsha de Cordova's National Eye Health Strategy Bill, giving evidence to the House of Lords Committee on the Integration of Primary and Community Care, responding to the Welsh Government's plans for their new GOS contract, and building our relationships with MPs and MSPs in advocating for the integration of services and highlighting the invaluable role that optometrists play.

We were pleased to see that the GOC incorporated many of our recommendations in the draft response to its call for evidence on the need for change to the Opticians Act (1989). These included our belief that refraction should not be separated from the sight test, and should be carried out by an optometrist or an ophthalmic medical practitioner.

We have also continued to work closely with partners in the sector to develop the new qualification process for optometry.

This has included communicating the changes, developing a new work-based learning programme (called Clinical Learning in Practice - CLiP), and facilitating knowledge-led collaborations via SPOKE (Sector Partnership for Optical Knowledge and Education).

The College is shaping the future of eye care across the UK by ensuring that optometrists are at the heart of it. Every day, our members show that they are ready and able to play their part in new ways of delivering high quality eye care.

I am proud of what you have achieved and grateful for your support in helping us realise our vision for optometry.

Thank you.



Professor Leon Davies FCOptom
President of The College of Optometrists



CEO'S FOREWORD

Inspiring and supporting
optometrists to achieve
their full potential

As the professional body for optometry, the College delivers the guidance and training that enable optometrists to take on new roles in a changing eye health landscape.

Our work to place optometrists at the heart of patient-centred eye care is outlined in the President's foreword. Key to achieving this vision, is ensuring that optometrists have the support they need to achieve their full potential.

We qualify the profession through the Scheme for Registration and, going forward, through our development of CLiP (Clinical Learning in Practice), the work placement element of the new master's degree in optometry. Our CPD widens and deepens our members' clinical and professional knowledge, and our higher qualifications equip optometrists for new challenges and responsibilities.

Our members rely on our guidance and resources to support their practice, and we ensure that they are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the latest innovations, evidence-base and legislation.

This year is the mid-point of our five-year strategic plan, which sets out our priorities and how we are preparing the profession for the future.

The annual report is a good opportunity to review our achievements to date. Here are just some of my highlights of the year:

- We continued to see strong support from our members for their professional body, with membership increasing by 4.2%.
- We updated 29 Clinical Management Guidelines to support evidence-based clinical decision making.
- Increasing numbers of members successfully completed one or more of our higher qualifications, and the Therapeutic Common Final Assessment (Independent Prescribing) exam. We have now awarded over 6,600 higher qualifications.
- We worked to develop CLiP in partnership with 12 universities offering the new master's degree in optometry, so that optometry students are prepared for practice as a full registrant.
- Our vibrant CPD programme is now much easier to access through our website.

In 2022-23, we saw over 20,000 course completions, 3,600 members attending our events, and provided guidance on navigating and meeting the GOC's CPD requirements. Docet also recorded over 12,000 course completions, as optometrists from across the UK engaged with the distance learning funded by the four nations' governments.

- Our public-facing cost of living campaign gained significant media coverage and public interest. We will continue to address inequality in accessing eye care and reducing preventable sight loss.

I believe that we are making great progress in achieving our vision, which is only possible thanks to the invaluable support of our members, and we look forward to another successful year ahead.



Ian Humphreys
Chief Executive of The College of Optometrists

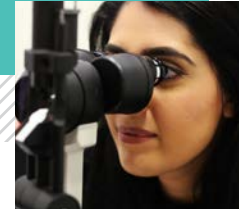
The year at a glance



Defining and inspiring excellence in optometry



Enabling optometrists to maximise their skills and develop their careers



Representing and amplifying the expert voices of optometrists



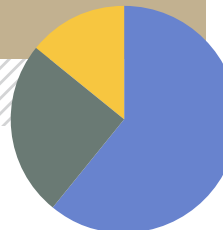
Embedding insight and evidence at the centre of the profession



Council members and trustees



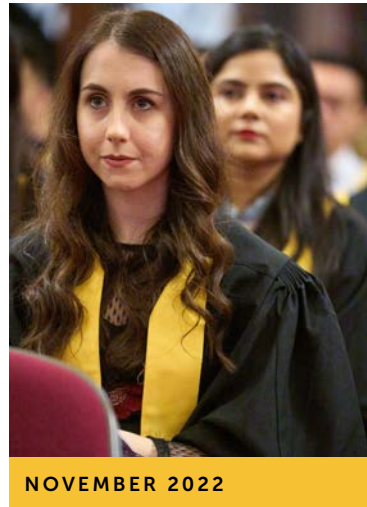
Financials



The year at a glance



- ▶ We publish new guidance on expanding the scope of practice, which supports optometrists who want to develop new skills.
- ▶ The College and the Royal College of Ophthalmologists co-chair a working group on the development of national imaging standards for eye care.



- ▶ We welcome more than 600 new optometrists to the profession at our annual Diploma Ceremony.
- ▶ Our winter eye health advice campaign launches.



- ▶ The UK National Eye Health and Hearing Study, in which the College is a partner, receives £300K funding.



- ▶ College Clinical Adviser, Daniel Hardiman-McCartney FCOptom, receives an MBE.
- ▶ Professor Lizzy Ostler, the College's Director of Education, is appointed to The QAA Advisory Group for the Optometry Subject Benchmark Statement.



- ▶ College President, Professor Leon Davies FCOptom, presents our Workforce Vision at the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Eye Health and Visual Impairment.
- ▶ Our hay fever advice campaign launches.

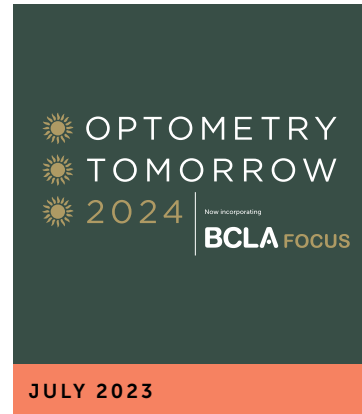
THE YEAR AT A GLANCE



- We are invited to provide evidence to the Integration of Primary and Community Care Committee at the House of Lords.
- We launch *Moving on with OCT CPD* course.



- We announce Clinical Learning in Practice (CLiP) placement programme partnerships.
- We present the President's Medal to Professor Bernard Gilmartin.
- We launch our national cost of living campaign.
- DVLA reduces list of ocular conditions that drivers must declare after the College raises concerns.




- We announce our collaboration with BCLA on Optometry Tomorrow 2024.



- We open public consultation on proposed updates to the Guidance for Professional Practice.



- First students start new Master of Optometry degree (MOptom), which integrates the College's work-based placement programme.
- We are extensively quoted in Health Technology Wales' report on myopia management interventions.
- Our Clinical Advisers contribute to media activity on myopia and NHS eye care in support of National Eye Health Week.
- We attend Optometry Scotland's Inaugural Parliamentary reception.



Defining and
inspiring excellence
in optometry

Our clinical and professional guidance and support enables the optometry profession, and particularly our members, to achieve excellence in their practice.



▲ This year, we carried out consultations on the Guidance for Professional Practice.

Our Clinical Advisers provide clinical advice to our members, UK governments, UK health services and the public. They are responsible for defining good practice across the UK and provide the tools and expert advice to help our members solve clinical challenges and enable them to practise confidently.

They lead on the development of our Guidance for Professional Practice, which supports optometrists' clinical and professional decision making. It is regularly reviewed and updated. This year we consulted with our members and the wider optical community to guide the development of the fourth edition.

Our Guidance continues to influence national policy. We were extensively quoted in Health Technology Wales' report on myopia management interventions. The report was consistent with our guidance throughout and provided one of the first independent economic evaluations of interventions for a UK population.

In October, we published new additional guidance on expanding the scope of practice, which supports optometrists in making a decision on whether a particular procedure falls within their scope of practice and ensures patient safety and robust governance when moving into a new area of practice.

This year, we updated 29 of our CMGs. These enable optometrists, and other eye care practitioners, to make evidence-based clinical decisions on the diagnosis and treatment of eye conditions that present in practice.

Trusted clinical and professional guidance

In October, the Clinical Advisers guided members on changes to the interval periods for people eligible for diabetic eye screening in England, producing explainer videos in conjunction with NHS England.

DEFINING AND INSPIRING EXCELLENCE IN OPTOMETRY



- ▲ Our Diploma Ceremony was one of the highlights of the College year.
- ▲ We informed the House of Lords on the issues of headlight glare while driving.

They also led a collaboration with sector stakeholders to produce a joint statement on the flu and COVID autumn vaccine programme, as well as working with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and National Patient Safety Alert (NPSA) to alert members to an intraocular lenses recall.

Following our call for the standardisation of digital imaging across eye care services in October, the College and the Royal College of Ophthalmologists agreed to co-chair a national working group on the development of national imaging standards for eye care. This included optical device manufacturers and industry experts. Sharing a patient's record and diagnostic images digitally between primary and secondary eye care services will increase swift and efficient diagnosis and treatment decisions - transforming the timely care of patients.

Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town, Member of the House of Lords, is spearheading a campaign for stronger regulation and guidance on the use of LED headlights – currently very much in the news. In January 2023, Baroness Hayter invited the College's clinical advisers to inform a debate at the House of Lords, and in March 2023, we met with Baroness Vere (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport) to discuss the issues of headlight glare while driving.

Recognising and encouraging excellence


In November, the College welcomed more than 600 new optometrists to the profession at its Diploma Ceremony – the first since 2019. We hosted two ceremonies on the day. This allowed us to recognise and celebrate the achievements of pre-registration trainees and higher qualification students who overcame the challenges of the pandemic to qualify in 2020. Seventeen members received a Fellowship by Portfolio in recognition of outstanding contributions to furthering excellence in the practice of optometry.

29

Updated Clinical
Management
Guidelines

832

Clinical enquiries
responded to

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair looking through the eyepiece of a microscope. The background is slightly blurred, showing another person's head in profile on the left. A teal-colored text box is overlaid on the lower-left portion of the image, containing the text: "Enabling optometrists to maximise their skills and develop their careers".

Enabling optometrists
to maximise their
skills and develop
their careers

We continue to lead the way in the professional formation and development of optometrists.



▲ We are raising awareness and understanding of the new route to qualification.

Qualifying the profession

Following its five-yearly accreditation visit, the GOC commended the quality of the Scheme for Registration OSCEs. Enhancements discussed during the visit included our work this year on improving the structure and content of website guidance to improve user experience and reduce enquiries, and measures to improve assessor experience. We also launched a series of drop-in sessions for supervisors and trainees, providing targeted support.

The College is investing in learning materials and technology to facilitate, support, assess and quality assure workplace placements for students supported by College-trained and approved supervisors. In June, we were pleased to announce partnerships with 12 universities to deliver the Clinical Learning in Practice placement programme (CLiP) as part of ETR (GOC Education and Training Requirements) - the new route to qualification in optometry. This will include an online portal, which will manage the process for all involved.

More than 300 delegates attended our *Preparing for ETR* webinar in July, and we are continuing to ensure that supervisors and placement hosts are aware, informed and engaged as CLiP develops. In September, the first students started on the new Master of Optometry (MOptom) courses and will complete their work-placements in the third or fourth year of their course.

SP KE

The Sector Partnership for Optical Knowledge and Education (SPOKE), led by the College, continues to support the successful implementation of the new GOC education requirements. This year, it published the outputs of its third project, which found that there was a need for increased awareness of optical careers and attracting the right calibre of candidates. SPOKE was also awarded additional funding to deliver the specialist qualifications (Prescribing and Contact Lens) Hub.

ENABLING OPTOMETRISTS TO MAXIMISE THEIR SKILLS AND DEVELOP THEIR CAREERS

Enabling optometrists to provide high quality patient care

We provide a full range of face-to-face and online learning resources for optometrists to support their continuing professional development (CPD), to maintain and develop their clinical and professional skills and knowledge, and to meet GOC CPD requirements. Members can gain all their points through the College. This year, we updated the way our online courses are presented online by type, topic and subject to enable our members to access all relevant CPD materials – from courses to articles in publications – quickly and easily.

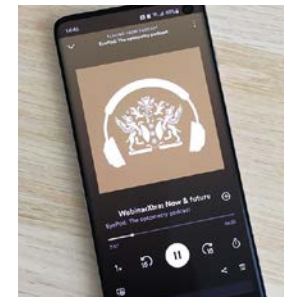
High quality CPD

Our online learning hub now provides 44 non-interactive CPD points through a range of innovative formats, including recorded webinars and interactive courses. This year we added six new courses to the hub, including *Moving on with OCT*, which has proved to be very popular. Our members can also gain points through topical podcasts and our *Acuity and Optometry in Practice (OiP)* journals.

Members attended live webinars on key areas including AI and OCT in Glaucoma, as well as online peer reviews. Growing numbers of members are returning to live regional events to boost their 'hands on' skills and network with colleagues. 100% of delegates at our collaborative events with Johnson & Johnson Vision in Birmingham, Bradford and London rated the content as excellent or good.

In practice resources

Our patient leaflets are one of our most popular member benefits and an invaluable resource for explaining common eye conditions in a clear and user-friendly way. This year, we developed digital-only downloadable versions of our leaflets in order to increase accessibility and sustainability.



- ▲ We support our members
- ▲ with vibrant CPD and
- ▲ in-practice resources.





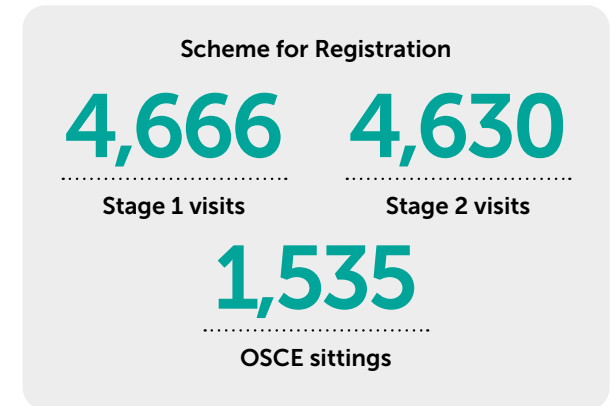
▲ Our higher qualifications are enabling optometrists to take on new roles and responsibilities.


Encouraging and supporting career progression

We support optometrists taking on new roles and responsibilities in changing eye care pathways through our provision of the Independent Prescribing (IP) examination and support, and our range of higher qualifications. This year we saw a significant increase (29%) in optometrists sitting the IP examination, enabling practices to deliver a wider range of eye care within their community.

Our Higher Qualifications, delivered by College-accredited providers, also enable optometrists to provide more specialised care in practice and this year we approved and reaccredited 10 courses to meet increased demand and provide greater accessibility.

We also reviewed and redeveloped the career-focussed pages on our website so that optometrists are aware of the opportunities open to them and the College support and resources that will help them take on new roles and fulfil their potential.



A photograph showing an optometrist with blonde hair in a ponytail, wearing a grey sweater and glasses, leaning over to examine a patient's eyes. The patient is a woman with dark curly hair, wearing a dark blue floral patterned top. The background shows a clinical setting with a stainless steel cabinet and medical equipment. A blue text box is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Representing
and amplifying
the expert voices
of optometrists

A workforce vision for the UK – one year on

We continue to work closely with governments, policy-makers, commissioners, clinicians, clinical and academic researchers, charities and patients to improve eye health services across the UK. Where we can, we do this in partnership.

Launched at the end of August 2022, our Workforce Vision sets out ambitious plans to improve the delivery of eye care services by making full use of optometrists' skills. As the provision of eye care in the UK is rapidly changing, our vision sets out how we will ensure that optometrists remain at the forefront of eye care provision, and continue to be valued and recognised as a key healthcare profession.

A workforce vision for the UK

ONE YEAR ON

We believe optometrists should be at the heart of patient-centred eye care in the UK, making full use of their skills, developing new ones, and leading and delivering new models of care to improve patient outcomes.

#AdvancingOptometry

Our achievements so far:

Promoting the role of our profession to government and policy makers

- ✓ Provided policy expertise to MP Marsha de Cordova's National Eye Health Strategy Bill
- ✓ Promoted the profession in Westminster at the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Eye Health and Visual Impairment
- ✓ Gave oral evidence to the House of Lords Committee on the Integration of Primary and Community care, highlighting the important role of optometrists.

Championing optometrists as first contact practitioners

We have ensured health services and governments recognise the value of optometry-led services, such as:

- Providing strategic and clinical input, including our contribution to the Welsh Government's consultation on changes to primary eye care
- Co-chairing a national group to improve digital image sharing between primary, community and secondary care across the UK.

Developing new skills

Providing high-quality CPD resources through our online CPD hub, webinars and events

40 GOC CPD points available

More CPD in non-clinical domains:

- 2** points in Leadership & Accountability
- 11** points in Professionalism
- 22** points in Communications

College-led UK-wide eye care data modelling project

This project will be delivered by early 2024 and aims to:

- Model predicted eye care workforce and identify the prevalence of 14 eye condition groups over the next 5-10 years
- Provide an interactive dashboard that will:
 - Offer a model of future local eye care needs
 - Support evidence-based workforce planning and commissioning.

This project is co-funded by:



▲ The College President and CEO meet with Marsha De Cordova, MP.

Influencing decision-makers

College President, Professor Leon Davies FCOptom, presented our Workforce Vision at the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Eye Health and Visual Impairment in April 2023, as well as at the Royal College of Ophthalmologists conference in May. We also briefed the APPG Chair, Marsha de Cordova MP, on workforce and eye care transformation, and eye care research-related issues ahead of a Westminster debate on a National Eye Health Strategy.

In May 2023, we were invited to provide written and oral evidence submissions to the House of Lords Integration of Primary and Community Care Committee inquiry, and to a subsequent private roundtable event in July to further discuss health integration. We reiterated our main recommendations that health services establish optometrists as first contact practitioners in order to take the pressure off hospital eye care services, and that better digital connectivity is key to improving patient outcomes.

In June, we were pleased to see that the DVLA reviewed and reduced their extended list of ocular conditions that drivers must declare, after the College raised concerns. The extended list would have resulted in many drivers with otherwise normal eye health and good levels of vision making DVLA declarations.

We were very concerned to hear that NHS England was considering stopping the Special Schools Eye Care Service, especially when there is still so much unmet need among this group of young people. We wrote to NHSE's National Director for Primary Care and Community Services and their National Director for Eye Care to raise our concerns, and NHS England has now agreed to continue and expand the Special Schools Eye Care Service. College Trustee, Professor Kathryn Saunders FCOptom, had several meetings with the Health Minister which helped influence the successful outcome. She also wrote to the Health Minister about access to eye care in Northern Ireland.

REPRESENTING AND AMPLIFYING THE EXPERT VOICES OF OPTOMETRISTS

The voice of our profession

This year we have responded to numerous consultations - representing the interests of our profession, our members and their patients; and influencing those making decisions on eye health care across the four nations. Our invitation to Optometry Scotland's Inaugural Parliamentary reception in September was a great opportunity to raise the profile of optometrists and highlight the role they can play in a new approach to health care provision.

In April, following five months of consultation, the GOC published its response to its call for evidence on the need for change to the Opticians Act (1989). We were pleased to see that the GOC adopted many of our recommendations including our view that refraction should not be separated from the sight test, and should be carried out by an optometrist or other qualified medical practitioner. The GOC also agreed with our advice that the central principle for optical regulation and practice should be that registered, competent optical professionals must remain in control of clinical decision-making as new technologies and innovations are deployed.

In January, we submitted our response to Healthcare Improvement Scotland's cataract surgery standards scoping consultation. We welcomed the development of these standards, as they will support national consistency and drive improvements in the delivery of cataract services. We highlighted the important role primary care optometrists play in providing safe care for cataract patients (pre and post treatment) closer to home. We also called for better use of all primary care optometrists' skills to reduce the backlog of delayed outpatient appointments. We also responded to the Welsh Government's consultation on the reform of primary care ophthalmic services. The new contract took effect in October 2023 and expands the core eye care services provided in primary care in Wales, enabling optometrists to utilise full professional capability in the delivery of eye care closer to home.

In our response to the Hewitt review to help inform a new way of working, we highlighted work with our partners in the sector and NHS commissioners to improve patient access to primary eye care services, by designing and delivering new service models like the Minor Eye Conditions Service (MECS) and Optometry First. We stressed the need to address the lack of IT connectivity between primary eye care and the rest of the NHS, to enable eye care transformation at all levels.



▲ NHS England has now agreed to continue and expand the Special Schools Eye Care Service.

REPRESENTING AND AMPLIFYING THE EXPERT VOICES OF OPTOMETRISTS



▲ Clinical Adviser, Denise Voon MCOptom, on Steph's Packed Lunch on Channel 4.

Campaigning for better eye health for all

In the summer, we launched our national cost of living campaign - encouraging the public to prioritise their eye health. Our research showed that 50% of people said that the cost of living would have an impact on how they care for their eyes in the future, and a concerning 22% of people admitted to postponing or cancelling an appointment in the past year. The campaign reached more than 1.3million people via national and regional media.

We were also featured in national and regional press, TV and radio advising the public on a range of issues including dry eye in the Guardian, and general eye health on Channel 4's Steph's Packed Lunch.

We also amplified our campaign and other key initiatives, such as understanding ETR and supervision recruitment messages through our growing social media following – increasing engagement with our members and the public.

This year we reached more than 50,000 followers across all our social media platforms - the largest following of any similar sector body.

1.3 million

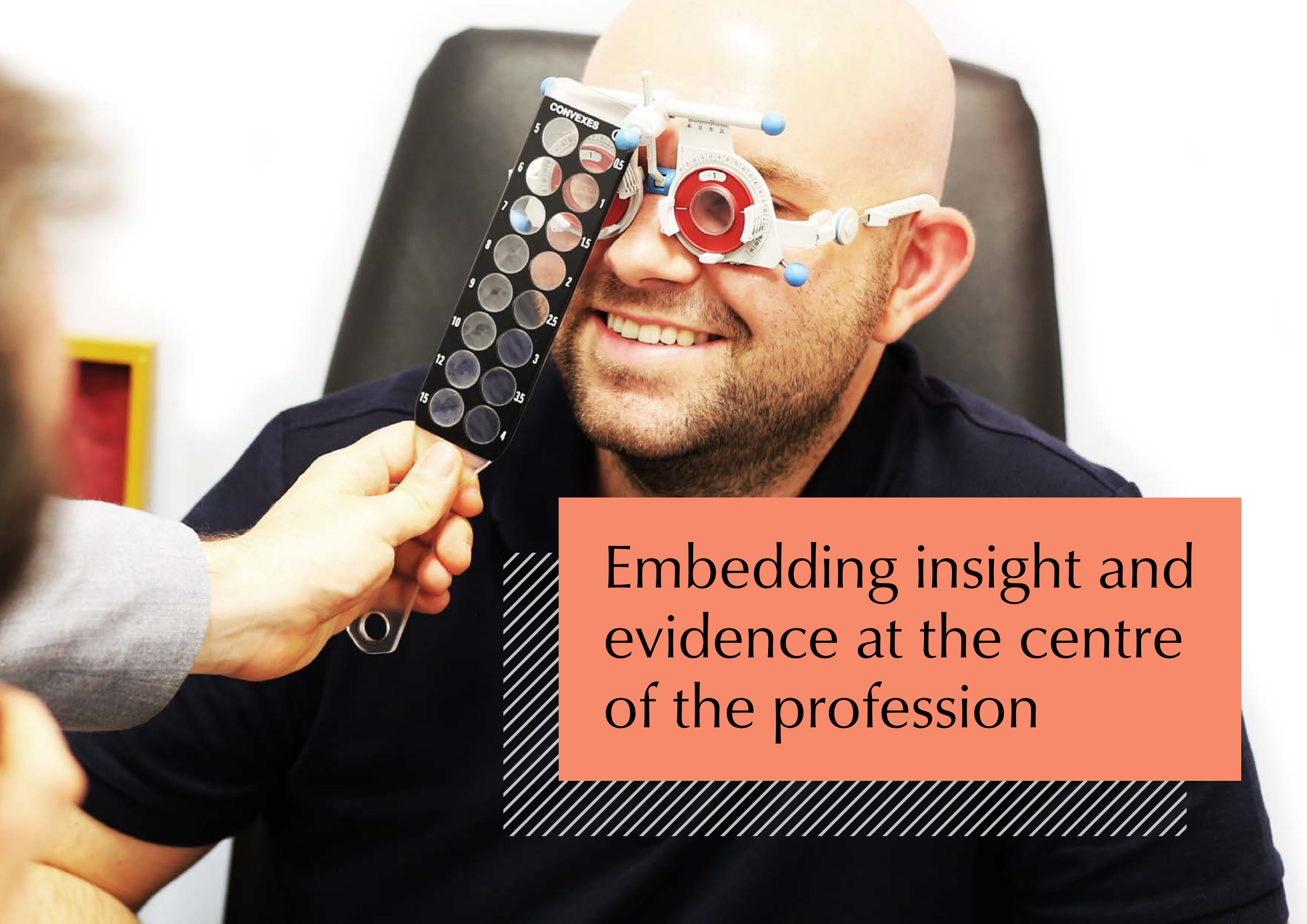
Cost of living campaign reaches
1.3 million people

590,925

lookafteryoureyes.org
page views

50,000

Followers on social
media



Embedding insight and evidence at the centre of the profession

We continue to commission and support research that builds the evidence base for our profession.



▲ Our international research journal, OPO (Ophthalmic and Physiological Optics)

OPHTHALMIC AND PHYSIOLOGICAL OPTICS
OPO
JOURNAL OF THE COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRISTS

OPO is world's number 1 optical research journal



In May and June, we carried out our 2023 Clinical Practice Survey, and are currently analysing the results. The data from the surveys we commission helps inform the College's priorities for engaging with government and health policy makers, the focus of our CPD and training materials, and our future research.

Throughout the year, the College supported four funding applications for research into:

- Dementia and Cataract Surgery: Impact of Cataract Extraction on Dementia (ICED) study - as a co-applicant with the University of Bradford and St. Hellier Hospital as the lead organisations.
- NIHR; Professional Boundaries in Eye Health (as a co-applicant, with King's College, London as the lead applicant)
- ESRC; The impact of AI on eye health care and research (as a co-applicant with Dundee as the lead applicant)
- The Royal Society; The impact of CPD on Low vision practice (as a co-applicant, with the University of Manchester as the lead applicant) to the School of Primary Care Research (SPCR) funding stream.

The College was also a partner in the UK National Eye Health and Hearing Study (UKNEHS), which successfully gained £300K in funding from a number of eye health and hearing charities to fund the pilot stage of the project.

Supporting both new and established researchers is key to advancing optometry, as well as personal career progression. This year we awarded more than £85,000 in scholarships, grants and bursaries, in addition to providing expert advice.

Our international research journal, OPO (Ophthalmic and Physiological Optics) maintained its position as the world's top-ranked journal for contemporary research in vision science and optometry, according to ScimagoJR, for the ninth year running.

800

Members access international optical journals via *Open Athens*



THE COLLEGE OF
OPTOMETRISTS

Council members
and trustees

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Kathryn Trimmer
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Johnathan Waugh
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Cert Paed Eye Care Prof
Cert Med Ret

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Hassnain Safdar
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Cert Glauc Prof Cert Med
Ret Prof Cert LV



Hamza Mussa
MCOptom Prof Cert
Med Ret



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William Gillan
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Cert Glauc

South West



Lewes Hambrey
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Prof Cert Med Ret



Kiki Soteri
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Cert Glauc Prof Cert Med Ret

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Professor Irene Ctori
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David Jameson
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Meera Shah
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Jay Varia
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Cert Glauc

Wales



Eleanor Thomas
MCOptom

Nkosi Yearwood
MCOptom

Yorkshire and Humber



Stephen Clark
MCOptom Prof Cert
Glauc Prof Cert LV Prof
Cert Med Ret

Dr Aleksandra Mankowska
MCOptom FHEA

Barbara Watson
FCOptom DCLP DipTp(IP)
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Early Careers representatives

Mariam Amin
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Katheryn Rees
FBDO

Niamh Coyle

Lay Advisory Panel representatives

Andrea Clerk
MBA CIPD FILM

Rekha Randhawa
LLB(Hons) MA

Katie Engel
LLB

Mark Redhead
MA MBA FRSA

Optometry Schools Council nominee

Professor Joy Myint
PhD FCOptom Prof Cert LV

Financials

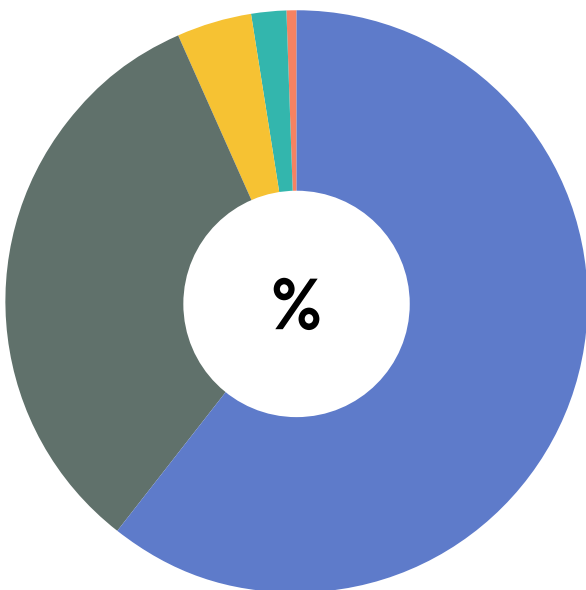
Income

Education	61%	5,440,927
Membership	33%	2,932,539
Research	4%	390,656
Investment income	2%	143,507
Other	0%	20,278

Total Income **£8,927,907**

Surplus on Investments 260,391

Income 2022-2023

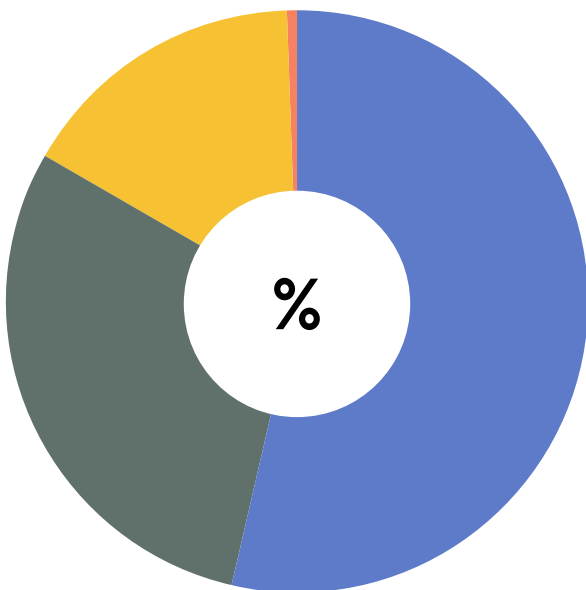


Expenditure

Education	54%	5,165,094
Membership	30%	2,834,961
Research	16%	1,504,795
Investment income	0%	
Other	0%	42,776

Total Expenditure **£9,547,626**

Expenditure 2022-2023



Balance sheet

Fixed assets	
Tangible	1,871,341
Intangible	3,357,990
Total fixed assets	5,229,331
Investments	4,431,604
Total	£9,660,935
Current assets	
Debtors	2,239,890
Cash at bank and in hand	707,916
Total	£2,947,806
Liabilities	
Creditors due within one year	(5,535,827)
Net current liabilities	(2,588,021)
Net assets	£7,072,914
Restricted funds	
DOCET	534,208
Other	123,597
Total	£657,805
Unrestricted funds	
Designated funds	5,490,041
General funds	925,068
Total	£6,415,109
Total charity funds	£7,072,914

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