

1 JANUARY 2020 TO 31 DECEMBER 2020

# Annual report



# About us

The FODO Group comprises FODO, FODO Ireland and the National Community Hearing Association (NCHA).

FODO is the representative professional body for eye care providers across the UK, and FODO Ireland represents eye care providers across the Republic of Ireland. We lead change by influencing government, legislators, policymakers and opinion formers. In addition, we assist and work with our members and in partnership with patient groups, regulators and other professional associations to improve access to high-quality eye care for everyone in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

The NCHA is the representative professional body for community hearing care providers across the UK. We work with the broader hearing sector, governments and decision-makers to lead and influence change. We are the voice of community hearing care and work with our members and stakeholders to improve access to high-quality hearing care for all.



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# Chair's statement

In 2020 the infectivity and virulence of Covid-19 took everyone by surprise across the European health region, including the UK and Ireland. It led to the suspension of routine healthcare, including eye and hearing care services. The level of infections and mortality brought unprecedented disruption, fear and uncertainty for everybody in our sectors.

Optical and hearing care providers never lost sight of their important healthcare roles in these most challenging times. When hospital departments had to close, primary eye and hearing care rallied, adapted, and innovated to ensure people had access to crucial eye and hearing care throughout the pandemic. Members can all be immensely proud of how the sector responded and met patient needs during this most difficult year.

Being part of the FODO and NCHA family helped everyone stay focused, supported, and coordinated. Our head office team switched immediately to a seven-day working week to support members and ensure they had all they needed throughout the pandemic. We analysed fast-changing regulations and developed guidance. We also worked with sector partners to keep eye and hearing care open for patients throughout the UK and Ireland.

We were involved at all levels, including playing a pivotal role in NHS funding and PPE support for eye care and ensuring hearing practices could continue to assist patients. We also

worked upstream, with an eye on our future workforce. With our members providing most pre-registration placements for optometrists in the UK, we worked hard with members and colleagues at the GOC and College of Optometrists to ensure a generation of graduates could complete their vocational training and not be lost to the profession.

In 2021 we have restarted some of the work put on hold during 2020. We will look to return to our normal in 2022, with our annual report and AGM moving back to May each year.

I want to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to all members for being there for every patient when it mattered and to our extraordinarily able and dedicated head office team. You helped us get through the most difficult healthcare year on record.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynda Oliver".

**Lynda Oliver**  
Chair

# Managing Director's report

It has been a year of many challenges, with all resources redirected to tackling Covid-19 pressures. We supported members across the UK and Ireland and worked with partner organisations throughout the pandemic to ensure that patients could get the essential eye health, vision, and hearing care they needed when other services were inaccessible or overwhelmed.

We analysed public health and health services advice and trends, produced detailed guidance so that members could operate and keep patients, staff and the public safe. We played an active role in emergency planning, including defining essential healthcare, access to vaccinations and ensuring eye and hearing care services remained open across the UK and Ireland.

In addition, we worked to secure maintenance grants to eye care practices to offset the impacts of Covid-19 restrictions, lobbied for an extension to the furlough scheme and responded to a record number of consultations to ensure our members' voice was heard at all levels throughout the pandemic.

We pulled out all the stops to ensure members had what they needed when they needed it. For example, we analysed every new piece of Covid evidence and advice and rapidly published updates and guidance so members could respond to changing

safety rules and regulations. We also launched new websites for FODO, FODO Ireland and the NCHA so that members could access information and support easily and we upgraded our HR support offering.

**Our goal was simple, to do everything we could to help our members and the sector make it through the most challenging time so they, in turn, could help the public through the crisis.**

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We achieved this against a backdrop of significant financial uncertainty. Historically, we had always operated on a balanced budget, holding minimal cash reserves. The economic impact of the pandemic meant we had to restructure rapidly, put key projects on hold and build a surplus for uncertain times ahead. Our financial results for 2020 are a major achievement and only possible because of the strategic approach, member focus and relentless work of our small head office team and non-executive directors.

As we ended 2020, global insurance markets were hardening rapidly in response to the pandemic, global economic outlook and general pressures on medical malpractice premiums. As a result, the cost of insurance increased for members. However, our financial prudence in 2020 meant that this increase in member premiums was offset by a one-year discount on membership fees, meaning members paid no more per full-time equivalent (FTE) than they paid in 2019.

Towards the end of the year, we started to work with the NHS and sector partners on several major eye care transformation projects in England and Wales. And we continued our ongoing work in helping the GOC and

higher education institutions deliver strategic goals in optometric and optical education and training reforms in the UK. We also continue to work on modernising eye care in the Republic of Ireland, especially children's eye health services, and modernising hearing care to meet public health needs.

We look forward to working closely with all members on these and other vital projects in 2021 and beyond.



**Harjit Sandhu**  
Managing Director

# Policy and influence

The policy team led our response to the pandemic, monitoring, analysing, and responding rapidly to changes in infection rates and regulations across the UK and Ireland. In 2020 we responded to over 45 consultations Group-wide, ensuring members' voices were always heard at the highest level.

## FODO

As The Association for Eye Care Providers, we responded to over 35 consultations during 2020 and focused on ensuring primary eye care was supported throughout the pandemic and beyond.

At a UK level, our policy team helped coordinate a joined-up effort with the College of Optometrists and GOC to ensure as many optometry graduates as possible could start their pre-registration year, securing the next generation of optometrists. As the secretariat for the UK's domiciliary and IT optical committees, we also ensured domiciliary eye care providers had the support they needed throughout the pandemic. And we ensured that IT connectivity between primary and secondary care continued to progress.

In England, we worked with sector partners to ensure members and the wider sector had what they needed to continue providing care safely. And, as a key part of the Optometric Fees Negotiating Committee (OFNC), we achieved over £150m in support for GOS contractors in England during the pandemic.

Although 2020 was very much the pandemic year, our policy team also continued to work on the future of eye care services, making a case for more eye care to be delivered in primary care settings closer to home.

In Northern Ireland, Optometry Northern Ireland (ONI) came into its own and demonstrated its value to patients, the profession and government throughout the pandemic. FODO's policy team and other sector bodies worked with ONI Chair William Stockdale and Vice-Chair Jill Campbell.

In Scotland, FODO Scotland continued to work with Optometry Scotland. Hal Rollason announced he would be retiring as Chair of FODO Scotland in January 2021, having played a leading role in the organisation for more than 18 years. Hal also announced his retirement from Optometry Scotland, which he has been part of since its formation in 2003. Hal has achieved so much for the sector in his time at FODO Scotland, Optometry Scotland, the College of Optometrists, on the new GOS contract in Scotland, IT connectivity and education and training, and will be missed by all. Kathryn Trimmer succeeds him as FODO Scotland Chair and Stuart Laird becomes Vice-Chair.

In Wales, we worked with Optometry Wales and sector partners on GOS reforms, helping analyse key data and proposals, challenging as a critical friend and supporting the key goals of enhancing the scope and range of primary eye care and improving access, care and outcomes for patients. This work will continue into 2021 and 2022, and we will keep members up to date through regular updates.

## FODO Ireland

Throughout 2020, FODO Ireland was at the forefront of ensuring the Department of Health and HSE recognised primary eye care services as essential healthcare services. We also researched and published Covid-19 guidance for the broader sector so that services could be delivered safely. As a result of this work, the government updated Covid-19 regulations so that opticians could reopen to meet essential and urgent eye care needs.

We also continued our collaboration with the Technical University Dublin to tackle workforce shortages and called on government to add optometrists and dispensing opticians to the occupations lists for employment permits, as well as contributing to CORU's strategy 2021-2025.



**Garvan Mulligan**  
FODO Ireland Chair

## NCHA

The NCHA policy team responded to the pandemic by coordinating a sector-wide effort to develop and publish guidance for audiology. As a result, we created the most comprehensive set of Covid-19 guidelines for audiology practices. We also responded to over 10 formal consultations to ensure community audiology was not forgotten during the pandemic.

In addition, we led engagement with NHS England to unblock the stop on audiology services, increasing awareness about the importance of hearing and ear care at the highest levels within the NHS.

With hospital ENT services restricted and GPs under immense pressure, in 2020, the BMA and Royal College of General Practitioners Covid-19 guidance signposted patients with impacted earwax to NCHA members. It resulted in unprecedented demand in primary care audiology, which NCHA members met safely through rapid service innovation and relentless focus on supporting patients and GPs through this challenging time.

At our strategy day, we set our goal for the future, which includes achieving hearing for all and tackling inequalities in access to hearing and ear care in the UK. We will do this by fighting for all patients to have access to a primary care audiology service.



**Peter Ormerod**  
NCHA Chair



# Finances

As we reported in last year's annual report, in 2019, the Board had agreed to gradually work towards a three-month cash operating reserve after years of running on a balanced budget and holding no major cash surpluses. The target cash reserve was £300,000 based on an average subscription income of £1.2m, and by the time the pandemic hit in 2020, we had already built a liquid reserve of £61,000.

With the financial uncertainty caused by the pandemic, we accelerated our programme to build a cash reserve for uncertain times ahead through a rapid restructure and putting key projects on hold. This work means that the result for the year ended 31 December 2020 was a surplus of £219,000 on a turnover of £1.2m. This compares to a surplus of £34,000 on turnover of £1.2m in 2019. As a result, our total liquid reserves at the end of 2020 stood at £292,000.

Our rapid move to a hybrid home-office based model during the first lockdown meant we also decided to sell our head office building which we jointly owned with ABDO and OSA (formerly known as the FMO). FODO received its one-third share of the proceeds of this sale in early 2021, and we are forming a sub-committee to recommend a strategy for best managing FODO's liquid assets for the benefit of all members. I would like especially to thank FODO Director Alan Tinger, on behalf of ABDO, FODO and OSA, for all his work in organising the sale of the building to obtain the best value.

In 2021 we expect more people to be working part-time until the sector recovers, and with fees based on FTEs, we expect membership subscription to reduce in 2021 before recovering in 2022/23. Members also experienced a significant increase in medical malpractice insurance premiums for 2021. To offset the impact of this, and because of work undertaken in 2020 to build a financial buffer, we provided all members with a one-year membership discount for 2021. We are forecasted to run a balanced budget as we rebuild our head office team and support members through subsequent waves of the pandemic. Our work this year means members will continue to benefit from one of the most cost-efficient membership bodies there is.

**Hal Rollason**  
Honorary Treasurer

# Financial report

## Income and expenditure account

31 December 2020	2020 £000	2019 £000
Turnover	1,199	1,220
Administrative expenses	(980)	(1,186)
Operating surplus	219	34

## Balance sheet – 31 December 2020

	2020 £000	2019 £000
<b>Fixed assets</b>		
Tangible assets	326	338
Investments	500	500
	826	838
<b>Current assets</b>		
Debtors	33	48
Cash at bank and in hand	571	220
	604	268
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(312)	(207)
<b>Net current assets</b>	292	61
<b>Total net current assets less current liabilities</b>	<u>1,118</u>	<u>899</u>
<b>Members' funds</b>	1,118	899

**Lynda Oliver**  
Chair

**Harjit Sandhu**  
Managing Director

These summarised accounts are an extract from the statutory financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2020. They have been audited by Menzies Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors, who gave an unqualified audit report on 17 September 2021. The auditors have confirmed to the Directors that these summarised accounts are consistent with the statutory financial statements.

# Our team

## Head Office team

- Harjit Sandhu, Group Managing Director
- David Hewlett, Group Director
- Alan Tinger, Group Director
- Giusy Maniscalchi, PA to Managing Director
- Sue Silvester, PA to Group Director
- Rajan Verma, Membership Officer

## FODO non-executive directors

- Lynda Oliver, Chair
- Claire Slade, Vice Chair
- Hal Rollason, Honorary Treasurer and FODO Scotland Chair
- Paul Carroll
- Josie Forte
- Stephen Hannan
- John Hopcroft
- Sarah Joyce
- Dan McGhee
- Meena Ralhan
- Glenn Tomison
- William Stockdale
- Adrian Street

## FODO Ireland executive members

- Garvan Mulligan, Chair
- Owen Blee
- Marie Keating
- Desmond Mackey
- Peter McGrath

## NCHA Board members

- Peter Ormerod, Chair
- Mark Georgevic
- Graham Lane
- Paula Cave
- Stephen McAndrew
- Diane Newman
- Jonathan Parsons
- Rob Skedge
- Steve Witts

# Annual report

[www.fodo.com](http://www.fodo.com)

[fodoireland.ie](http://fodoireland.ie)

[www.the-ncha.com](http://www.the-ncha.com)

