



Association of British Dispensing Opticians
Association of Optometrists
British Medical Association
Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians

Optometric Fees Negotiating Committee

2 Woodbridge St, London, EC1R 0DG
Chair: Paul Carroll

Email: secretary@ofnc.co.uk
Secretary: Peter Hampson

9th February 2024

OFNC - first meeting with new Primary Care Minister

OFNC has recently had a meeting at DHSC with the new Minister for public health, start of life and primary care, Rt Hon Dame Andrea Leadsom DBE MP, and officials.

Several of the most pressing issues affecting primary eyecare were raised:

- The need for sustainable funding for General Ophthalmic Services (GOS) to enable optometrists and dispensing opticians to continue to deliver high-quality care across the country.
- The need for integrated IT connectivity across eyecare in England to help tackle the hospital ophthalmology backlogs and deliver the NHS aims and sustainability goals of care closer to home.
- The significant potential benefits from the new national MECS/CUES specification which DHSC had commissioned and the additional capacity for appointments that could be made available across the sector.

Paul Carroll, OFNC chair said: “We welcome the new Minister’s willingness to discuss how primary eyecare could take a more prominent role in helping the NHS to reduce waiting times and save direct and indirect costs for patients and the NHS. The Minister is aware that the cornerstone of eyecare is sight testing and the invaluable contribution GOS delivers, including identifying patients with eye disease. We stressed that there is an urgent need to increase GOS fees to close the widening gap between NHS sight test fees and inflation. We look forward to further discussions with the Minister to address these pressing issues.”

Andrea Leadsom said: “I was delighted to meet with the OFNC to discuss the essential role played by NHS sight testing in the prevention of avoidable sight loss, the current challenges facing eye care services and how an expanded role for the primary eye care workforce could help alleviate ophthalmology pressures.”

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Note for Editors

The Optometric Fees Negotiating Committee (OFNC) is the national negotiating body for eye care in England with the Westminster Parliament, the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England. It comprises the leaders of the UK representative bodies: ABDO, AOP, FODO and BMA (for OMPs) and works in partnerships with the College of Optometrists and the General Optical Council.