**Proposal to donate to the Central Optical Fund**

**Background**

[**http://www.centralfund.org.uk/**](http://www.centralfund.org.uk/)

The Central Optical Fund is a LOC controlled not for profit organisation supporting optometry. The Fund is an investor in optometry and invites and considers applications for funding optometry related projects in England and Wales. These projects must meet the objectives of the Fund namely:

* Promote: Elevate the profile of optometry
* Protect: Defend optometry from negative publicity
* Develop: Expand the role of optometry.
* Support: Develop resources, technologies and strategies that aid optometry.

The Central Optical Fund (formally the Central (LOC) fund) was established in 1972. It was funded by a voluntary levy of 0.5% of the NHS sight test fee, collected through LOCs. Its mandate was to undertake work centrally on behalf on the profession as a whole, and local optical committees in particular. The Fund’s members are individual LOCs, and it is managed by five elected Directors, each representing five broad geographical areas of England and Wales. Meeting about four times a year, the Fund aims to maintain a low cost base.

The Fund has supported a variety of projects of various size, scope and setting and have encompassed political, GOS related, research based, legal, educational (both public and practitioner), strategic and data based projects. The Fund also serves as a defensive aid in times of need. For example in the 1980s, the Fund supported the AOP’s efforts in defending the profession against additional VAT liability from the Government. Historically, the Fund has provided ongoing funding to the AOP for regular primary care and political work.

Projects supported by the Fund have been delivered by the AOP, Optical Confederation, LOCSU, Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS), College of Optometrists, Eyecare Trust, universities and charities. Recent examples of the work the fund has supported are: The National Eye Health Epidemiological Model (NEHEM), Bids for the profession on NHS IT connectivity/E-referral and support of National Eye Health Week

The Fund is primarily maintained by the voluntary levy – individual practices and contractors giving a voluntary donation to the Fund. We also receive donations from LOCs and individuals. There are minimal current voluntary levy donations to the Fund in Dudley, therefore since 2014 Dudley LOC has made a donation to the fund annually.

With the current Pandemic Crisis the Fund is acting in its defensive aid capacity and is offering financial support via grants and loans to LOCs to ensure the essential and valuable work of the LOCs is able to continue.

Further information is available on the Central Fund website or from our area director Charles Barlow.

**Proposal**

Dudley LOC should aim to make a contribution of £500 to the Central Optical Fund during its upcoming financial year, to be paid if and when the treasurer feels appropriate, according to cashflow and circumstance.