

The Central (LOC) Fund

A History of Support to the Optical Profession

Founded by LOCs at the NOC in 1972, the Central Fund was established to finance work centrally on behalf of the profession and maintain a defensive reserve for the profession to defend it from attack and financial challenges. Today it still maintains that reserve and protects, promotes, develops and supports optometric interests through a system of grant awards for projects that benefit the profession

LOC funded and controlled

- The Central Fund is a company limited by guarantee that has LOC members who control it.
- Each LOC is entitled to be a member, there is no cost, and their liability is limited to £1
- The members appoint 5 directors, who are proposed and elected by LOCs at an Annual Meeting
- The Fund is accumulated by voluntary levies from contractors, donations from individual LOCs and Donations (and legacies) from individuals
- It is a not-for-profit organisation

What has the Central Fund ever done for us?

Here are just some examples of where Central Optical funding has made a difference over the years. Prior to the OFNC we funded NHS fee negotiations, and our funding enabled the setting up of the Optical Consumer Complaints Service.

We've supported numerous projects on behalf of ABDO, AOP, College and FODO, including Legal Videos, The Foresight and Think Tank Projects and funding of political lobbying.

Our funding supported the historic legal victory over HMRC securing partial exemption of VAT saving the sector vast sums of money.

We supported the work to develop the enhanced eyecare pathways that we now take for granted.

Our funding of cross sector projects has often enabled the profession as a whole to leap forward, such as the Quality in Optometry toolkit, the National Eye Health Epidemiological Model, The National Data Repository or the LOCSU Learning Disability pathway pilot.

We have supported research and learning by helping equip clinics as well as developing online courses and modules, masters programmes, 3D Virtual clinics as well as numerous research projects such as the Open Optometry free to all digital test chart.

We have supported public eye health messaging including projects with the Eyecare Information Service, support for Public Health learning, our long-standing support for Eye Health UK and National Eye Health week and recently the BCLA "Love Your Lenses" campaign.

Most recently we have supported the whole sector workforce by funding Wellbeing Events for LOCs.

Can anyone apply for funding

The Fund invites and considers applications from individuals or organisations for funding optometry related projects. The Fund directors appraise applications based on the objects of the fund and award grants accordingly. Projects should increase the profile and expand the role of optometry by developing its scope and expertise. They should support the profession by developing resources, technologies and strategies that aid optometry and LOCs in particular. The Fund is particularly keen to encourage project applications from LOCs that are advancing the profession in this post COVID era.

Is there a place for the fund in The Future?

There are many historic examples whereby we have provided cross sector funding, enabling the whole profession to progress. In the future it is likely there will be many more issues and opportunities which fall outside the remit or capacities of the separate optical bodies. In its unique position as able to benefit the whole of the profession, The Central Fund is therefore a resource that is not only useful to provide defensive funding at short notice, but also able to provide enormous impetus to change and advancement of the profession.

So please support us to protect, promote, develop and support optometry.