ABDO 2025 round-up

Consultations and meetings

It was a busy year for ABDO, with involvement in numerous projects, including the Mumsnet children's eyecare survey, the Human Medicines Regulations consultation and proposals around updates for the DVLA driving standards as well as ongoing sector, policy, clinical and development work. In addition, there were numerous meetings with LOCSU discussing the new model constitution and the potential changes for LOCs including DO representation.

ABDO attended a wide range of professional events, including parliamentary, NHS and DHSC meetings, to advance the role of primary eye care clinicians. This included meetings across the UK to support the devolved nations in their work, as well as OFNC and Clinical Council meetings focused on developing sustainable eye care pathways. ABDO also engaged with a variety of professional events hosted by both multiple and independent contractors in England, strengthening our profile and relationships across the wider optical community.

Exams and memberships

This year ABDO welcomed 242 newly qualified DOs.

Student members are going up, with well over 1000 enrolled on courses this year. The apprenticeship is thriving, and one national contractor reports that they have taken on over 200 student DOs, and of those,141 are on the apprenticeship route.

Entries for our winter 2025 exam session closed early October, with theory exams held in late November. PQE/FQE and CL practical exams are scheduled for January 2026. We anticipate a further increase in the number of qualified DOs when the results come in.

ABDO central team

ABDO has over the last three years been delivering its latest strategic plan and as part of this has transformed the way it supports members across the UK. In April two

new South regional leads were appointed: Pauline Bradford in the South West and Lynne Pulley for London and the South East. Laura Hing has recently joined the team as the Midlands Regional Lead, increasing the number to seven. These roles are intended to enhance communication, engagement and representation between dispensing opticians, ABDO and the wider eye care sector with a focus on regional representation.

We also welcomed Gavin Berkerey as communications and engagement director, who will play a key role in shaping and strengthening ABDO's communications going forward.

Looking ahead to 2026

This is an exciting year for ABDO as we mark a significant milestone, 100 years since dispensing optics was recognised as a distinct and valued profession. We will be updating you throughout the year on events showcasing the dispensing and clinical skills of dispensing opticians and contact lens opticians and how they can make a huge difference to patients vision in your area.

We have a full calendar of events to showcase dispensing opticians -100 DOs profiles, along with 100 voices and 100 outstanding case studies.

The president, vice-president and CEO of ABDO have challenged themselves to visit 100 practices nationwide to meet our members.

In addition to celebrating 100 years, we will be at 100% Optical. Not only will we be providing a comprehensive CPD programme, we will also have a stand near the Dispensing Workshop area. Here attendees can meet the ABDO team and regional leads, as well as learning about the association's work to promote DOs across the optical sector.