Regional update for representative committees

October 2026

Policy, Influence and Sector Engagement

ABDO responded to the Government consultation on driving vision standards, supporting a structured approach to visual assessment and proposing a dedicated Driving Vision Assessment and certification process, distinct from a routine sight test.

ABDO continues to contribute to discussions around GOS funding, NHS e-Referral Services and wider NHS reform. Engagement with the General Optical Council also continues and ABDO has contributed to the GOC's thematic review into commercial practices and patient safety.

GOC consultation on testing of sight, supervision and delegation

ABDO is encouraging colleagues to respond to the GOC consultation on proposed changes to the testing of sight and to supervision and delegation (Standard 9), as the changes could have implications beyond sight testing and affect wider areas of practice, including restricted dispensing. Project: Consultation on (i) proposed updated testing of... | General Optical Council

ABDO's main concern is that **changes to supervision requirements intended to support new sight-testing and teleoptometry models could have unintended consequences for other areas of practice, particularly restricted dispensing.** In particular, ABDO is concerned that:

- **Remote supervision may not always allow meaningful intervention.** A registrant may be contactable remotely but unable to directly observe the patient, check measurements, assess frame fit, identify communication difficulties or vulnerability, or stop an activity when necessary.
- **Children and vulnerable patients could be affected.** Dispensing to children under 16 and to sight impaired or severely sight impaired patients often requires significant professional judgement, face-to-face assessment and immediate intervention where problems arise.
- **Changes to Standard 9 apply more widely than sight testing.** The GOC has confirmed to ABDO that any revised supervision and delegation requirements would apply generally across practice, not just to activities associated with the sight test.
- **There could be uncertainty about what constitutes adequate supervision.** ABDO wants clarity on when remote oversight is sufficient and when the physical presence of a registrant is necessary to ensure patient safety.

- **The role of registered DOs and CLOs must be recognised.** ABDO is keen to ensure that regulated professionals, who have their own accountability and professional judgement, are clearly distinguished from unregistered staff.

Workforce and Professional Recognition

Following the ABDO Pay and Reward Survey, a new resource hub has been launched to support conversations around pay, professional value, career progression and workforce sustainability. A new ABDO Member Directory is also in development to improve professional visibility and showcase specialist qualifications, with launch planned for mid-October. The directory forms part of a wider programme of work designed to strengthen awareness and appreciation of the dispensing optician and contact lens optician professions.

Education, Qualifications and Workforce Development

ABDO continues to expand access to professional education and strengthen opportunities for future dispensing opticians. The University of Plymouth began delivery of its new ABDO-accredited FBDO programme in September 2026, which delivers the ABDO Level 6 Dispensing Optician Apprenticeship. This development expands ABDO's network of approved providers and increases access to training. Dispensing examinations - ABDO - Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing

ABDO is using employer feedback to help inform future education and professional development opportunities that are practical, accessible and aligned with the needs of both practitioners and employers. ABDO also continues its involvement with the Sector Partnership for Optical Knowledge and Education (SPOKE), who are developing educational resources for promoting optical careers to primary and secondary school pupils. SPOKE: Sector Partnership for Optical Knowledge and Education - College of Optometrists

Paediatric Dispensing

Paediatric vision and eye care remain significant priorities for ABDO, with activity spanning professional guidance, public awareness and practitioner education. Following publication of ABDO's paediatric dispensing white paper, a new parent and carer information leaflet has been launched. Children's eyecare - ABDO
ABDO continues to strengthen the evidence base, professional knowledge and practical support available to practitioners involved in children's eye care and paediatric dispensing. ABDO is a key partner in a sector-wide campaign launching in October to encourage parents and carers to take children for a sight test before they start school.