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Introduction

The General Optical Council's vision is to be a trusted, modern healthcare regulator.

Our strategic intents are:

- To help make UK eye care responsive to societal needs and expectations
- To work with partners in Government, regulation and optics to provide a robust, modern and consistent regulatory framework for eye care.

In 2008 we celebrated our 50th anniversary year. At the same time, we embarked on a programme of reform which will shape the future of optical regulation.

Policy priorities in 2009/10

Implementing the proposals in the Government's White Paper on healthcare regulation, *Trust, Assurance and Safety – The Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century*, will continue to constitute one of the most significant elements of our Business plan in 2009-10.

The new, reconstituted Council will take up office from 1 April 2009.

Policy priorities for 2009-10 are to:

1. Ensure that effective organisational structures and strategic planning mechanisms are in place to enable the new Council to operate effectively
2. Implement the stakeholder engagement strategy
3. Prepare for introduction of a revalidation scheme
4. Prepare for the establishment of OHPA
5. Address CHRE performance review recommendations
6. Implement efficiency measures and review policies and procedures to ensure effective controls and performance management

Purpose and functions

The General Optical Council (GOC) is the regulator for the optical professions in the UK. Our purpose is to protect, promote and maintain the health and safety of the public through effective regulation of eye care professionals and businesses.

The GOC has four core functions:

1. Setting standards for optical education and training, performance and conduct.
2. Approving qualifications leading to registration.
3. Maintaining a register of individuals who are qualified and fit to practise, train or carry on business as optometrists and dispensing opticians.

4. Investigating and acting where registrants' fitness to practise, train or carry on business is impaired.

Our values are based on The Better Regulation Commission's criteria for good regulation.

Proportionate: Regulators should only intervene when necessary. Remedies should be appropriate to the risk posed, and costs identified and minimised.
We will identify and target the issues of greatest risk to public safety.
We will remove unnecessary bureaucracy.

Accountable: Regulators must be able to justify decisions, and be subject to public scrutiny.
We will seek, and respond to, the views of stakeholders and partners.
We will consider and review the consequences of our actions.

Consistent: Government rules and standards must be joined up and implemented fairly.
We will work in collaboration with UK health regulatory bodies and other partners to develop consistent policies and procedures.

Transparent: Regulators should be open, and keep regulations simple and user friendly.
We will explain and publicise decisions, and make public, wherever possible, Council information, activities and proceedings.

Targeted: Regulation should be focused on the problem, and minimise side effects.
We will ensure that our activity is focused on the areas of greatest risk, or where there is most benefit to public health and safety.

Organisational excellence
We will provide good value for money.
We will pursue high standards of customer service.
We will ensure that the Council is a good place to work, particularly through developing and training our staff and members.
We will promote and develop equality and diversity in all our work.

Standards

Strategic intents

To ensure that standards for good practice and conduct are widely accepted, understood and followed by the eye care professions.

Tasks

1. Develop a revalidation scheme
2. Complete the review of the competencies
3. Complete the review of the codes of conduct
4. Develop a strategic approach on the sale and supply of optical appliances and consider the implications of this for the legal framework (tbc resources)
5. Consider the regulatory regime for dispensing opticians (tbc resources)

Delivered by: Director of Standards

[Measures of success: To add]

Education

Strategic intents

To ensure systems for accrediting optical training and qualifications, and for continuing education, promote and maintain high standards and meet public health needs.

Tasks

1. Consider the CET/revalidation process
2. Develop specifications for revalidation system
3. Undertake a strategic review of DO qualification framework, which ties in with the DO regulation review.
4. Develop a policy on Europe
5. Ensure Independent Prescribing provision
6. Pilot the new annual monitoring scheme
7. Consider patient involvement in Visit process

Delivered by: Director of Education

[Measures of success: To add]

Registration

Strategic intents

To maintain an accessible, up to date Register in which the public can have confidence.

Tasks

1. Undertake a review of content and access to the Register
2. The effective implementation of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act legislation
3. The effective handling of the end of the second cycle for CET
4. Introduce an automated online retention process
5. Undertake the analysis and review of the equality and diversity monitoring programme
6. Integrate the registration and finance applications
7. Consider a written policy and GOC guidance on the position of persons applying to join Register with a disability
8. Undertake a review of body corporate registration

Delivered by: Director of Communications and Information

[Measures of success: To add]

Fitness to Practise

Strategic intents

To ensure the integrity and effectiveness of FTP investigation and adjudication systems.

Tasks

1. Review policy on criminal prosecutions
2. Review approach to allegations of poor clinical practice
3. Introduce scrutiny function
4. Adoption of electronic case management system
5. Improve registrants' understanding of FTP system
6. Public awareness of FTP system (see also Influence)
7. Improve witness and complainant support
8. Establish FTP policy group
9. Appoint/reappoint hearings panel

Note: Tasks above reflect policy priority 4. to prepare for the establishment of OHPA.

Delivered by: Director of Legal and Fitness to Practise

[Measures of success: To add]

Resources

Strategic intents

To ensure that the GOC has the resources it needs to operate effectively

To ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively

To attract, reward, develop and retain high quality staff

Tasks

Finance

1. Review budget planning framework and financial reporting arrangements
2. Develop financial strategy
3. Develop investments policy
4. Tighten up internal controls

IT and facilities

5. Modernise IT infrastructure and develop IT strategy
6. Review accommodation requirements

HR

7. Induction of new Council
8. Appointment/induction of new Chief Executive
9. Develop staff engagement/capacity for change
10. Job evaluation/competency framework
11. Pay/reward policy
12. Implement cross-functional mandatory training and development policy
13. Review/develop appraisal mechanisms for Council/Committee members

Delivered by: Chief Executive (Finance), Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development (IT and facilities, HR)

[Measures of success: To add]

Organisation

Strategic intents

To put in place and to work within effective and efficient organisational processes to deliver the mission and core functions of the Council

Tasks

Governance

1. Agree and implement organisational structures and strategic planning mechanisms for new Council/committees/executive
2. Ensure mechanisms are in place to manage performance and hold the executive to account

3. Committee member appointments
4. Review and consult on GOC internal policies and processes necessary for effective and efficient working
5. Agree KPIs and other information necessary to enable the GOC to quality assure its activities
6. Develop proposals for legislative change to support new Council structures

Equality and diversity

7. Ensure implementation of the Equality & Diversity action plan

Delivered by: Chief Executive

[Measures of success: To add]

Influence

Strategic intents

To enhance the Council's reputation and influence across all stakeholder groups

Tasks

1. Implement the stakeholder engagement strategy and ensure the GOC understands public and patient expectations when developing strategy/policy
2. Raise public awareness of the GOC, particularly in relation to registration of opticians and how to complain
3. Promote better understanding of standards and guidance
4. Develop a public affairs strategy, incorporating a four-country approach
5. Explore opportunities for joint working on eye health issues
6. Agree a coordinated policy on Europe (see also Education)
7. Develop publications to explore opportunities for interactive and electronic communications and improve cost-effectiveness

Delivered by: Director of Communications and Information

[Measures of success: To add]