

**BEFORE THE FITNESS TO PRACTISE COMMITTEE
OF THE GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL**

GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL

AND

BETHAN JOHN (D-33068)

**DETERMINATION OF A SUBSTANTIVE REVIEW
26 NOVEMBER 2025**

Committee Members:	Sara Nathan (Lay Chair) Lisa Hill (Lay) Joy Tweed (Lay) Lesley Reid (Dispensing Optician) Adrian Street (Dispensing Optician)
Legal adviser:	Jennifer Ferrario
GOC Presenting Officer:	Mr Neel Rokad
Registrant:	Present
Registrant representative:	Mr John Graham
Hearings Officer:	Anwar Henry
Outcome:	Current Fitness to Practise is not impaired

DETERMINATION

Background

1. During a substantive hearing on the 2 December 2024, the Registrant admitted the following factual allegation in its entirety:
The Council alleges that you, Ms Bethan John ((D-33068), a registered Dispensing Optician:

1) On or around 28 June 2017, at Cardiff Magistrates' Court, you were convicted of driving a motor vehicle on 11 June 2017 after consuming alcohol that exceeded the prescribed limit, contrary to section 5(1)(a) of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and Schedule 2 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988.

2) You failed to declare the conviction set out at 1 above to the Council on your:

a. Application for restoration to the register of dispensing opticians dated:

i. 16 May 2018;

ii. 1 April 2021;

b. Application for retention to the register of dispensing opticians dated:

i. 2 March 2022;

ii. 27 February 2023;

3) Your conduct as set out at 2a and 2b was dishonest.

And by virtue of the facts set out above, your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of misconduct and a conviction.

2. The Registrant, according to the memorandum of conviction as seen by the Committee, was convicted on the 28 June 2017 at Cardiff magistrates Court for driving a motor vehicle with excess alcohol. She was sentenced to a financial penalty of £120, disqualified from driving for a period of twelve months and required to pay a surcharge and costs amounting to £115.
3. The Registrant applied for registration as a student Optometrist via an application form received by the Registrations department of the General Optical Council ('the Council') on the 18 September 2023. In the application she declared the criminal conviction.
4. Enquiries by the Council revealed that in 2018, 2021 and 2022, the Registrant, when applying for restoration or retention, failed to disclose the conviction and/or had signed declarations stating that she had had no criminal convictions.
5. The application dated the 18 September 2023 was refused.
6. At the beginning of the substantive hearing the parties confirmed to the Committee that a provisional agreement of an Agreed Panel Determination ('APD') had been reached. The Registrant in that agreement had admitted current impairment and that an appropriate sanction would be a suspension order for a period of twelve months.
7. The Committee considered the content of the APD report, however it went on to independently assess current impairment. It found that the Registrant's current fitness to practise was impaired having regard to the risk of repetition of the conduct, and the public interest element. It determined that the requirement to uphold professional standards and maintain public confidence in the profession would be undermined if no finding of impairment was made. It considered the nature of the criminal conviction and the repeated dishonesty in failing to declare the conviction over a number of years.

8. Upon considering sanction, the Committee took into account the APD report. It had regard for the relevant factors and concluded in the circumstances that a suspension order for twelve months was reasonable and proportionate. It went on to approve the APD report.
9. The Committee agreed that it would be appropriate for a review to take place to ensure that the Registrant is fit to resume practice either unrestricted or conditionally. It considered that a reviewing Committee may be assisted by the following:
 - A reflective statement addressing professional integrity, insight, remorse and remediation;
 - Evidence of CPD;
 - Testimonials and references.
10. The Committee agreed that the reviewing Committee will need to be satisfied that the Registrant:
 - Has fully appreciated the gravity of the offence;
 - Has not re-offended and has maintained her skills and knowledge and
 - That the Registrant's patients will not be placed at risk by resumption of practice or by the imposition of conditional registration.
11. Prior to the hearing the Registrant was provided with notice of the review hearing and a hearing bundle. On the 25 November 2025, the Registrant provided a bundle of documents for inclusion in the review hearing.

Findings regarding impairment

12. The Committee heard submissions from Mr Rokad on behalf of the Council. He said that it is for the Registrant to satisfy the Committee that her fitness to practise is not currently impaired. Mr Rokad referred the Committee to the Council's skeleton argument and said that since preparing the skeleton, the Council had received a twelve page bundle from the Registrant. Mr Rokad said that in the bundle there is some evidence of insight, reflection and remorse. He said that there is no evidence of remediation in terms of training or CPD courses. He reminded the Committee that dishonesty can be difficult to remediate. Mr Rokad submitted that in light of the circumstances, the Council is adopting a neutral position in terms of impairment.
13. Mr Graham, on behalf of the Registrant, invited the Committee to find that the Registrant's fitness to practise is not currently impaired. He said that the Registrant intended to give evidence.
14. The Registrant gave oral evidence. She asked the Committee to adopt the witness statement that she had included in her bundle. When the Registrant was asked questions by the Committee she said that if she intended to resume a role in the optical profession, then she will undertake the relevant CPD. She said that she had no immediate plan to undertake CPD because she was not intending to work as a Dispensing Optician in the immediate future.
15. When the Registrant was asked why there had been no testimonials in the bundle, the Registrant said that she had not asked for them. She said that she had understood the recommendations from the substantive Committee however because she had not intended to continue working in the optical industry, she had not requested any testimonials. The Registrant said that she had asked her

current employer to provide a reference and they had agreed. She said that she could obtain a reference during the course of the hearing if the Committee was agreeable to receiving it. She offered to provide an email address for her employer but had not previously requested a reference from them. The Registrant said that she had been fully transparent with her current employer about the Council's investigation, and the reason behind the hearing.

16. Mr Graham asked questions of the Registrant in re-examination. In response she said that she had ordinarily renewed her registration as a Dispensing Optician in March of each year. She said that she did not renew it in March 2025. The Registrant told the Committee that she had assumed that her name had been removed from the Council's Register. She said that since her suspension, she has not worked in the optical industry.
17. Mr Rokad asked the Registrant about the dishonesty finding, and to explain how she had attempted to remediate herself. The Registrant said that the consequences for her in failing to disclose the criminal conviction had been significant. She said that the dishonesty had been caused by her fear of the consequences. Since the Committee's findings, she has faced her fears and made a conscious decision to be as transparent as possible in how she conducts herself on a daily basis. She said that if she were to find herself in a similar circumstance, that she would act in an open and honest manner.
18. Mr Graham made submissions. He said that when the original Committee had reached its decision and made recommendations, it said that the reviewing Committee *may* be assisted by specific evidence, it had not been obligatory. He said that as the Registrant had not worked in the optical profession during the suspension period, testimonials or character references would have offered little if any probative value. He said that the Registrant has demonstrated in her witness statement that she understands the seriousness of the original offence and in the circumstances this ought to reassure the Committee that there will be no repeat behaviour.
19. Mr Rokad made submissions. He submitted that whilst the original Committee had made recommendations to the Registrant rather than imposing obligatory directions, the onus is with the Registrant to satisfy the Committee that her fitness to practise is no longer impaired. It had therefore been incumbent upon her to follow through with the recommendations. He said that it should have been fairly straightforward for the Registrant to have provided a reference from her current employer. He reminded the Committee that it had no evidence to demonstrate that the Registrant had been working without issue, whether within the optical profession or not. He said that neither does it have any evidence that the Registrant has kept her skills up to date.
20. The Chair asked Mr Rokad to confirm the Registrant's position in terms of her registration. Mr Rokad made enquiries with the Council and informed the Committee that she has been retained on the Register (not on the public register), whilst the fitness to practise proceedings are in progress. The Committee noted that she had not completed her 2022 – 2024 CPD requirements. Mr Rokad said that the Registrant's registration will be reviewed once the hearing had concluded.
21. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Adviser who advised the Committee that its options in respect of carrying out a review, were contained in sections 13F and 13G of The Opticians Act 1989. The Legal Adviser referred the Committee to paragraph 24 of the Council's Hearings and Indicative Sanctions Guidance, which sets out the approach a committee should adopt when

considering a review. She advised the Committee that it should first consider current impairment, and it should exercise its own professional judgement in this regard. The Committee was advised to have regard to the recommendations of the substantive hearing committee in terms of evidence it considered would assist in a review hearing, and to consider whether the information provided by the Registrant, addressed these sufficiently.

22. The Legal Adviser advised the Committee that if it concludes on the evidence that the Registrant's fitness to practise is no longer impaired, the suspension order will expire after the 12 month period, on the 2 December 2025, and the Registrant may return to practise unrestricted. If the Committee decides that there is current impairment, it will need to decide what sanction if any, should be imposed beginning with the least restrictive. She advised that the Committee should impose an appropriate and proportionate sanction.
23. The Committee considered whether the Registrant's current fitness to practise is impaired. In its deliberations, the Committee had regard to the Council's hearing bundle and the bundle of documents provided by the Registrant. It also had regard to the submissions from Mr Rokad and Mr Graham.
24. The Committee reminded itself of the recommendations from the substantive hearing committee in terms of impairment and bore these in mind when reviewing the documents received from the Registrant and her oral evidence.
25. In terms of insight, the Committee was satisfied having regard to the evidence that the Registrant, with her reflective statement, had demonstrated insight into her actions. It was also satisfied that she had shown remorse in her witness statement and during her oral evidence.
26. In relation to remediation, the Committee decided that there had been very little. The Registrant had told the Committee that since the original Committee's findings, she had made a conscious decision to conduct herself in an open and transparent manner. The Committee acknowledged that dishonesty was difficult to remediate and the Registrant had taken some steps to demonstrate that she was mindful of her behaviour on a day to day basis.
27. The Registrant had not provided any testimonials or references. The Committee was surprised by this having regard to the fact that the Registrant has had the benefit of legal representation. In terms of CPD, the Committee noted that there had been none undertaken. It did however have regard to the Registrant's evidence that she had not attended CPD courses because she had had no intention to work in the optical profession in the immediate future. The Committee had been reassured by the Registrant that if she decided to work as a Dispensing Optician that she would attend extensive CPD, in order to assist with her registration.
28. The Committee noted there had been no repeat conduct by the Registrant, and the most recent conduct had occurred in 2023.
29. The Committee considered that the misconduct had related to a criminal conviction and involved dishonest conduct. It reminded itself that the original Committee had decided that the case related to public interest alone; marking its disapproval of the dishonest conduct and the desire to uphold proper professional standards in the profession. The original Committee had not found that the Registrant had placed members of the public at risk of actual harm.
30. It went on to decide that having regard to the passage of time, and the evidence provided by the Registrant both in writing and orally, that the Registrant's behaviour had been addressed, insight and remorse demonstrated and there

ought to be no risk of repeat conduct. It went on to decide that the wider public would likely consider in the circumstances, that the Registrant, if she chose to do so, ought to be able to return to unrestricted practice. The Committee in reaching this decision, had reminded itself that in order to remain or to be placed on the Register, the Registrant will need to satisfy the Council that she had undertaken the necessary CPD requirements.

31. For these reasons, the Committee concluded that there was no longer a risk of undermining public confidence in the profession.

Declaration

32. The Committee made a formal declaration that the Registrant's fitness to practise is no longer impaired for the reasons above.
33. Once the suspension period has expired on 30 December 2025, the Registrant may return to practise as a Dispensing Optician, subject to a review by the Council's Registrar.

Chairman of the Committee: Sara Nathan

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in dark ink. The signature appears to read 'Sara Nathan' in a cursive, slightly slanted script.

Signature

Date: 26 November 2025

Registrant: Bethan John

Signaturepresent via video link.....

Date: 26 November 2025

FURTHER INFORMATION
Transcript
A full transcript of the hearing will be made available for purchase in due course.
Appeal
Any appeal against an order of the Committee must be lodged with the relevant court within 28 days of the service of this notification. If no appeal is lodged, the order will take effect at the end of that period. The relevant court is shown at section 23G(4)(a)-(c) of the Opticians Act 1989 (as amended).
Professional Standards Authority
<p>This decision will be reported to the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) under the provisions of section 29 of the NHS Reform and Healthcare Professions Act 2002. PSA may refer this case to the High Court of Justice in England and Wales, the Court of Session in Scotland or the High Court of Justice in Northern Ireland as appropriate if they decide that a decision has been insufficient to protect the public and/or should not have been made, and if they consider that referral is desirable for the protection of the public.</p> <p>Where a registrant can appeal against a decision, the Authority has 40 days beginning with the day which is the last day in which you can appeal. Where a registrant cannot appeal against the outcome of a hearing, the Authority's appeal period is 56 days beginning with the day in which notification of the decision was served on you. PSA will notify you promptly of a decision to refer. A letter will be sent by recorded delivery to your registered address (unless PSA has been notified by the GOC of a change of address).</p> <p>Further information about the PSA can be obtained from its website at www.professionalstandards.org.uk or by telephone on 020 7389 8030.</p>
Effect of orders for suspension or erasure
To practise or carry on business as an optometrist or dispensing optician, to take or use a description which implies registration or entitlement to undertake any activity which the law restricts to a registered person, may amount to a criminal offence once an entry in the register has been suspended or erased.
Contact

If you require any further information, please contact the Council's Hearings Manager at Level 29, One Canada Square, London, E14 5AA or by telephone, on 020 7580 3898.