



THE COLLEGE OF
OPTOMETRISTS

Classification: Official

1 March 2021

To: All UK Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians

Dear Colleagues,

Supporting optical professions throughout the pandemic

This year has started in a way we could all have barely imagined 12 months ago, and we wanted to write to thank all of you for your immense efforts. After the long ordeal of last year, we enter the New Year with the real hope that vaccination offers to control COVID and the very substantial impact that it has had on health, lives and livelihoods but with a significant surge in cases to deal with before that begins to take effect.

There are many weeks ahead that will continue to be among the most challenging of all our professional lives. Optometrists, Dispensing Opticians and their support staff will be faced with many professional dilemmas and some may be pushed to the limits of physical and mental endurance. Please look after your colleagues - protracted, relentless crises are often much more draining than short intense ones.

We should be proud that Optometry and optics is recognised as an essential primary care healthcare service but with that comes responsibilities including continuing to provide services during this current phase of the pandemic. The guidance provided by the professional organisations aims to support you as you provide services to your patients during this Amber phase.

We wrote to you in [late November](#) and previous communications issued during the pandemic contained important advice concerning the application of clinical decisions in extreme circumstances and we would encourage you to read them if you have not already done so.

Our view remains that clinical decision making must remain anchored in the principles of the GOC Standards of Practice and guidance provided by the College of Optometrists. This means it must also rightly take into account the realities of the situation in which we find ourselves. We would emphasise once again that a rational approach to varying practice in an emergency is part of a healthcare worker's professional response, and we would expect you to be professionally supported to do this. Many Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians are as a result of this

emergency working in new ways, new areas of ophthalmic care and taking decisions in a way they would not under normal conditions, and this should be expected and professionally supported.

All health and social care, and ophthalmic and optical leaders, have huge confidence in the ability and judgement of all our colleagues to meet these challenges. We have been inspired by the passion and commitment of optical professionals working in all roles throughout the pandemic. This will not be easy and we continue to express our enormous gratitude for all you are doing.

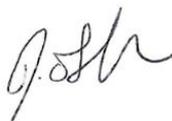
We stand with you professionally at this time.

Kind regards,



Mr Raymond Curran

Head of Ophthalmic Services, Health and Social Care Board Northern Ireland



Mr David O'Sullivan

Chief Optometric Advisor / Prif Optometrig Ymgynghorol, Welsh Government / Llywodraeth Cymru



Dr Janet Pooley

Optometric Advisor, Scottish Government



Mr Colin Davidson

President, College of Optometrists



Sir Anthony Garrett

General Secretary, Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO)



Mrs Lesley Longstone

Registrar and Chief Executive, General Optical Council