

OFNC

Association of British Dispensing Opticians
Association of Optometrists
British Medical Association
Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians

Optometric Fees Negotiating Committee

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Chairman: Mike George Secretary: Ann Blackmore

Derek Busby
Dental and Eye Care Services
Department of Health
Richmond House
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Dear Derek

Optical voucher values – 2016/17

Optical vouchers are an important patient benefit which must be protected. It is essential that there are realistic increases in voucher values because they affect the range and quality of spectacles optical practices can make available to patients.

We were very disappointed with the very low increase in 2015 of only 1%. Moreover, the value of vouchers has been significantly eroded for many years. The community eye health sector does everything possible to provide basic spectacles within the voucher values, but as values fall it can only do so by reducing the choice available to the patient.

We do not propose any change to the voucher bands this year, but as we have already indicated in our response to the consultation on special facial characteristics, we would hope to work with you to review the voucher bands and ensure this scheme works as effectively as possible.

For 2016-17 the OFNC would expect optical voucher values to increase by at least the same amount as patient charges and in line with other patient benefits if greater (eg wigs and fabric supports). We would also hope that the Government will finally address the bizarre anomaly of linking voucher values to dental and prescription charges, which has meant that if they help patients by holding down dental and prescription charges, they conversely penalise NHS spectacle wearers by limiting their benefit.

We therefore hope that when setting voucher values for 2016-17 the Government will recognise the importance of this patient benefit, and the fact that the eroded value still needs to be corrected. Given this we would like to see an increase in voucher values for 2016-17 of 2%.

Yours sincerely



Ann Blackmore
Secretary, OFNC