

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

OFNC Press Release – 30 March 2017

Government Freezes Sight Test Fees

The Government has today announced its intention to freeze NHS sight test fees in England for the second year in a row, leaving them at 2015-16 levels for 2017-18. Optical vouchers, which provide help to patients on low incomes and to children who need spectacles, have also been frozen. The continuing education & training (CET) grant will however increase by 1% and the grant to train pre-registration optometrists by 1%.

Mike George, Chair of the Optometric Fees Negotiating Committee said:

“We are extremely disappointed that NHS sight test fees have been frozen for a second year in a row. We appreciate the financial challenges facing the NHS and we understand that all parts of the health sector need to play their part in addressing that challenge. But there is no way we can advise the profession to accept such an offer which is clearly not in their long term interests and more importantly is not in the best interests of patients.”

He continued, “It is particularly frustrating that the NHS sight test – which is a very cost effective part of the NHS – continues to be underfunded, while at the same time NHS England is failing to make greater and more effective use of community optical practices to deliver primary eye care, which could help significantly to address the pressures on GPs and hospital ophthalmology departments and would provide better, more convenient care to patients.”

Ann Blackmore, OFNC Secretary said: “Year on year our members are facing real increases in their costs – largely as a direct result of government policies and contract requirements – which the government refuses to recognise. And on top of that they have been expected to cope with the administrative and financial chaos resulting from the incompetence of Capita and NHS England in delivering primary care support services. We will be looking now to government to provide compensation to the sector for this fiasco as a matter of urgency.

It is to our members’ credit that they have continued to provide a full range of services to patients across the country despite these challenges – but this will become increasingly hard to do. The real terms cut in voucher values will be particularly hard on many patients.”

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Notes for editors:

1. The Optometric Fees Negotiating Committee (OFNC) is the community eye health equivalent of the BMA's and BDA's General Practice Committees and community pharmacist's pharmaceutical services negotiating committee (PSNC). It is the recognised negotiating body for fees for the professions. Its members include the ABDO, the AOP, the BMA, and FODO.
2. The Chair and secretariat to the OFNC are provided by AOP and FODO.
3. The current membership of OFNC is Mike George (Optometrist, AOP – Chair OFNC), Henrietta Alderman (AOP CEO), Richard Edwards (Optometrist, FODO), Claire Slade (Optometrist, FODO), Trevor Warburton (Optometrist AOP), Gordon Ilett (AOP), Simon Longstaff (OMP BMA), John Maingay (BMA), Professor Nagasumbramanian (OMP BMA), Sir Anthony Garrett (CEO ABDO), David Hewlett (CEO FODO). Secretary: Ann Blackmore (FODO).
4. The OFNC is always grateful to receive comments, advice and perspectives from Optical Confederation members and can be contacted via Ann@fodo.com.
5. Papers relating to the 2017-18 fees negotiations round are available at <http://www.opticalconfederation.org.uk/resources/ofnc>