

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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## ABOUT US

The FODO Group of companies comprises FODO, FODO Ireland and the National Community Hearing Association (NCHA).

FODO is the representative professional body for eye care providers across the UK and FODO Ireland represents eye care providers across the Republic of Ireland. We lead change by influencing government, policymakers and opinion formers. We assist our members and work with them, patient groups and other professional associations to improve access to high-quality eye care for everyone in the UK and the Republic.

The NCHA is the representative professional body for community hearing care providers across the UK. We work with the broader hearing sector, governments and decision-makers to lead and influence change. We are the voice of community hearing care and work with our members and stakeholders to improve access to high-quality hearing care for all.

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# CHAIR AND MANAGING DIRECTOR STATEMENT

In this year's annual report, we look back at 2019 when we made significant progress on all our goals. However, as we write, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed everything. Members are having to rethink and transform how they deliver eye and hearing care to meet patient needs across the UK and Republic of Ireland. At this most challenging of times, we have switched immediately to a seven day a week operating model to ensure members always have the support they need.

Change was already our theme of 2019 and, before the pandemic hit, the FODO Group had moved to a new operating model, upgraded IT systems and enhanced membership benefits all the while continuing to control costs and lead on health policy analysis to protect and advance eye and hearing care services as usual.

This work ensured members have continued to benefit from expert policy analysis, sector-specific guidance and one-to-one support, as well as top legal defence and employment law services, throughout the crisis.

The pandemic has also made us review our plans for 2020 and 2021. Like our members, we have re-examined every operation and cost to ensure we adapt for the difficult years ahead. With the shift to remote and more agile ways of working, we have taken the decision to sell our headquarters building, so we can reduce long-term costs and reinvest in enhancing membership support in the future.

At the same time, we continue to prepare for Brexit in our Ireland business and to develop robust plans to respond to tougher medical malpractice insurance markets long-term. This is inevitable because of the global economic climate. Our health policy team also continues to make progress in opening up system opportunities to help members expand eye and hearing care services. As always, our goal is to create and maintain a climate where our members can flourish and deliver expanding services to patients whatever the externalities.

This year, with the team working flat out to support members through the pandemic and on fast-evolving national work programmes, we present this online 2020 annual report in which we share highlights of the work undertaken in 2019.

Throughout the pandemic and beyond, we take immense pride in the service we provide to our members. Our small and dedicated team will always be by your side.



Lynda Oliver  
Chair



Harjit Sandhu  
Managing Director

# POLICY AND INFLUENCE

Our policy team continued to monitor, analyse, and respond to critical opportunities and threats on your behalf throughout 2019. We responded to over 20 consultations across the Group, covering legislative reform of NHS commissioning, simplification of Partial Exemption (VAT), the government's green paper on prevention, and important national clinical guidelines by NICE.

We continue to horizon scan and analyse evolving opportunities and risks for members, and to take action upstream to ensure an optimal operating environment into the future. In all that we do, our goal is to protect and advance eye and hearing care on behalf of patients, our members and wider society. As the leading voice for eye and hearing care providers, we will continue that work throughout the pandemic and beyond.

## FODO

Collaborative working lies at the heart of everything FODO does. In 2019, we continued to work with sector partners across the UK and Europe to advance eye care services and promote members' interests.

In England, we engaged at the highest level with the NHS on tariff reforms for eye care services commissioned using the Standard Contract. We argued for sustainable funding models that incentivise quality care, including improved tariffs for follow-up care for chronic conditions like glaucoma. We played a crucial role in NHS England's Long Term Plan priority to improve access to eye care in special schools, helping develop a model service specification and funding system.



At the same time, we continued to challenge excessive regulatory burdens on practices and practitioners and unwarranted variation in NHS commissioning, which simply adds to the cost of business without any benefits for the patients we serve.

In Northern Ireland, we have continued to see good progress as the sector widens the scope of services provided through enhanced services and viable fees. FODO members William Stockdale and Jill Campbell were elected chair and vice-chair respectively of Optometry Northern Ireland (ONI) and took up their posts in June 2019. Since then, ONI has continued to work to achieve equality for those in Northern Ireland who receive Universal Credit but who cannot automatically access eye care. This issue is currently with the Office of the Deputy First Minister and the Chair of the Health Committee.

We continued to work closely with Optometry Wales (OW) on enhancing the NHS contract, building on the roadshows in autumn 2018. OW and FODO have been working alongside other key stakeholders to ensure that primary care optometry evolves to enhance the patient experience and remove barriers to the provision of world-class optometric and optical services in all communities in Wales.

FODO Scotland worked closely with Optometry Scotland (OS) to protect and develop General Ophthalmic Services. The year was marked by consolidation and future planning since the Enhanced Supplementary Examination was introduced in October 2018. We saw an improvement in the uptake of SIGN 144, which sets out best-practice glaucoma management between primary and secondary care, including the safe discharge of patients back to their community optometrist. We hope this leads to significant improvements for people with glaucoma to access care closer to home.

We also continued to play a leadership role in Europe throughout 2019, with EU policy continuing to influence health care in the UK and Republic of Ireland either directly or indirectly as the UK exits the EU. We have, for example, been working hard to ensure that problems inherent in the EU Medical Device Regulation for spectacles, contact lenses and hearing aids are resolved at European level for members and are not replicated in the new UK system. Getting this wrong will add significantly to costs for members, which is why FODO is playing a leading role to mitigate these and other risks upstream.

Our commitment to partnership working across the UK has gone from strength to strength in 2020, as FODO has been there seven days a week to support and work with all sector bodies to tackle Covid related challenges head-on.

## **FODO Ireland**

Throughout 2019, FODO Ireland continued fighting inequalities in access to eye care, especially for children who depend on state-funded care and who unjustifiably wait for many months for a sight test solely because of funding and contractual inefficiencies.

FODO Ireland held regular meetings with the Health Service Executive to seek to unblock and expand the implementation of the Primary Care Eye Service Review Group Report by expanding the Community Ophthalmic Services Scheme to children aged eight and over. Doing so would not only benefit children but would also free up ophthalmology staff to focus on more complex cases.



FODO Ireland has strongly advocated for the implementation of online approval and patient referral systems to minimise the administrative burdens that practices face. This remains work in progress. We have also sought practicable solutions to regulatory issues, including Garda Vetting, the European Medical Device Regulation and CORU's approach to the recognition of overseas qualifications.

Ensuring we have a sustainable workforce is crucial to meeting the nation's growing eye health needs. So, in 2019 we concluded a funding agreement with Technological University Dublin that will eventually see a 28% increase in the intake of optometry students from 25 to 32 a year. This significant achievement comes after several years of sustained hard work to train a greater homegrown workforce for the Irish optical sector.

## NCHA – audiology

The NCHA continued to support members with regulatory and commissioning issues throughout 2019, as well as working closely with sector partners to advance explorative discussions on establishing an independent and accountable College of Audiology in the UK.

We commissioned expert advice on the Equality Act 2010 and hearing loss and undertook other in-house research to help set the policy agenda in the years ahead.

Together with Action on Hearing loss, NHS England, the LGA and the Association of Directors of Public Health, we published [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Guidance](#) and a [data toolkit](#) for local authorities and NHS commissioners to help tackle unmet hearing needs in England.



As the voice of community hearing care, the NCHA led on strategically meaningful consultations on behalf of members and the wider sector throughout 2019. This included carrying out an extensive review of the draft NICE tinnitus guideline and submitting substantive feedback which NICE accepted. Our vital contributions helped to ensure that the final guideline was evidence-based and worked alongside NICE's guideline for the management of adult hearing loss. Patients and practitioners will benefit because care will be more accessible and affordable as a result.

In all that we do at the NCHA, we aim to help tackle the significant public health challenge unaddressed hearing loss has become across the UK. We will continue our leadership role in driving change throughout 2020 and beyond.



# MEMBER BENEFITS – ALL YOU NEED TO SUCCEED

In 2019 we enhanced the support available to members and will build on this in 2020. Highlights:

- With members benefiting from access to legal advisers who are experts in health defence, we continued our excellent track record of supporting members in managing complaints and regulatory issues upstream and reducing fitness to practise hearings.
- We introduced new employment law and health and safety support for practice owners, including an online HR hub and phone and email advice. The support takes account of variations in the legal frameworks across the UK. Members can now also access model employment law contracts and handbooks covering optometrists, dispensing opticians, hearing aid dispensers/audiologists, and general support staff.
- Individual members who need it can now benefit from tailored advice and support from Prospect, the leading trade union for professional people, as well as support from FODO's experienced in-house team. Helping members through challenging times so they can get their careers back on track is a top priority.
- Members have access to a legal and tax helpline, saving them time and money throughout the year.
- We piloted a new model of education and training events which participants rated as excellent. The programme was ready for roll out to the wider membership during 2020, but unfortunately, the rollout has been delayed until 2021 owing to Covid-19 work.
- Members continued to benefit from bespoke advice and support on the whole range of complex issues businesses and individuals can face, including commissioning and procurement regulations, contracts, off-payroll working, IR35 reforms, application of the Equality Act 2010, individual human resources support, and more.

In recent years, insurance underwriters have increased premiums in response to historical claims and lack of competition in the global medical malpractice market. Against this backdrop, we undertook an extensive review of the market in 2019 to ensure members continued to benefit from competitive insurance rates and terms.

We have also started to lay the groundwork for 2020 and beyond, as we increase our education and training offering, to help members mitigate risk and grow successful businesses and careers.

Each year across the FODO Group, we deliver more support and advice to members when they need it. We do so while keeping costs under control and continuing our long-standing tradition of providing excellent value: a practice we are proud to maintain.



# FINANCE REVIEW AND ACCOUNTS

## Treasurer's report

The result for the year ended 31 December 2019 was a surplus of £34,000 on turnover of £1.2m, compared with a surplus of £15,000 on turnover of £1.2m in 2018. The team achieved this while restructuring the business and dealing with increased demands in regulatory defence and insurance claims, and policy work growing in volume and complexity.

Historically, we have operated on a balanced budget, holding no major cash surpluses. The Board agreed in 2019 to start to work towards a three-month cash operating reserve in the future. Subscriptions were increased by 2% in 2020 to help to cover the costs of enhanced membership support and to start slowly building an operating reserve. Covid-19 has shown how important this is for financial stability when crises hit and when members need our support more than ever.

Like our members, we have responded to the pandemic by initiating a new round of cost controls, notwithstanding the need to build reserves for what will be a few difficult years ahead. This means FODO members will continue to benefit from one of the most cost-efficient membership bodies there is. I would like to thank all the FODO team for their hard work, in particular to the Executive Team for rigorous financial control, and to FODO Board colleagues for their unwavering support.

**Hal Rollason**, Honorary Treasurer

## Financial report

| <b>INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT –<br/>31 DECEMBER 2019</b> | <b>2019<br/>£000</b> | <b>2018<br/>£000</b> |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|
| Turnover   | 1,220                | 1,203                |
| Administrative expenses                                      | (1,186)              | (1,188)              |
| Operating surplus  | <u>34</u>            | <u>15</u>            |

| <b>BALANCE SHEET – 31 DECEMBER 2019</b>          | <b>2019<br/>£000</b> | <b>2018<br/>£000</b> |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Fixed assets</b>                              |                      |                      |
| Tangible assets                                  | 338                  | 359                  |
| Investments                                      | <u>500</u>           | <u>500</u>           |
|  | 838                  | 859                  |
| <b>Current assets</b>                            |                      |                      |
| Debtors  | 48                   | 119                  |
| Cash at bank and in hand                         | <u>220</u>           | <u>24</u>            |
|  | 268                  | 143                  |
| Creditors: amounts falling due within one year   | <u>(207)</u>         | <u>(138)</u>         |
| <b>Net current assets</b>                        | <u>61</u>            | <u>5</u>             |
| <b>Total net assets less current liabilities</b> | <u>899</u>           | <u>864</u>           |
| <b>Members' funds</b>                            | <u>899</u>           | <u>864</u>           |

L S Oliver, Chair   H Sandhu, Managing Director

These summarised accounts are an extract from the statutory financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2019. They have been audited by Menzies Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors, who gave an unqualified audit report on 8 October 2020. The auditors have confirmed to the Directors that these summarised accounts are consistent with the statutory financial statements.

# OUR TEAM

## Head office Team

- Harjit Sandhu, Group Managing Director
- David Hewlett, Group Director
- Alan Tinger, Group Director
- Gary Robjent, Policy Manager
- Peter Fogarty, Senior Policy Adviser
- Giusy Maniscalchi, PA to Managing Director
- Sue Silvester, Business Systems & Data Manager
- Rajan Verma, Membership Officer
- Jayne Harrison, Administrative Assistant
- Sheila Briggs, (Part-time Secretary, FODO Scotland)
- Toni Fuorvito, (Receptionist co-funded with ABDO and FMO)

## FODO non-executive directors

- Lynda Oliver, Chair
- Claire Slade, Vice Chair
- Hal Rollason, Honorary Treasurer and FODO Scotland Chair
- Paul Carroll
- Josie Forte
- Stephen Hannan
- John Hopcroft
- Sarah Joyce
- Dan McGhee
- Meena Ralhan
- Glenn Tomison
- William Stockdale
- Adrian Street

## FODO Ireland executive members

- Garvan Mulligan, Chair
- Owen Blee
- Marie Keating
- Desmond Mackey
- Peter McGrath

## NCHA board members

- Peter Ormerod, Chair
- Mark Georgevic
- Graham Lane
- Paula Cave
- Stephen McAndrew
- Diane Newman
- Jonathan Parsons
- Rob Skedge
- Steve Witts

