

**INSPIRING AND  
SUPPORTING EXCELLENCE**

# **OUR STRATEGY 2020-2025**



**THE COLLEGE OF  
OPTOMETRISTS**

Professional Excellence in Eye Health

# FOREWORD

## Preparing the profession for the future

The pace of change in the eye healthcare sector is increasing every year, and this year has been like no other for our members and our profession. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges for all of us both personally and professionally, and it is also changing optometry and eye healthcare forever. While the immediate implications for practice are now known, the long term impact of the pandemic on eye health and care is still uncertain. Now more than ever, our profession must continue to adapt if we are to make the most of the new opportunities.

During this pandemic, we have had to embrace the use of technology to continue to provide eye care services remotely and safely, develop new clinical practice, and adapt to changing patient needs. We know that these changes, which we thought were temporary, will have a profound impact on UK optometrists in the near future.

Over the next five years, we will continue to strengthen our relationships with our main partners in the optical sector and with governments and healthcare representatives across the UK to set out the priorities for delivering eye healthcare, including addressing workforce challenges, developing new ways of working and harnessing new technologies, to improve patient outcomes in every setting. By leading the sector to ensure eye health is high on the agenda of commissioners and policy makers, we will ensure that optometrists' skills continue to be recognised, used appropriately in designing eye care services, and trusted by patients and the public. Our ambitious new five year strategic plan will guide us towards an even greater visibility for optometrists, for our profession and for the College.



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# OUR VISION

Optometrists at the forefront of better eye health and vision for all.



# OUR PURPOSE

We inspire and support optometrists to excel in the provision of eye health care, always for the benefit of patients.

We achieve this through:

- Promoting lifelong learning and career advancement
- Effectively amplifying the expert voice of optometrists
- Defining and supporting good clinical practice.

# OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

- Defining and inspiring excellence in optometry.
- Enabling optometrists to maximise their skills and develop their careers.
- Representing and amplifying the expert voices of optometrists.
- Embedding insight and evidence at the centre of the profession.

# OUR FOUNDATIONS

our **members**

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our **values**

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our **people**

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our **resources**

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# INTRODUCTION

**This strategy sets out the priorities for The College of Optometrists for the next five years, from Autumn 2020.**

As this strategy was being developed, the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, creating significant challenges in the professional and personal lives of every optometrist in the UK. Whilst the immediate implications for practice are known, the long term impact of the pandemic on eye health and care is still uncertain at the time of writing. What we are certain of is that the College must lead the optometry community in its response to the immediate challenges of the pandemic and through the phases of recovery. And that whilst we do this, we must always stay focussed on our long-term vision of maximising eye health for all.

## **Inspiring and supporting excellence**

We will support the optometry community, and particularly our members, to achieve excellence in their practice, by enabling them to develop their skills and careers; providing clinical guidance and evidence; and championing the roles and expertise of optometrists.

Our new strategy sets out a bold framework for the next five years, built upon four pillars of activity - each of which looks at the immediate-, medium- and long-term. This approach will ensure we continue to focus on realising our purpose of optometrists at the forefront of eye healthcare across the UK, while allowing us to be responsive to changes in the community's and patients' needs.

## **Anticipating change and providing certainty**

This strategy will not be static. We will review our priority activities every year to make sure they remain appropriate to the changing health and social environments. We will regularly evaluate our performance against our priorities to make sure our resources are used to the greatest effect. And we will involve members in reviewing what we have achieved and in planning what we will focus on next.

## **Now. Next year. And by 2025**

Throughout the next five years, we will continue collaborating with members, policy-makers, partners and patients to ensure we are making effective progress towards our vision for optometry.

In the immediate term, we will continue to prioritise our response to the pandemic to help optometrists adapt to new and changing practices and ways of providing care, and to make the most of the opportunities that arise from these.

We are producing and updating guidance to support clinical practice. We are learning from the new models of practice that have been put in place across the UK, and sharing that knowledge with members and stakeholders. We are adapting the Scheme for Registration and supporting trainee optometrists.

We will continue to improve recognition of the value of optometrists, and to advocate for more optometrist-led pathways to improve access to the benefits of excellent eye care.

The pandemic will have longer-term repercussions for society, business and healthcare, which will likely affect patient needs, services and workforces. As these repercussions become clearer, we will ensure that optometry's scope of practice anticipates and reflects these changes.

We will evolve our continuing professional development (CPD) and higher qualifications to meet the needs of our members and their colleagues. We will create pathways for progression through a new tiered membership, integrated with CPD, to better reflect the range of expertise and experience represented by our community. We will lead research into extended clinical practices. And we will continue to grow public awareness of the importance of eye care through communications and partnerships.

All our work will be based upon learning from the insight, experience and expertise of our members. We will introduce new membership packages and benefits and deliver a new website that is more responsive to members' needs and provides a more effective platform to advocate for excellence in optometry.

We have developed new organisational values to ensure we are supporting members' ambitions and realising the potential of optometry. We will ensure the College has all the resources it needs to achieve this strategy and drive positive change during a challenging period for optometry and the public we serve.



## STRATEGIC PILLAR ONE:

# DEFINING AND INSPIRING EXCELLENCE IN OPTOMETRY

## OUR PRIORITIES:

### Immediate

- Continuing to produce and update UK-wide guidance to support optometrists in the safe delivery of primary eye care during the different phases of the pandemic
- Developing clinical governance for new models of primary and secondary care emerging during the pandemic, in order to ensure patient safety
- Ensuring the GOC's Education Strategic Review achieves meaningful improvements for pre-registration education and reflects the impact of the pandemic
- Strengthening our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, and leading cross-sector work to identify discrimination and inequalities experienced by optometrists, and agree and progress actions to tackle these.

### By 2023

- Defining the College's role in pre-registration education following the outcome of the GOC's Education, Strategic Review and changes to the Scheme for Registration
- Continuing to represent members' concerns in relation to the proposed optometry undergraduate degree apprenticeship and, if it is progressed, ensuring it maintains the quality of optometric education, the standing of professional optometrists and patient safety
- Reviewing and developing optometry's future scope of practice, so that it meets the changing needs of patients, services and the workforce, and ensuring this is reflected in pre- and post-registration education
- Developing and updating guidance to support optometrists to adopt new or evolving models of eye care.

### By 2025

- Developing our role in pre-registration education, particularly in leading practice-based learning and education funding models, based on learnings from our immediate and medium-term activities
- Achieving the Royal title for the College and its members.



## STRATEGIC PILLAR TWO:

# ENABLING OPTOMETRISTS TO MAXIMISE THEIR SKILLS AND DEVELOP THEIR CAREERS

## OUR PRIORITIES:

### Immediate

- Leading the design and provision of responsive, supportive professional development for contemporary practice, and ensuring the College is recognised for this
- Providing integrated professional development and wellbeing support to members during the pandemic, including a focus on resources for locums
- Making it possible to swiftly upskill qualified optometrists to meet changing models of care, by reviewing the scope of the independent prescriber qualification and developing more capacity for optometrists to qualify
- Securing the immediate future of the Scheme for Registration, and paths for new graduates and current trainees
- Reviewing the Scheme for Registration so that it reflects changes to service delivery models and practice arising from the pandemic, and ensure the GOC regulates for these changes.

### By 2023

- Widening the College's portfolio of resources for continual professional development, and expanding our online CPD offer
- Reviewing the College's higher qualifications to ensure they are responsive to evolving workforce needs and models of eye care, and recognised by employers
- Defining and supporting excellence in virtual supervision and assessment.

### By 2025

- Defining optometry's approach to continual professional development, ensuring this is recognised by the GOC
- Exploring new ways to improve the recognition and value of members' professional development, such as through College Fellowship by portfolio, chartered status and professional credentials
- Defining what excellence means in supervision and assessment, particularly for practice-based learning
- Encouraging optometrists to broaden their scope of practice, including managing uncertainty and risks, and making best use of their skills
- Fostering a culture of supportive peer learning within the optometry community.

## STRATEGIC PILLAR THREE:

# REPRESENTING AND AMPLIFYING THE EXPERT VOICES OF OPTOMETRISTS

## OUR PRIORITIES:

### Immediate

- Reviewing funding for primary and secondary eye care services within the UK and determining the best models to ensure adequate funding across all services
- Leading a review of the basic sight test and determining how it will evolve in response to the pandemic so that it delivers the best outcomes for patients
- Collaborating with partners across the UK to develop new models of primary and secondary eye care that make effective use of optometrists' core skills and higher qualifications, in order to reduce demand on hospital services and improve patient outcomes
- Ensuring that changes to optometrists' scope of practice during the pandemic are reflected in the development of new models of care
- Improving recognition of the contribution that optometrists make to maximising the nation's eye health - amongst employers, other health professions, commissioners, policy-makers and the public
- Increasing public awareness of the safety and importance of primary eye care as services re-open.

### By 2023

- Reviewing and developing new service and business models for primary eye care, building on evidence of effective changes in technology, practice and commissioning accelerated by the pandemic
- Engaging members in defining and leading change across practice, models of care and the optometric profession
- Increase public awareness and understanding of the role of optometrists and the importance of regular eye examinations.

### By 2025

- Championing our members' involvement in service and workforce development and leadership, particularly in clinical audit, governance and quality improvement
- Taking the lead in defining the role of optometry across all patient pathways.

## STRATEGIC PILLAR FOUR:

# EMBEDDING INSIGHT AND EVIDENCE AT THE CENTRE OF THE PROFESSION

## OUR PRIORITIES:

### Immediate

- Identifying research opportunities that provide the evidence to support new and extended optometric practice and optometry-led models of care
- Evaluating the potential impact on patient outcomes of different models, funding and enablers of enhanced, optometry-led eye care services across the UK
- Collating the evidence base on the role of existing and emerging technologies, particularly in post-pandemic urgent and extended models of primary eye care
- Reviewing the College reference groups and improving their diversity of membership, to ensure our strategy, approach and guidance is informed by all members' experience and insight.

### By 2023

- Increasing the College's collection and use of data to gain greater insight into what matters to different groups of optometrists, and what will benefit patients, and using this insight to inform our work
- Developing a knowledge management strategy and audit to bring together what we learn and know from the College's research, policy, clinical advice, library and information service activities
- Understanding and developing models for current and future workforce needs, the impact on clinical practice, patient outcomes and primary and secondary eye care capacity.

### By 2025

- Building the evidence base to improve confidence in new models of eye care, through funding relevant research and collating evidence
- Influencing other funding organisations to increase their support for optometric research in key areas
- Embedding an improved knowledge management and evidence-based approach at the heart of the College's activities
- Increasing the capacity in optical research through targeted funding
- Evaluating and demonstrating the impact of research funded by the College.

# TAKING CARE OF OUR FOUNDATIONS

**Our members, our values, our people and our resources provide the College with solid foundations for delivering this strategy. We will continue to strengthen and support each of these foundations over the next five years in the following ways:**

## **Our members**

We will develop new membership packages and services in line with the strategy to ensure that existing and new members gain maximum value and support. We will also develop a CPD-led progression through tiered membership that recognises individuals' skills, expertise and professional development.

We are delivering a new customer relationship management (CRM) system that will ensure information, member benefits and communications are specific to the individual interests and practices of our members.

The College's brand identity and website are being improved to support delivery of the new strategy. We will continue to review and improve how we demonstrate the impact of the College's work to members, to the wider community of optometrists and to other key stakeholders.

## **Our values**

We have redefined the College's organisational values. This will guide us in transforming our culture, provide a standard by which our culture can be assessed and inform how we deliver the strategy. Our updated values are:

- We act with integrity and transparency
- We listen and we learn
- We demonstrate respect and professionalism
- We achieve high quality
- We champion equality, diversity and inclusion.

## Our people

We will continue to support and invest in our staff and their professional development. As a responsible organisation and as the representative of optometrists, the College will always champion equality, diversity and inclusion. We will strengthen our commitment in this area by engaging with our staff to better understand their experiences and their suggestions for changes to our ways of working. Where improvements are necessary, we will revise policies and procedures and support staff with training.

## Our resources

We will continue to review the impact of the pandemic and the uncertain economic environment on College finances, so that we maintain a secure financial position.

We will improve monitoring of our progress and performance against the strategic priorities detailed in the strategy to ensure we are using resources effectively. And we will review our budgeting processes and assets so that we achieve good value for every investment made.

We will develop a sustainable income and cost model for the College, including the expected changes to the Scheme for Registration following the GOC's Education Strategic Review.


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