

# Annual plan 2026

Association of British Dispensing Opticians







## Welcome to ABDO's **Annual Plan 2026**

*Celebrating the past and inspiring the future*

**A**s the professional body for dispensing opticians (DOs) and contact lens opticians (CLOs) in the UK, our annual plan for 2026 sets out the work we will be doing during the year to support and represent our members, promote awareness of their expertise, enable them to develop their careers and advance the profession.

2026 is an important year for our profession as we celebrate 100 years since the establishment of one of our predecessor organisations, the Association of Dispensing Opticians. This is a fantastic opportunity to highlight the value that DOs and CLOs continue to bring to optical practices – to *'Celebrate the past and inspire the future'*.

We will also continue our media engagement to promote ABDO as an 'expert voice' and showcase the roles of DOs and CLOs. We want to capitalise on the interest generated by our work over the last year, such as the research report published with Mumsnet that highlighted the expertise of DOs in paediatric dispensing.

Following the launch of the FBDO apprenticeship and the growing interest in qualifying as a DO, we have a good platform to build on, and the enthusiasm with which members have greeted the launch of our professional certificate in paediatric eyecare shows members' appetite to develop their knowledge and skills. The success of our 2025 clinical conference, which focused on dry eye management, shows that there are further opportunities for members to extend their scope of practice. And with increasing awareness of the need for drivers to meet the required vision standards, we will be highlighting the expertise of members in enabling patients to drive safely for longer.



**Kevin Gutsell**  
ABDO President



**Alistair Bridge**  
Chief Executive



**2026.** Our priorities in this anniversary year are to:



**100 years**  
**of Dispensing Opticians**  
*Celebrating the past. Inspiring the future*  
1926-2026



**1** show the value  
of DOs and CLOs

**2** enable members  
to develop their  
roles

**3** improve member  
services and  
support

Over the next three pages we have set out the work we will be undertaking in each of these priority areas.

*During the year, we will also be developing a new strategic plan that will guide our work on behalf of members for the three year period starting in January 2027.*

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## PRIORITY 1

# Show the value of DOs and CLOs



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1926-2026

1

- Promote the findings of our pay and reward survey
- Introduce new member directory to enable patients and eyecare practitioners to locate members and understand their particular areas of expertise
- Showcase the roles played by members as part of our 100 year celebrations
- Media engagement to raise the profile of ABDO as an expert voice and highlight the expertise of DOs and CLOs
- Work in collaboration with sector partners to influence government and NHS plans across the four nations of the UK and highlight the expertise of members
- Produce guidance highlighting the expertise of members in advising patients on vision and driving to enable them to drive safely for longer
- Publish research on paediatric dispensing and ensure this is available on an 'open access' basis
- Produce a white paper on paediatric dispensing to set out good practice and reflect the level of education and training gained by DOs in this core area of expertise
- Publish our research strategy, including developing our capacity to carry out further research projects



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## PRIORITY 2

# Enable members to develop their roles



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# 2

- Deliver new final examinations for students studying the 2023 syllabus for the FBDO Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing and comply with the regulatory requirements for the provision of the end-point assessment for students following the apprenticeship pathway
- Deliver new final examinations for students studying the 2024 syllabus for the Diploma in Contact Lens Practice
- Provide assurance that our qualifications meet the General Optical Council's education and training standards and Ofqual's requirements
- Deliver and provide assessments for the Professional Certificate in Paediatric Eyecare, with extra support for learners to develop their ability to critically appraise research and pursue evidence-based practice
- Develop plan for future higher qualifications and CPD leading to accreditations
- Deliver ongoing programme of online and in-person CPD, including regional events and workshops at 100% Optical
- Collaborate with the College of Optometrists on the 'Optometry Tomorrow' conference to promote the professional development of DOs and optometrists as part of the multidisciplinary practice team
- Continue to provide online adult and child safeguarding courses
- Enable DOs and CLOs to develop their expertise in dry eye management by providing clinical guidance



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## PRIORITY 3

# Improve member services and support



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### 3

- Support regional leads to promote the expertise of DOs and CLOs and provide guidance for members
- Complete our review of the advice and guidance we provide for members, and develop a platform that makes the guidance easily accessible and searchable
- Support the running of our Business Hub and produce business-related articles for members
- Work with our IT provider to maintain and improve our IT systems and processes, including maintaining our Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation
- Review the member benefits we provide
- Support and promote our mentoring programme
- Review and develop our operational processes and contractual arrangements to optimise the services we provide for members and other stakeholders and ensure value for money



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**ABDO's purpose is:**  
"To support and represent members, promote awareness of their roles, enable their professional development and advance the profession as a whole."



## Association of British Dispensing Opticians

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January 2026