

AIO Slates Capita for delaying payments to Practices

Association writes to Capita and Jeremy Hunt

The Association for Independent Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians (AIO) has written to the Chief Executive of Capita and to the Secretary of State in respect of the late payment of NHS fees to optical practices. It is becoming clear that the wholly unacceptable practice of late payment is wide spread and has been enduring for many months now.

AIO Chairman Peter Warren said: 'it is an absolute disgrace that a corporation the size of Capita is sitting on Government funds and not making timely payment of NHS fees to optical practices. If this was a temporary phenomenon it would be one thing, but it has been going on for months now. Small Independent practices cannot afford to carry the financial burden for Government because Capita can't do its job properly.'

The letter to Capita has asked for an urgent explanation for the delays and a clear timeline for the problem to be resolved. The letter warns that compensation may be claimed in due course if the company has been found to contribute to the demise of any practices where late payment has been a factor.

In the letter to Jeremy Hunt, AIO has asked what the Government is doing to put pressure on Capita to resolve these difficulties. Legislation dictates that Government contracts will be paid within thirty days and the Association's letter enquires what financial penalties have been levied against Capita for not meeting their contractual obligations.

AIO is also surprised at the apparent silence on this issue in optical circles and calls on other bodies to exert real pressure on Capita and The Government.