

## **Why did AIO take up the Capita issue?**

This question has been asked openly in some quarters, and perhaps has also occurred to a number of Independents who have not asked it out loud. Does it represent the Association becoming more political and taking an adversarial stance to other optical representative organisations?

This is a fair question, and in short the answer is that AIO will always pick up on issues that have been raised by its members and who have asked for help. The Capita issue had been enduring for a long time in those pilot geographies in which practices were unfortunate enough to be located. Practices not located in those areas may have wondered what all the fuss was about, but we received reports of late payments, payments for the wrong amount, payments being made to the wrong payees and payments being sent to the wrong practices with patient information on them (including to a branch of a multiple). Clearly something had to be done, so we decided to write to the Secretary of State and the CEO of Capita. We have received replies to both letters and take comfort from the contents of both that appropriate action is being taken.

Subsequent to our letters and the attendant publicity it has become clear that action was well in progress by LOCSU and indeed with the backing of the other representative bodies. More open communication may therefore have pre-empted our action.

What we need to make clear is that our action was not taken as part of some sort of new political agenda or by way of challenge to other representative bodies. It was taken simply to represent our members' interests.

AIO has recently released its new policies and will be looking to engage in a positive and constructive manner with all optical stakeholders and third parties that can help to realise them, and more importantly their benefits to our members – and ultimately all Independent practitioners. It would therefore be perverse for us to look to upset relationships with those organisations.