

## **AIO takes stance on MECS and Specsavers letters.**

### *Professional body writes to all CCGs and Independent practices.*

The Association for Independent Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians (AIO) has written to all CCGs and the NHS to advise them that it would consider the awarding of any MECS contract to a single commercial interest as being anti-competitive and not in patients best interests.

A letter from Doug Perkins to Independent practices states that Specsavers intends to bid for NHS and CCG contracts to become 'the referred source for minor eye conditions in patients'. The letter could be interpreted to suggest that Independent practices that do not 'become part of the Specsavers family' may be excluded from NHS and CCG contracts.

AIO has written to all Independent practices to advise them that as the only professional body solely representing the interests of Independents it will always stand up for their rights.

The Association continues to develop the framework by which Independent practices can thrive such as the recently launched Independents Code (IC) which serves to identify those practices which offer excellent eye health care services on the high street. IC is overt recognition of the fact that the 'enhanced optical services' espoused in some quarters are already available on the High Street. It is worth mentioning that the recent Which? survey of its members found Independents once again recorded the highest satisfaction rating amongst all optical outlets.

Surely the NHS and CCGs would not consider acting anti competitively and diverting patients away from those practices that they have deemed to offer best service.