



The Voice and Values of Independent Practice

Association for Independent Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians

AIO PRESS RELEASE

Monday 22nd June 2020

For immediate release

AIO gets clarity from the GOC on what services practices could offer in lockdown

Independent body invites any breaches of lockdown rules to be reported

AIO today issued a Statement following recent controversy over apparent breaches of lockdown rules by opticians following a meeting with the GOC's CEO Lesley Longstone. The Statement (attached) makes it clear that no routine eye examinations or sight tests should have been conducted between the period 23rd March 2020 and 15th June 2020. Any practice breaching the Rules should therefore be subject to Fitness to Practice proceedings.

AIO is aware that there may have been multiple breaches of the rules across the UK and is therefore inviting members and the wider optical community, Independent and Multiple alike, to report and provide evidence of such breaches to the GOC (or to AIO for onward submission) in order that Fitness to Practice proceedings can be commenced in each case. Any breach reported through AIO will be treated in complete confidence and the reporting party will not be disclosed to the GOC or any other third party. Breaches can be reported to admin@aiovision.org or by telephone to 0800 1300 486 and ask for Mike or Lin

Dr Christian French, AIO Chairman said 'we were appalled to see evidence of a blatant breach of lockdown rules by optical practices being circulated in the public domain. Against a backdrop of our members (and the Independent sector more widely) strictly observing present GOC rules, teamed with the stresses, uncertainties and hardship that the lockdown has occasioned, a cavalier and total disregard in some quarters is totally unacceptable and must be dealt with appropriately. It should never be acceptable that a business goes against the direct advice of our regulatory body (whose rules are put in place for public safety). Such behaviour suggests severely misplaced priorities around public safety, going against the very principles of our profession.'

Whilst we are aware of, and fully understand, the motivation of the Change.Org petition that has been circulating, our focus is on ensuring clarity regarding the Statements issued by our regulator, whilst bringing to account those who have broken those rules and denigrated our profession in such a blatant manner.'

AIO, as the only representative body in optics which represents Independents exclusively, and without any external influence, is determined that there can be no hiding place for those that have broken the rules against the backdrop.

Ends

Notes to Editors

About The Association for Independent Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians (AIO)

AIO is the professional body that represents independent optometric practitioners. It exists to serve the interests of its members working constructively with the AOP and General Optical Council as well as other stakeholders such as Government Departments, industry representative bodies, consumer organisations and the media; national, local and trade.

The AIO was founded in 1956 and has been dedicated to promoting the interests of optometrists and dispensing

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