News

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Optical complaints up by more than a third

Complaints to the Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS) rose by 35 per cent to 2,479 in the year April 2008 to March 2009 when compared to 2007 figures, the optical watchdog's annual report has revealed.

Published last Friday, the review also highlighted particular difficulties raised by consumers when dealing with optical practices. These included complaints about 'buy one, get one free' (BOGOF) offers, failure by practices to comply with requests for prescriptions and refusal to measure the interpupillary distance.

In terms of methods of complaints, of the 2,479 contacts logged by the OCCS, 43 per cent were received by letter, 9 per cent by email and the majority (48 per cent) were made by telephone.

The OCCS was keen to point out that the figures for 2008 were collected on a different basis to 2007, such as recording those complaints that were resolved without the need to open a case file. The watchdog added that therefore it did not consider the 35 per cent increase in complaints was an indication of a deterioration in standards.

OCCS administrator, Richard Wilshin, told *Optician*: 'We don't consider that there is necessarily an increase in the number of complaints about optical practices - it's just that more people are coming to us who have previously channelled their complaints elsewhere.'

Wilshin added there was a need for greater awareness of the literal interpretations made by consumers when taking advantage of offers.

'We are getting more complaints about the interpretation made by the lay person of BOGOF offers such as an expectation that the free frame is of the same quality and price as the one that they are paying for,' he said.

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