



## Community Optometry Services

### What is an optometrist?

They are primary health care specialists trained to examine the eyes to detect defects in vision, signs of injury, ocular diseases or abnormality and problems with general health.

Optometrists make a diagnosis, offer advice and when necessary prescribe, fit and supply contact lenses or glasses. They can also refer onwards for specialist advice. Some specialise in Low Vision (LV).

### What is a dispensing optician?

DOs fit and supply glasses and with further training can also specialise in LV.

### What should I do if I have an eye or vision problem?

If you have not already done so, you arrange to see an optometrist. In Scotland the eye examination is free of charge through the NHS.

If you have experienced any sudden change to your vision urgent advice is required and you should arrange an appointment without delay. Explain the situation so that a more urgent appointment can be allocated.

The optometrist will examine your eyes and vision to ascertain the reason for the difficulty and whether spectacles will solve the problem. In the vast majority of cases this will be all that is required.

Sometimes you will be referred to your GP e.g. to be checked for blood pressure or diabetes.



If the vision is poor (not fully correctable with spectacles), the reason is certain and the condition is not treatable the optometrist may advise you to contact one of the optometrists or DOs who offer an LV service (unless they do so themselves). You will then be assessed, offered advice and LV aids can be provided if required.

If specialist opinion or treatment is required the optometrist will refer you to the Eye Department or the LV Clinic. The latter is staffed by an ophthalmologist (an eye doctor) and a specialist nurse who has expertise in LV.

### **Why should I seek further help with my vision if glasses do not solve the problem?**

Fife has one of the best LV Services in the UK. One of the reasons for this is that all the relevant services work as a team and inter-refer so that anyone with poor vision gets the most appropriate help easily and as quickly as possible. Research shows that this is an important requirement of a LV service.

Several optometrists and DOs have taken further training and offer a LV service. They offer advice and low vision aids. These often help when further visual improvement with spectacles is not possible. This service, and the aids, are provided free of charge by NHS Fife. The aids are supplied on loan for however long is necessary. Instruction on their use is also provided. Follow up appointments are available in case difficulties continue. This ensures that the most appropriate type of aids are provided and can be used effectively.

The waiting times to see these practitioners are significantly shorter than the LV clinic. Their practices are spread throughout Fife and often offer the convenience of a more local consultation. If further help is required the optometrist or DO can also organise this.

### **How do I find out which Optometrists / Dispensing Opticians offer this service?**

The list is on the [website](http://www.fifeinsight.co.uk): [www.fifeinsight.co.uk](http://www.fifeinsight.co.uk)

or please

**phone: 01592 583272**

and one will be sent out to you.

