

**BEFORE THE FITNESS TO PRACTISE COMMITTEE
OF THE GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL**

GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL

F(11)20

AND

SIOBHAN MARY HIGHAM (01-9375)

**NOTICE OF INQUIRY
SUBSTANTIVE HEARING**

Take notice that an inquiry will be conducted in the above matter by the Fitness to Practise Committee of the General Optical Council. A procedural hearing leading directly, by agreement of the parties, to a substantive hearing will be conducted at the **General Optical Council, 41 Harley Street, London, W1G 8DJ** and will commence at **09:30 hrs on Wednesday, 15 February 2012** (and 16-17 February, if required).

The Inquiry will be based upon the allegation submitted by the Council (see below) and will determine whether the fitness to practise of **Siobhan Mary Higham** is impaired by virtue of the provisions contained in section 13D(2) of the Opticians Act 1989.

David Henley BEM
Hearings Manager, General Optical Council
15 December 2011

ALLEGATION

The Council alleges that in relation to you, Ms Siobhan Higham, a registered Optometrist:

1. On 14 May 2010 you were consulted by Patient A at Brian Clark Opticians (“the Opticians”) in Tring when he presented with a blind spot in the peripheral vision of his left eye.
2. In the course of your consultation with Patient A you failed to:
 - a. refer Patient A to Eye Casualty without examining him which was clinically justified;
 - b. having taken the decision to examine Patient A you failed to carry out any of the following procedures which were clinically indicated:
 - i. investigation of Patient A’s left eye peripheral visual field;
 - ii. left eye fundus examination through a dilated pupil;
 - iii. checking of the left eye anterior vitreous gel for pigment.
3. Your omissions outlined at 2 above meant that you did not put yourself in an adequate position to detect clinically relevant information in relation to Patient A.
4. You did not take adequate steps to ensure that Patient A received a prompt emergency referral in that:
 - a. you did not refer Patient A directly to Eye Casualty;
 - b. you sent a letter to Patient A’s GP stating “fields were normal R& L” which was capable of giving a misleading impression as to the urgency of the position;
5. In light of your decision to refer Patient A to his GP, you did not provide an adequate “safety net” and in particular did not advise Patient A to the effect that:
 - a. If his symptoms worsened and/or he was worried about his vision he should urgently:
 - i. get in contact or return to the Opticians; and/or
 - ii. attend Eye Casualty.
 - b. he should get in contact if he had not received an appointment at the hospital within a reasonable timeframe.

And by virtue of the matters set out above, your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your misconduct.

Committee Members: Sir Alistair Graham (Lay)
Mr R Kapoor (Optometrist)
Mr M Lomas (Optometrist)
Mr R Varley (Lay)
Lady Margaret Wall (Lay)

Legal Adviser: Mr G Pounder

Hearings Manager: Mr D Henley BEM

Transcribers: Fiona Shipley Transcriptions Limited

If you require further information relating to this hearing, please contact the Council's Hearings Manager at 41 Harley Street, London, W1G 8DJ or, by telephone, on 020 7580 3898. If you require information relating to any non-hearing matters, please contact the Council's Communications Department on 020 7580 3898.