

**General Optical Council statement  
30 October 2006**

**Sale and supply of optical appliances**

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The Opticians Act 1989 (at s2A) places an express duty on the General Optical Council to protect the public. The GOC has specifically considered the issue of patient health and safety regarding the sale and supply of optical appliances. In doing so it has taken detailed advice, and is now able to confirm its position in relation to three main categories of appliance.

**Spectacles**

All spectacles other than those which are exempt under s27(2) of the Act or the Sale of Optical Appliances Order of Council 1984 must be sold by or under the supervision of a registered optometrist, dispensing optician or medical practitioner.

The supervisor must be able to exercise their professional skill and judgement as a clinician.

Sellers will need to prove they meet the necessary requirements for supervision. The Council will determine on a case by case basis whether supervision can be deemed to have taken place with reference to expert clinical opinion where appropriate.

The GOC considers that legislation regarding sale and supply of spectacles is clear. In order to consolidate the guidance available regarding the meaning of supervision, the professional optical bodies are being asked to review and update their guidance as soon as possible.

**Plano (zero powered) contact lenses**

Plano lenses are dealt with separately from sight correcting (powered) lenses in the legislation.

Plano lenses must be sold by or under supervision of a registered optometrist, dispensing optician or medical practitioner.

The supervisor must be able to exercise their professional skill and judgement as a clinician.

Sellers will need to prove they meet the necessary requirements for supervision. The Council will determine on a case by case basis whether supervision can be deemed to have taken place with reference to expert clinical opinion where appropriate.

This has been an area of some confusion. The professional optical bodies are being asked to produce detailed guidance as to the meaning of supervision in this context.

**Sight-correcting (powered) contact lenses**

Powered lenses must be sold by or under the general direction of a registered optometrist, dispensing optician or medical practitioner. (It should be noted that this does not prevent supervision if the seller chooses to manage sales in this way.)

Guidance regarding general direction is already in existence. The professional optical bodies are being asked to review this guidance and update it if necessary.

Sellers will need to prove they meet the necessary requirements for general direction. The Council will determine on a case by case basis whether general direction can be deemed to have taken place with reference to expert clinical opinion where appropriate.

The GOC considers that the rules in relation to the requirements for a written specification and its verification are clear. Where there is evidence to suggest that the requirements of s27(3) are not being complied with, formal action may be taken.

ENDS