

# Optical Confederation Submission to the Joint Committee on the Draft Deregulation Bill

## Summary

The Optical Confederation welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's inquiry on the Draft Deregulation Bill.

The Optical Confederation supports

- appropriate and proportionate regulation for the protection of the public and in accordance with the Better Regulation Principles<sup>1</sup>
- 'enlightened regulation', which seeks solutions without compromising the regulators' primary aims, rather than bureaucratic regulation, which can add burdensome costs to business and stifle innovation without any tangible public benefit
- the growth duty to have regard to non-economic regulators, which will now be included in the Bill, provided it is principles-based and would go no further than the current system of impact assessments (which often underestimate the impact of even small changes on businesses).

## **1.) A duty to have regard to the desirability of promoting economic growth**

1.1.) In a recent submission<sup>2</sup> to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Optical Confederation argued for the scope of the growth duty to be widened to encompass the significant and widespread practice of commissioning of public services by public authorities. In our case, this would relate to NHS eye health services. This is often simply another form of regulation and, if applied inappropriately, can add significantly to business costs and small business risk without public benefit. A similar duty on public sector commissioners might also be a step forward.

1.2) We have seen considerable positive progress in this area under the current Government's NHS reforms and by NHS England's commitments to a Single Operating Model for sight testing contract applications, contact compliance and the 'earned autonomy' model, and it is hoped that this will continue.

1.3) There are however aspects of the Any Qualified Provider (AQP), national contract and contract compliance for other services which provide very high barriers to market entry for small and large businesses alike. The Optical Confederation is keen to work with NHS England on this, as the new health and social care system becomes established during 2013-14, in order to see how these areas can be improved.

## **2.) About us:**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bis.gov.uk/brdo/resources/knowledge/better-regulation-principles>

<sup>2</sup> OC submission to Department for Business, Innovation and Skills consultation on 'Non-economic Regulators: Duty to have regard to Growth' - <http://www.opticalconfederation.org.uk/downloads/consultations/BIS-Consultation-April-2013-FINAL-OC-response.pdf>

**2.1)** The Optical Confederation represents the 12,000 optometrists, the 6,000 dispensing opticians and 7,000 optical businesses in the UK who provide high-quality and accessible eye care services to the whole population. The Confederation is a coalition of the five optical representative bodies: the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO); the Association of Contact Lens Manufacturers (ACLM); the Association of Optometrists (AOP); the Federation of Manufacturing Opticians (FMO) and the Federation of Opticians (FODO). As a Confederation, we work with others to improve eye health for the public good.