



27<sup>th</sup> March 2006

Ms. Maureen O'Sullivan  
The Competition Authority,  
Parnell House,  
14 Parnell Square,  
Dublin 1.



**DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH AND  
CHILDREN**  
AN ROINN  
SLÁINTE AGUS LEANAÍ

Quality and Fairness  
A Health System for You

**Re:- COMPETITION IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES  
OPTOMETRISTS  
PRELIMINARY REPORT**

Dear Ms. O'Sullivan

I wish to thank you for the opportunity to examine the above report and I am pleased to note its positive tone with regard to the provision of optometric services in Ireland.

I have also noted your Authority's preliminary recommendations and offer the following comments on those that directly refer to this Department:-

**Preliminary Recommendation 1: Allow optometrists to provide State funded eye tests for children.**

On receipt of the preliminary report the Health Service Executive was contacted on this matter. The view of the Executive is that, while there are arguments as to why very young children should continue to be referred to ophthalmologists in the Community Ophthalmic Service, younger children, i.e. those under the age of eight should be seen by the community ophthalmic physician as they may require treatment for amblyopia or lazy eye. Age is the most important factor when considering the treatment of amblyopia or lazy eye and treatment should be completed during the first seven years of life when the visual system is still maturing. By the age of seven the window of opportunity for treatment has almost closed and beyond this age the response to treatment is poor as visual maturity has occurred. Children over the age of eight years could be referred directly to the optician from the school medical service.

**Preliminary Recommendation 3: Remove unnecessary restrictions on advertising.**


**Preliminary Recommendation 4: Set out the functions of the Opticians Board in legislation.**

**Preliminary Recommendation 5: Change the composition of the Opticians Board.**

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These three recommendations may be considered in the context of a future review of the Opticians Act 1956. However, the Department already has a significant programme of legislation work on hand, particularly in the context of the Health Service Reform Programme, and there are no immediate plans to undertake such a review.

Yours sincerely



Liam McCormack  
Assistant Principal Officer