



Optegra & the Patients First Coalition

Breaking Down Barriers to Healthcare Impact Report



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0: Forewords

0.1 Nick Forbes CBE

**Chair of the Patients First Coalition
and former Member of Keir Starmer's
Shadow Cabinet**



The General Election on 4th July was a moment of change in Britain. Whatever your political views, we now face significant change in healthcare – and that change is urgent.

On his appointment as Britain's new Health Secretary, Wes Streeting made clear that the NHS is broken, and now requires fundamental reform to fix it. He has also made clear the vital role that leading independent sector providers – such as Optegra – must play in supporting the NHS and ensuring patients get the care they need, when they need it.



On his appointment as Britain's new Health Secretary, Wes Streeting made clear that the NHS is broken, and now requires fundamental reform to fix it.

Having visited Optegra, it is clear to me that the future of ophthalmology lies within independent sector providers, working in close partnership with the NHS – and allowing the NHS to do the acute and urgent care it does best.

Britain still lives with the aftermath of COVID-19 – waiting lists remain at a record level, and rising health inequalities, along with the effects of the cost-of-living crisis, mean that healthcare organisations have significantly risen in importance and value in recent years.

It is becoming ever more important that with increasing significance in people's day-to-day lives comes a responsibility to colleagues, patients and communities in delivering social value across a coordinated framework for action.

Working with Mat Pickering and the team at Optegra, I know that the organisation has an outstanding story to tell when it comes to their social impact – and in putting patients first, so they can get the care they need, when they need it.

This report focuses on some of our key Purpose Goals, measuring Optegra against our unique social impact toolkit, and demonstrating how the organisation is delivering for patients.

Optegra is innovating – from integrating new technology and AI into its operations, to accelerating its journey to net-zero, building a positive workplace environment, and working in close partnership with the NHS to deliver for local communities.

0.2 Mat Pickering

Managing Director of Optegra



Since it was established in 2008, Optegra has grown to become a Europe-wide organisation focused on delivering outstanding patient care and outcomes in the ophthalmic field. This is underpinned by our values, and our commitment not only to our patients but also to our colleagues. I am proud that the Optegra of 2024 is a fast-paced, innovative, collaborative, and patient-centred business that consistently delivers the best outcomes within our sector.

Having worked in the healthcare sector for over 25 years I have seen constant change, but at the same time sometimes it can feel as

if everything stays the same.

On 5th July 2024 the Health Secretary, the Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP said, 'From today, the policy of this department is that the NHS is broken'. A powerful statement that has the potential to not just deliver change, but the radical transformation needed. We all have a duty to contribute to this.

We have become used to high wait times and complicated referral routes. Some people can navigate around this by opting out of the National Health Service and it is important that this route remains available. However for many people being able to access vitally important care, such as cataract surgery, is simply not available at the speed and convenience it should be.

I believe people across the UK have the need, and the appetite, for the National Health Service and the private sector to work in a collaborative way. Of course, there are many ways in which this happens already, however we need to challenge ourselves to make sure this becomes the strategic way forward over the next decade.

For me, this starts with an honest and open debate with the simple aim of doing what is right for our patients and community. We cannot change the health sector on our own, but collectively our ability to impact change should be limitless.

Our partnership with the Patients First Coalition represents our commitment to do everything in our power to make healthcare within our sector more accessible to people who need it, and this includes challenging and collaborating with all stakeholders to make this happen.



I believe people across the UK have the need, and the appetite, for the National Health Service and the private sector to work in a collaborative way.

1

Optegra receives the same tariff per case as the NHS.

2

This money helps to fund life-changing surgery.

Optegra
has invested over
£12m
in new clinics
across the UK

4

That means a greater return and more efficiency for the taxpayer.

3

Higher productivity means 25 patients can be treated per day vs 15 in the NHS



Photo: Newly elected MP Zoe Franklin visits the Optegra Eye Hospital Surrey

1. An introduction to Optegra and its place in the healthcare ecosystem

1.1. A background to Optegra

Optegra is a leading independent healthcare company, specialising in eye care. It has successfully treated over one million patients, offering NHS patients exceptional eye care through access to leading cataract surgery and sight threatening medical conditions.

Optegra is celebrated for its state-of-the-art treatments and patient-focused approach. The combination of exceptional surgeons and world-class facilities has set a new benchmark in delivering transformative eye care across England.

The organisation offers a wide range of solutions tailored to individual needs, acknowledging that every eye is unique. Its services include leading laser eye surgery, lens replacement, cataract treatment, and treatments for conditions such as glaucoma and macular degeneration, all aimed at providing personalised care to those most in need.

Optegra's reputation is reflected in its excellent and consistent outcomes, as well as its ratings on independent review platforms like Trustpilot and Doctify. This extensive network ensures comprehensive treatment options for a full range of vision correction needs.

A significant part of Optegra's service is NHS cataract surgery, which addresses the painless, gradual clouding of the eye's natural lens. This condition, most commonly caused by ageing, can impair vision significantly. Cataract surgery is the only treatment once a patient is diagnosed, and Optegra excels in providing this procedure.

It is a fast, pain-free, day-case surgery that not only restores vision but may also reduce or eliminate the need for glasses. Cataract surgery also has wider health benefits to society, such as in preventing trips and falls in older age, and maintaining people's independence.

Optegra's eye hospitals are supported by specialist optometrists, registered nurses, healthcare technicians, and consultants registered with the General Medical Council. Equipped with state-of-the-art technology and furnished to a five-star standard, these hospitals ensure maximum patient comfort and care. The hospitals are dedicated solely to eye surgery, improving the organisation's focus and expertise in this field.

Optegra Eye Health Care locations



1.2. Optegra's purpose

Optegra operates with a clear and purposeful mission: to improve the quality of life for its patients through exceptional eye care.

This mission is driven by a set of shared values that shape the organisation's approach to patient care and business success:

- **Patient Safety: 'We are safe'**
Ensuring patient safety is the top priority, guiding every decision and action.
- **Focused Care: 'We are focused'**
Committed to achieving the best outcomes for patients.
- **Efficiency: 'We move fast'**
Maintaining a positive, proactive attitude to deliver timely responses and care.
- **Innovation: 'We are brave'**
Empowered to find new ways to improve and innovate.

Optegra ensures patients are well-informed and comfortable with the decision to undergo cataract surgery, offering a transparent, supportive process.

Cataract surgery is essential for restoring clear vision and, in many cases, reducing or eliminating dependence on glasses. Patients can select from a range of world-renowned surgeons and receive comprehensive aftercare, remaining under the consultant's care for up to a year post-surgery, with close monitoring for three months. In total Optegra has treated 214,224 eyes across the UK.



Photo: Optegra makes sure patients get the life-changing care they need, when they need it.

Optegra's hospitals are exclusively dedicated to eye surgery and treatments, including laser eye surgery, lens replacement, and various medical eye conditions like age-related macular degeneration (AMD). These facilities provide a modern, calming, and comfortable environment, ensuring patients feel relaxed and well-cared for through personalised treatment plans.

Each Optegra location is equipped with the most advanced surgical and technical equipment and staffed by leading Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeons. A National Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) ensures compliance with the highest clinical standards.

This commitment to excellence has earned Optegra recognition as a top-rated eye hospital provider, with a 4.8 star rating on Trustpilot and a rating of 4.9 stars on Doctify.

Optegra hospitals are supported by dedicated optometrists, healthcare technicians, and over 40 consultants offering a wide range of procedures.

1.3. Breaking down Britain's barriers

The Patients First Coalition, as part of the Purpose Coalition, works to measure organisations against a set of sector-relevant social impact criteria. The Purpose Goals outline 15 interconnected impact barriers to opportunity. By drawing on expertise provided by academia and business, the Goals are designed to specifically address some of the unique challenges facing the UK.

The Coalition's cross-party work brings together the UK's most innovative leaders, Parliamentarians and businesses to improve, share best practice, and develop solutions for improving the role that organisations can play for their customers, colleagues and communities by breaking down barriers to opportunity.

The Purpose Coalition is chaired by Rt Hon Justine Greening, the UK's former Secretary of State for Education, Transport and International Development; and led by Nick Forbes CBE, who recently served in Sir Keir Starmer's Shadow Cabinet, who leads the Purpose Coalition's work with the Labour Party; Rt Hon Anne Milton, former Minister for Apprenticeships and a Minister in the Department for Health and Social Care; and Lord Walney, former No 10 Advisor to Gordon Brown and Labour Member of Parliament for Barrow and Furness.



The Purpose Goals focus on key life stages and highlight the main issues that need to be resolved to break down barriers to opportunity.



Photo: Nick Forbes CBE is a former Member of Sir Keir Starmer's Shadow Cabinet

The Goals were designed following Justine Greening's experience - as Secretary of State for International Development - leading the UK's delegation to the convention of the United Nations (UN) that established the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Purpose Goals apply the SDGs in a UK context.

The SDGs as interlinked goals emphasised the interdependent environmental, social, and economic aspects of development and centralised the role of sustainability. At the time, Justine recognised how transformative a common set of accessible but ambitious goals could be in galvanising action to effect change. After leaving Government in 2019, Justine established the Purpose Coalition and Social Mobility Pledge with the intention of galvanising UK economic and social figures to improve social mobility in the UK.

The Purpose Goals focus on key life stages and highlight the main issues that need to be resolved to break down barriers to opportunity in the UK. The Goals are intended to guide ambition, provoke action, and measure progress.

Optegra is active across all the 15 Purpose Goals but specifically focused on five specific areas of the most impact in its area of expertise - Right Advice and Experiences, Fair Career Progression, Good Health and Wellbeing, Achieve Equality through Diversity and Inclusion, and Working in Partnership - to improve the quality of life for its patients through breaking down the barriers to exceptional eye care.



Photo: Optegra offers a range of services to patients to improve quality of life.

1.4. The healthcare ecosystem

The current state of the UK healthcare system presents significant challenges that directly impact the provision of eye care, especially cataract treatment.

Waiting times in the NHS are at a record level, alongside wider challenges that face our health services across the country – and polling by YouGov found it the top priority for voters in the 2024 General Election.

The NHS elective waiting list in England has been a growing issue, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Even prior to the pandemic, the waiting list had doubled over a decade, increasing from 2.3 million in January 2010 to 4.6 million in December 2019.

The NHS and the government have consistently failed to meet their waiting list and time targets since 2010, with many of these targets unlikely to be achieved in the near future.

Ophthalmology is currently the busiest outpatient specialty within the NHS – 10% of the total waiting list. Non-urgent referrals for cataract surgery can result in waiting times as long as 18 months from the day of appointment. These extended waiting periods significantly impact patients’ quality of life, and risk other health complications.

Optegra, a leading provider of eye care in the UK, plays a crucial role in alleviating the pressure on the NHS.

Optegra’s partnership with the NHS has been instrumental in reducing cataract surgery waiting times – but more must be done to utilise capacity in cataract surgery, and ensure people get the care they need, when they need it.

This partnership is vital in ensuring patients receive timely treatment – preventing further deterioration of their vision.



NHS Waiting Lists 2011-24
Source: NHS England



Photo: Optegra Eye Clinic West London

Left untreated, cataracts are the leading cause of blindness worldwide. Effective surgery can dramatically improve a patient's quality of life and economic productivity. In the UK, over 2 million people live with sight loss, with nearly 340,000 registered as blind or partially sighted. This condition predominantly affects older adults, with nearly 80% of those with sight loss being over 65. Women and certain ethnic minority groups also show higher prevalence rates for some of the leading causes of sight loss.

Critically, the economic impact of sight loss is significant to the British economy.

In 2019, the annual cost of sight loss and blindness was estimated at £36 billion, a figure that was estimated to have risen in 2022 by £2.5 billion as a result of the pandemic.



From today, the policy of this department is that the NHS is broken. That is the experience of patients who are not receiving the care they deserve, and of the staff working in the NHS who can see that – despite giving their best – this is not good enough.

– Health Secretary, Wes Streeting

Much of this economic burden is avoidable, as 50% of sight loss is preventable with timely and effective treatment. Expert clinicians have expressed concerns that many individuals are needlessly going blind, given the availability of effective treatments.

Optegra is committed to enhancing patients' quality of life by improving their vision, and offers NHS cataract surgery free at the point of care, with no additional cost to the taxpayer.

The increasing demand for cataract surgery and other eye care services highlights the importance of organisations like Optegra in providing timely, high-quality treatment.

By reducing the burden on the NHS and offering effective, transparent care options, Optegra plays a crucial role in improving the nation's eye health and overall quality of life.



2. Benchmarking Optegra's activity against the Purpose Goals

Optegra, in partnership with the Patients First Coalition, has committed itself to being assessed against the most relevant Purpose Goals. Throughout this section of the report, its current activity will be benchmarked against five key Goals, identifying areas of best practice and opportunity gaps where Optegra can scale up its impact further.

<p>1 Strong foundations in Early Years</p>	<p>2 Successful school years</p>	<p>3 Positive destinations Post 16+</p>	<p>4 Right advice and experiences</p>	<p>5 Open recruitment</p>
<p>6 Fair career progression</p>	<p>7 Widening access to savings & credit and Financial Inclusion</p>	<p>8 Good health and well-being</p>	<p>9 Extending enterprise</p>	<p>10 Closing the digital divide</p>
<p>11 Infrastructure for opportunity</p>	<p>12 Building homes & sustainable communities</p>	<p>13 Harness the energy transition & Net Zero</p>	<p>14 Achieve equality, through diversity & inclusion</p>	<p>15 Working in partnership to tackle social challenges</p>



2.1. Purpose Goal 4 – Right Advice and Experiences

Access to the right advice and experiences at the right time can help to unlock opportunity throughout a person's life.

Getting great access to career advice and the chance for those wider experiences that broaden horizons and set schoolwork in context are vital. It really makes the difference between a young person being able to know about opportunity and then understand the steps towards it. Working out how we can consistently provide high quality careers advice, support, mentoring and access to work experience is a vital step in improving social mobility.

For purpose-led organisations like Optegra, offering timely advice and valuable experiences is essential for unlocking opportunities and shaping futures. Providing robust career guidance, mentoring, and work experience – along with proactive and open career opportunities – is critical in helping young people recognise and navigate their potential paths. This approach not only broadens their horizons but also breaks down the barriers to opportunity by ensuring they have the knowledge and support to pursue opportunities effectively.

2.1.1. Junior Doctor training

As a responsible purpose-led employer, Optegra takes its role in supporting training extremely seriously – not only for its own skilled and versatile workforce, but for the whole health community. Junior Doctor training forms a crucial part of this work.

Optegra's Junior Doctor Training Scheme – launched earlier this year – sees junior doctors access high volume cataract surgery, alongside their main NHS work. The scheme includes an individual plan for each doctor, focused on the specific areas they want to develop.

Optegra works closely with the NHS to provide this training support, placing value on training to the highest standard, to ensure patients get the best possible care. In order for a programme of learning and development, time is built in to review each case, and procedures are filmed so they can be analysed and learnt from afterwards.

This training is overseen by one of Optegra's surgeons in their capacity as NHS Training Lead, ensuring that trainee doctors receive their training in a safe and effective environment. Through these initiatives, Optegra is not only enhancing the capabilities of its optometrists but also breaking down barriers to career progression.

In providing these opportunities, Optegra ensures that its colleagues can achieve their full potential, ultimately leading to improved patient outcomes and a more dynamic healthcare environment.



Photo: Optegra Junior Doctor Lava Nozad

2.2.2. Case Study Lava Nozad, Junior Doctor

Lava Nozad, 29, was the first to take part in Optegra’s initiative which allows junior doctors to access high volume cataract surgery, alongside their main training in the local NHS Trust.

Lava is working with Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon Mr Alastair Stuart, supporting with NHS cataract lists. She says: “I am so thankful for this opportunity, which allows me to learn about and experience high volume cataract surgery. I love operating, am really enjoying engaging with patients to work out what level of support they need throughout the procedure and working with the excellent Optegra team who have been so welcoming.

“This opportunity, hand-in-hand with my work at the Royal Surrey County Hospital creates a really rounded level of training for me and hugely increases the numbers of patients I operate on.”

The initiative has been praised by the Royal College of Ophthalmologists. Chair of the Training Committee, Sarah Maling, said: “England’s NHS commissioned eye services continue to increase independent sector cataract surgery and it is a necessity to include

“The College has set our clear guidance and recommendation to support training in an independent sector setting and recognises the benefit of such settings to provide comprehensive cataract surgical training. Given the reduction of surgical opportunity that trainees are reporting, the College is keen to facilitate access to all training opportunities.

“It is excellent to see that companies such as Optegra are now implementing this, and that the junior doctors are reaping the benefits to afford them the opportunity to secure the vital hands-on surgical experience they need to enhance their surgical skills and improve outcomes.”

Lava concludes: “I enjoyed medical school and the opportunity to cover everything from surgery to medicine to GP work. But the element which excited me most was ophthalmology – though we only experienced one week in this discipline in the full five years of medical school. Even in that short time, I realised it was a unique speciality with a mixture of surgical and medical work, and with so much variety treating various parts of the eyes.”

2.1.2. Student placements

Students in the first year of a post-16 science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) course are eligible to apply for research and experience placements. These placements are available across the UK in universities, industry, or research institutions. Through participation in these placements at Optegra, students gain exposure to real-world applications of their studies - fostering a deeper understanding and passion for their subjects.

Over the years Optegra has provided career advice, mentoring support and access to work experience to students from diverse backgrounds interested in a career in eye healthcare and research. This support has ranged from This This support has ranged from placements of a few days shadowing nurses and optometrists in clinics, surgical teams in our operating theatres or summer research placements supervised by Prof Clare O'Donnell, Head of our Eye Sciences team. One award- winning student project examined nerve changes in keratoconus a condition that causes poor vision, thinning and distortion of the cornea. These placements have led on to successful careers in eye healthcare, general nursing and academia.

Hundreds of undergraduate optometry students have attended Optegra Training Days over the years to broaden their understanding of hospital optometry. These have included interactive lectures from our Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeons and Eye Sciences team as well as hands-on workshops to develop their practical skills.



“We are keen to welcome trainees to all our sites and are proud of the way Optegra works. We have first-class facilities and excellent surgical outcomes, so why not pass those skills on and ensure a high supply of surgeons for the NHS or Optegra itself in the future? Along with our varied training offering from Fellowships to CPD events, we are fully committed to meeting our financial and ethical responsibilities.”

**-Ophthalmic Consultant Surgeon Mike Adams,
Optegra’s National NHS Training Lead**

This work not only highlights the high-quality mentorship and/or research opportunities provided by Optegra but also outlines the importance of these schemes in developing the next generation of clinicians and researchers.

Through offering and supporting these placements, Optegra ensures that students receive the right guidance and practical experiences, which are crucial for their academic and professional growth. This initiative exemplifies how strategic partnerships and educational programmes can break down the barriers to healthcare by empowering young people with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.

2.1.3. CPD events

Optegra is providing vital opportunities for ongoing education and skill enhancement through its involvement in leading Continuing Professional Development (CPD) events.

In its mainly face-to-face sessions - as well as monthly webinars - Optegra hospitals invite the local NHS optometrist community to accumulate CPD training points. This initiative supports the professional growth of optometrists, ensuring they stay updated with the latest developments in eye care.

The CPD Certification Service, established in 1996, is the world's leading and largest independent CPD accreditation institution, operating across all industry sectors. It provides support, advice, and recognised CPD accreditation for the Continuing Professional Development obligations and policies of professional bodies and academic institutes.

CPD represents a commitment to lifelong learning, encouraging professionals to look forward, identify opportunities to learn something new, refresh existing knowledge, improve skills, or simply keep up to date with the latest industry developments.

In practical terms, CPD can encompass a wide range of activities, from taking training courses and attending educational events to studying for new qualifications and learning new aspects of a job.

Through this work, Optegra not only contributes to the professional advancement of optometrists but also ensures that patients receive the highest standard of care based on the latest knowledge and techniques.

By the end of 2024, Optegra plans to have held 65 CPD events, highlighting its commitment to providing high-quality education and training. Through these efforts, Optegra is fostering a well-educated and skilled optometry community, ultimately benefiting the broader healthcare system and improving patient outcomes.

**Between April 2023-
March 2024, 1,289
optometrists attended
Optegra's face-to-face
CPD events.**

**8,400 attended
Optegra's
webinars**

**57 CPD events were offered by
Optegra between April 2023
and March 2024**



Photo: A recent CPD event held by Optegra to provide education enhancement.

2.1.4. Recruitment & onboarding

Optegra holds recruitment and onboarding as one of its central pillars of the colleague development journey, recognising the critical role it plays fostering a supportive and impactful work environment. It is for this reason that Optegra has recently appointed a UK Induction Lead to ensure staff are onboarded to their new roles effectively and ready to deliver for patients.

With 958 staff employed by Optegra globally, and a further 450 appointments expected over the next year, ensuring that new employees receive the best start possible is vital, and the Human Resources team has transformed the colleague development process in recent years in order to facilitate this process.

Maintaining a consistent workforce is vital and Optegra recognises the importance of investing in its employees. Optegra has a clinical turnover rate of just 15% in the UK (2023) – less than half the level of the average organisation.

Understanding the importance of swift and effective recruitment, Optegra has established strict guidelines to fill job postings within 40 days of approval. This efficient timeline ensures that prospective candidates have the opportunity to engage with the organisation promptly.

Critically, Optegra also offers candidates the chance to spend half a day with the organisation before committing to long-term employment. This approach allows candidates to gain a better understanding of the workplace culture and their potential role, leading to more informed and confident employment decisions.

Optegra's Human Resources team is acutely aware that due diligence during the recruitment process is essential for retaining employees. To support this, the organisation prioritises a robust onboarding process designed to integrate new staff seamlessly into the team.

New employees at Optegra benefit from a comprehensive onboarding module and receive regular onboarding newsletters through the organisation's dedicated onboarding site. This site offers a variety of tools, including features that allow new colleagues to familiarise themselves with the colleague tree right across the organisation. This transparency helps new employees gain a better understanding of the organisational structure and their place within it.

At the end of the onboarding and recruitment process, Optegra seeks feedback from new staff to continuously improve their experience.

88% of Optegra colleagues who took part in the onboarding survey gave the company 4 or 5 stars.

Through these efforts, Optegra not only improves the internal recruitment and onboarding experience but also delivers social impact to its colleagues, and therefore its patients, by creating a supportive and well-structured environment for its staff.

This commitment to employee development from the candidate's first engagement ensures that new colleagues feel valued, integrated, and prepared to



“Despite suggestions to the contrary, only 7% of our staff are recruited directly from the NHS”

**–Edna Osborn,
Optegra's Finance and HR Director**



6 Fair career progression



Photo: Optegra staff have the chance to improve their careers and progress.

2.2. Purpose Goal 6 – Fair Career Progression

Opportunities for career advancement for all should be based on ability and potential, not connections.

The chance to keep developing once in work and progress in a career isn't just important from the perspective of increasing your earnings, it's about how you can continue to feel challenged and learn even once you've left your school years behind. Businesses that work out how to provide those opportunities to keep growing and moving forward will do better.

Optegra invests significantly in colleague upskilling and development, enabling their employees to grow and excel - recognising the important benefit for both the individuals and the business. Providing these opportunities fosters a motivated and skilled workforce, driving long-term success.

2.2.1. Learning and development

Optegra's commitment to learning and development forms the second pillar of its employee journey, playing a crucial role in breaking down the barriers to opportunity for its staff. This focus is a key underpinning of Optegra's wider colleague offering, ensuring that every employee has the opportunity to grow and develop within the organisation.

Central to Optegra's approach is the 'Career Path' initiative, which maps out potential development steps for all colleagues. This framework supports employees in identifying and achieving their career aspirations, regardless of their starting point.

On top of career mapping, Optegra offers individual role postings, such as the Infection Prevention Lead for a specific hospital. These roles come with an uplifted salary and increased responsibility, providing staff with the chance to gain experience in leadership and specialised areas while still fulfilling their main job roles, as well as boosting their financial security.

Optegra further supports colleague development through its learning management platform – Skills for Health – which is also used by the NHS. This platform allows colleagues to request additional training programmes, ensuring they have access to a wide range of learning opportunities that meet their specific needs and interests.

Optegra offers a successful mentorship scheme. This programme pairs specific staff with mentors, including senior leaders and, in some cases, Optegra’s CEO, providing invaluable guidance and support from experienced professionals. The company also has a Rising Stars programme, made up of over 50 colleagues.

Through these initiatives, Optegra is providing its colleagues with the necessary tools, training, and support to advance their careers, demonstrated by the fact that 60% of Optegra’s UK Leadership Team have been internally promoted. This commitment to learning and development not only improves individual potential but also strengthens the overall capabilities of the organisation, ensuring that all employees can thrive and succeed in their professional journeys .

2.2.3. Patient Case Study – Sandee Lewis

Optegra Hampshire patient, Sandee Lewis, was seen for consultation within just nine days of referral. She said: “I couldn’t believe how quickly I was seen. The surgery was painless and not at all frightening, the experience far exceeded my expectations. I am thrilled with the results.”

Photo: Cllr Matt Boughton, Leader of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Councillor of Medway Ward, Tonbridge visited Clinic Manager Ibrahim Toma at Optegra Eye Clinic Maidstone



2.2.4 Case study – Ibrahim Toma

Ibrahim Toma has stepped up to be Clinic Manager at Optegra Eye Clinic Maidstone, which opened in 2022 – but he’s not an unfamiliar face at Optegra. Ibrahim previously worked for the company for over two and a half years, both as a healthcare technician, and later an Outpatient Lead role at Optegra’s Central London flagship hospital.

Ibrahim’s passion is patient care, not only in improving a person’s quality of life, but supporting the team at the clinic to develop. Optegra provided Ibrahim with an opportunity to start from scratch at the new clinic, to develop his own team and watch them develop alongside the site and services. Ibrahim said his biggest challenge in his career was to replace someone who had been in the role for 12 years: “I was told I had very big boots to fill, however, through confidence, self-belief and a willingness and openness to learn from the team I was coming in to manage, I was able to navigate this well and keep everyone on board”, he said.

Ibrahim’s story sets out how Optegra empowers its colleagues to develop their skills and provides opportunities for them to do so.

2.2.5. Colleague Case Study

Lorraine Morris

Lorraine Morris joined Optegra Eye Hospital when it opened in 2011 as a housekeeper. Right from the start she was made to feel part of the team and treated so well. She soon began to help patients in reception, chatting to them and providing coffee.

She knew she wanted to progress into patient care and was encouraged by her hospital manager. After some volunteering doing observations and other tasks, she was invited to take part in training to become a healthcare assistant.

She then knew she wanted to progress even further in her career and so continued the training she was offered by Optegra and is now an Assistant Practitioner, enjoying scrubbing in in theatre as well as supporting in clinics.

She said: "As soon as I joined Optegra I developed a passion for patient care, and they have been so supportive, I have been able to achieve my dream. Optegra push you with your dreams and give you the opportunities. I am very grateful.

"I now work directly with patients, providing the care they need and I absolutely love my job!"

2.2.6 . Case Study

Jen Abbott, Optegra Operations

Director

Jen Abbott is the youngest woman on the Optegra UK Leadership Team – and has secured that role due to her hard work and commitment as well as the opportunities she has grasped throughout her career at Optegra.

She said: "I joined Optegra in 2018 as commercial manager in the Manchester hospital with a focus on vision correction and sales. After about 18 months, I transferred to Yorkshire as Hospital Director, with full oversight of operations and finances, ensuring safety in all aspects of our business.

"When Covid hit in 2020 we streamlined our management team, and my role changed and I become responsible for all four sites in the north of England, ensuring that we had the right structure in place, that we were compliant and hitting all our KPIs. I then returned to Manchester as the Senior Hospital Manager. It's the biggest hospital in our portfolio so it's always busy. My expertise lies in operations and finance, making sure we hit our targets. We also need to ensure we see patients in the required time, provide safe treatments and are prepared for inspections."

"Since Jan 2024 I have been promoted to the UK Leadership Team as UK Operations Director. I am proud of this achievement, as I have worked my way up through the company, and have been given so many opportunities to develop and refine my business skills. I am grateful to have had such an accelerated career development and felt supported every step of the way.

"Colleagues have put their trust in me and I have pushed myself, taking a leap of faith to prove I could do the job. This has made me feel so valued."

2.2.7. Colleague upskilling

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Optegra initiated a business transformation that included upskilling a number of optometrists to undertake tasks typically performed by consultants or surgeons.

This initiative was executed with the utmost focus on patient safety, providing optometrists with critical opportunities to advance in their clinical careers.

One notable example of this upskilling effort is the establishment of an optometrist-delivered Yttrium Aluminum Garnett (YAG) pathway.

A YAG procedure is required post-cataract surgery in around 20% of cases due to posterior capsule opacification (PCO) – a clouding of the lens capsule. By training optometrists to deliver this procedure, Optegra has increased their responsibilities to the level typically afforded to consultants or surgeons.

The YAG pathway is just one of several initiatives implemented by Optegra to upskill optometrists across the business. This includes nurse injectors for AMD, providing more capacity for patient care, whilst Optegra allows qualified optometrists to independently prescribe, allowing more patients to be seen.

These pathways provide clinicians with expanded roles and responsibilities, enabling them to progress in their careers and contribute more significantly to patient care. This not only enhances the clinicians' skill sets but also ensures that patients receive timely and effective care, consequently helping to reduce waiting times.

The wide-ranging upskilling opportunities at Optegra have attracted a number of new optometrist candidates who recognise the benefits of professional development available within the organisation.



Photo: Mr Amir Hamid, Medical Director

2.2.8. Patient Case Study – Alan Turner

Alan Turner's cataracts had progressed to the point that he was advised not to drive. "I want to thank everyone at Optegra, the staff are all fantastic and have looked after me from the second I walked in to the second I left. What an amazing place. I am so happy – it has given me a huge lift and is the best thing I've ever done."



2.3. Purpose Goal 8 – Good Health and Wellbeing

Improving mental and physical health at all ages is vital to boosting overall wellbeing to allow people to fulfil their potential.

Health and wellbeing inequalities lie at the heart of improving social mobility across the UK. Good health and wellbeing are often a precursor to a person being in a position to make the most of their talents and in work, feeling that they can consider taking the next step in their career. The recent years have shone a stark light on the health inequalities our country has and how they impact on wider life. The statistics on diverging life expectancy give a clear sense of how communities even living side by side can have very different outcomes.

For one of the UK's leading eye health care providers, this focus is central to its mission.

Optegra is dedicated to providing top-tier eye care, recognising that good vision is fundamental to quality of life and personal advancement. This commitment is reflected in its state-of-the-art hospitals, all of which hold a 'good' rating from the Care Quality Commission (CQC). These facilities are equipped with the latest technology and provide a calm, comfortable environment dedicated solely to eye treatments. Patients receive continuous care from renowned Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeons, ensuring high standards and personalised attention.

Optegra's commitment to health and wellbeing extends to its employees as well. The organisation understands that a healthy, well-supported workforce is essential for delivering excellent patient care. By investing in the mental and physical health of its staff, Optegra ensures that its team can perform at their best, fostering a positive and productive work environment.

2.3.1. Employee relations

Optegra's approach to Employee Relations, the final pillar of its employee journey, is central to its colleague health and wellbeing approach. The organisation's strategy ensures that every staff member is supported, valued, and able to perform at their highest potential.

A key component of this approach is the requirement for all colleagues to have quarterly reviews with their line managers – with 89% taking part in Q1, and 75% in Q2 2024. These reviews provide valuable one-on-one time, fostering open communication and enabling managers to offer tailored support and guidance.

Optegra also views the Performance Development Plan (PDP) positively, considering it a crucial step in an employee's wider development rather than a punitive measure. This perspective encourages a growth mindset, helping colleagues to see challenges as opportunities for improvement and learning.

Employee Relations at Optegra also encompasses the management of grievances and disciplinary actions, ensuring these processes are handled with fairness and transparency. This approach helps maintain a positive work environment where employees feel secure and respected.

Through prioritising Employee Relations as its final colleague offering pillar, Optegra improves the health and wellbeing of its staff by creating a supportive, engaging, and rewarding workplace environment. This commitment to employee welfare fosters a positive organisational culture and drives the overall success of the business.

To gather comprehensive feedback and continually improve its employee offering, Optegra conducts a wide-ranging staff survey and individual hospital surveys annually.

These surveys inform a group-wide Action Plan, incorporating direct feedback from staff members. Since its inception in 2019, this system has consistently tracked and improved staff engagement, with Optegra achieving an 80% engagement rate among its 400 full-time staff members. Overall engagement has increased from 68% to 73%, reflecting the effectiveness of these

88%

**of Optegra colleagues
would recommend
Optegra as a place to work,
compared to 61% in the NHS**

97%

**of Optegra colleagues
promote their services to
those needing eye care,
compared to 65% in the NHS**

initiatives.

This compares extremely favorably to staff survey scores across the Ophthalmology sector and the NHS. In the latest The General Optical Council Registrant Workforce and Perceptions Survey, only 62% of the registered workforce report being satisfied in their roles. In the NHS, the figure is much the same. In addition - the 2023 NHS Staff Survey found that 61% reported that they would recommend their employer as a place to work, whilst 65% said that if a friend or relative needed treatment they would be happy with the standard of care provided by their organisation.

In response to the 2022 staff survey, where 70% of colleagues cited the cost of living as their primary concern, Optegra took decisive action. In January 2023, the organisation provided a one-off payment of £2,000 to all staff earning the UK average salary or less, and a slightly smaller amount to those earning over £38,000. This initiative significantly reduced the cost of living as a primary concern, with only 38% of colleagues listing it in the 2023 survey.

Optegra also offers extensive support for mental health. The organisation has a number of Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) and an employee helpline, providing essential resources for colleagues in need. Recognising that 78% of its staff are women, Optegra offers a Bupa Menopause platform, ensuring tailored support for female employees. More widely, all staff have access to free private medical insurance provided by Bupa, 24/7 GP appointments, and counselling services.

Support is also available to Optegra employees through its dedicated Employee Assistance Helpline, which is available to all staff and is confidential, meaning that employees can seek advice and support without fear of judgement.

2.3.2. Patient pathway

Optegra's Patient Pathway is central to its offering as a business - with a focus on putting patients first, ensuring a simple, streamlined and personalised experience from consultation to post-operative care. A patient pathway redesign has been led by Consultants Javad Moayed and Amir Hamid, to ensure that clinical perspectives are integrated into every phase of the pathway.

With one of the most standardised and efficient patient pathways for NHS cataract surgery in the UK, Optegra was amongst the first providers to develop high-volume low-complexity pathways that enable them to treat significantly more patients than can be done in the NHS.

During the pandemic, Optegra conducted an extensive assessment of its patient pathway, leading to transformative changes that improved efficiency and patient outcomes and have brought down waiting lists.

Recognising the importance of flexibility, Optegra has embraced virtual patient meetings with clinicians, a practice it continued after experiencing significant success. This flexibility allows patients to meet with clinicians at their convenience, streamlining the process and attracting a wider pool of patients seeking critical eye treatments, at the same time as reducing waiting times for patients and bringing down the number of wasted appointments.

Optegra takes pride in offering personalised cataract surgery tailored to each patient's lifestyle and needs. Most importantly, Optegra's pathway averages just four weeks, providing timely access to essential eye care. Whether through standard



"As a specialist eye healthcare provider, 100% of our investment budget goes into the latest equipment and facilities. We also invest in superior Johnson & Johnson intraocular lenses for all our NHS patients, to help provide excellent outcomes."

- Mr Amir Hamid, Optegra Medical Director

or enhanced cataract surgery, patients benefit from the expertise of skilled surgeons and the latest intraocular lens technology. The organisation offers various lens options, including toric and multifocal lenses, to address different vision goals, reducing dependence on glasses for distance, intermediate, and near vision.

In the post-operative phase, Optegra maintains its patient-centered approach by facilitating meetings with community optometrists in patients' communities or preferred locations. A proactive approach to post-operative care ensures that patients receive ongoing support and monitoring tailored to their individual needs.

Optegra's Patient Portal provides a convenient platform for patients to access information about their eye health, manage appointments, review correspondence, and make payments for private procedures. This digital interface streamlines communication and feedback, allowing patients to engage with Optegra seamlessly and efficiently.

2.3.3. Patient case study: Terry Thomas

Terry Thomas, from North Wales, was main carer for his wife who has motor neurone disease. Yet this care was at threat as he is blind in one eye and his advancing cataract in his other eye meant he could not clearly read her medication labels.

He said: "Due to the pandemic I have been waiting years for surgery and then Optegra stepped in and treated me within a week! I came out of the operation and all of a sudden I could see the times on the clock. The colours were so much brighter. It was incredible - I didn't realise how bad my eyesight was."

His surgeon, Christopher Hemmerdinger, said the case "would pull on anyone's heartstrings. His vision would have got worse as his cataract got worse. He had already gone from pretty normal vision to well below the legal standard for driving."



Photo: Optegra Eye Clinic Preston

10 Closing the digital divide



2.4. Purpose Goal 10 – Closing the digital divide

The digital and AI divide is one of the major barriers to opportunity – the spread of access to new and emerging technology is not equal.

World-class eye care requires world-class technology, and Optegra utilises some of the most advanced equipment across the country to provide life-changing care to its patients.

Optegra is proud to be investing in artificial intelligence to support patients 24/7, at their convenience, and celebrate and share best practice internationally too.

2.4.1. Utilising AI in eyecare

Optegra has further enhanced its patient pathways by launching an AI assistant, 'Iris', to pre-screen thousands of patients before surgery and check in on them after their treatment.

The vast majority – around 80 per cent – of Optegra's NHS cataract patients are 'routine' cases, which means Iris is fully able to triage, to handle their assessments and capture patient feedback. This frees up precious clinical time to enable clinicians to focus on those patients most in need of personalised care.



“AI in healthcare isn't about replacing human touch; it's about enhancing it. Our AI assistant ensures patients receive timely, flexible care, while freeing up our clinicians to focus on those who need it most”

– **Dr Ola Spencer, Optegra's Group Chief Technology Officer**

Iris also helps provide a quicker and more convenient treatment journey for the patient as they can automatically book in this service, and be available with more flexibility. In busy times, or during holiday periods, pre-assessments Iris is able to process and manage a near infinite number of calls ensuring a consistent service for every patient.

This ensures all patients have great flexibility in their care and can arrange their appointments at any time of day or night, to suit their own diaries, and from the comfort of their own home. Iris has been well received by patients with feedback such as 'very helpful', 'The conversation was reassuring to me', and 'Very clear questions and easy to complete survey.

Alongside AI, in the post-operative phase, Optegra maintains its patient-centered approach by facilitating meetings with community optometrists in patients' communities or preferred locations. A proactive approach to post-operative care ensures that patients receive ongoing support and monitoring tailored to their individual needs.

Furthermore, Optegra's Patient Portal provides a convenient platform for patients to access information about their eye health, manage appointments, review correspondence, and make payments for private procedures. This digital interface streamlines communication and feedback, allowing patients to engage with Optegra seamlessly and efficiently.

2.4.2. Prioritising world-class technology

Optegra's commitment to putting patients first is exemplified by its dedication to utilising and developing world-class technology. Understanding the important role that advanced equipment plays in achieving optimal patient outcomes, Optegra ensures that its facilities are equipped with some of the most cutting-edge technologies available.

Partnering with leading manufacturers and suppliers of ophthalmic equipment and instruments, Optegra maintains a stringent process of monitoring and assessing the quality and performance of its equipment. This approach guarantees that only the highest standards are upheld right across its patient care offering.

Optegra maintains proactive engagement and dialogue with its surgeons, improving its ability to incorporate the latest advancements in technology and treatments into patient care. This allows the organisation to identify opportunities to improve patient care through the integration of innovative equipment and techniques. A number of surgeons are also represented on Optegra's leadership team and board, ensuring that the voices of those with hands-on surgical experience and expertise are heard at the highest levels.

In terms of cataract and lens replacement procedures, Optegra uses the Johnson & Johnson Tecnis IOL for cataract surgery, which provides outstanding healthcare outcomes, with low YAG retreat rates.

Advanced lasers enable surgeons to perform precise corneal flap creation, ensuring optimal outcomes for patients undergoing laser vision correction.



Optegra has made significant capital investment through nine new NHS clinics – an investment worth over £12m, with zero cost to the taxpayer.

Optegra's dedication to innovation extends beyond treatment to include diagnostic techniques and imaging systems that enable clinicians to accurately assess and monitor patients' ocular health. The organisation is committed to empowering its clinicians to deliver safer, more accurate, and more effective treatments – improving patient outcomes and setting industry standards in ophthalmology.

2.4.3. Sector-leading research and development

As a dedicated not-for-profit research division, Optegra Eye Sciences plays a crucial role in advancing ophthalmic services and technologies across Britain, ensuring that patients benefit from the latest innovations.

Partnering with leading UK institutions – Aston University, the University of Bradford and the University of Manchester – Optegra runs training programmes and placements for students.

2.4.4. Case Study: Mr Sajjad Mahmood and new dry-AMD treatment

As medical retina lead, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon Mr Sajjad Mahmood at Optegra Eye Hospital Manchester, offers the dry AMD treatment to his patients. He said:

“Valeda Light Therapy is not available on the NHS. It is a treatment which is fully funded within the private sector, and Optegra is the first national provider to offer this first ever treatment for dry AMD. This is an example of how the private sector can support patients with more and more sophisticated treatments, which may not all be available on the NHS. We are delighted to be improving quality of life and saving sight with this new treatment.

“After so many years of having to report to my patients that there are no direct treatment options, I am so happy to now provide hope. A treatment which is not invasive, and which trials have shown to make a real difference.

“I have many patients with dry AMD who have had to watch their vision decline over the years. When they request a review some years later, to still have to tell them there is no treatment has been heart-breaking.

“But now that can change – with this new treatment we hope that a good proportion of patients with the earlier forms of dry AMD will improve their vision or at least stabilise the condition. We hope to preserve their existing vision for longer and reduce the rate at which they progress to more advanced forms of dry AMD which affect their lifestyle and independence.”

Optegra's most recent programme with the University of Manchester helps organise ophthalmic training placements for students with Optegra surgeons and optometrists in theatres and clinic. Optegra conducts cutting-edge research aimed at pushing the boundaries of ophthalmology, and in supporting the next generation of optometrists – fostering an environment of innovation, knowledge-sharing and in driving forward advancements.

At the forefront of Optegra's research and development efforts is an underpinning focus on championing innovations in eye care.

The Eye Sciences team collaborates closely with surgeons, industry partners, and academics to evaluate new treatments and technologies. This approach involves preparing new treatment proposals, conducting comprehensive literature reviews, and consulting with external experts to assess emerging therapies' potential impact.

These initiatives have led to significant advancements across various areas of eye care, including glaucoma therapies, implantable telescope treatments for age-related macular degeneration (AMD), laser technology for cataract surgery, and corneal laser procedures for treating presbyopia.

Optegra's dedication to pushing the boundaries of eye care through research and development underscores its wider commitment to putting patients first and delivering social impact through world-class care.

One notable advancement is the licensing of new injections for wet AMD treatment in the UK such as VABYSMO. These injections offer efficacy and safety comparable to monthly LUCENTIS injections, whilst reducing the requirement for follow-up visits and improving patient outcomes. More recently, Optegra has also been an early adopter of biosimilar intravitreal injection drugs, significantly reducing the cost burden to the NHS.

Optegra is pleased to now offer treatment for dry AMD. Whilst Valeda light therapy treatment has been available for some years, the company felt that recent study data were compelling enough

for Optegra to make this non-invasive and safe treatment available to early dry AMD patients seeking to maintain their vision.

Previously these patients would have been told there are no treatment options available. As a specialist eye hospital group with a number of hospitals we can potentially help more patients who may be struggling to access treatment.

Optegra's dedication to pushing the boundaries of eye care through research and development underscores its wider commitment to putting patients first and delivering social impact through world-class care.

2.4.5. Championing patient-outcome measurement

Optegra's commitment to putting patients first extends beyond providing exceptional clinical care to championing good health and wellbeing through rigorous patient-outcome measurement. It prioritises patient outcomes, ensuring that every individual receives the best possible care tailored to their specific needs.

Optegra Eye Sciences contributes outcomes data for cataract surgery procedures at all its UK hospitals to the National Ophthalmology Database Audit for independent analysis and publication.

Posterior capsule rupture is a complication that can occur during cataract surgery and is seen as a key indicator of surgical quality.

PCR rate is relevant to measure because PCR also increases the risk of developing poor vision after surgery and other sight threatening complications. The NOD industry benchmark for PCR rate is 0.79% compared to Optegra's rate which is significantly lower at 0.3%. In cataract surgery visual outcomes are measured as the percentage of treated eyes that achieve a good level of vision after surgery. Usually expressed as % of eyes that can read increasingly small letters on an eye test chart. 6/12 approximates driving vision standard and 6/6 is sometimes referred to as 'perfect' or 'normal' vision.

61%

is the percentage of Optegra treated eyes that can read very small letters ('20/20') on a standard test chart after cataract surgery (co-pathology excluded).

That compares to the NHS rate which is significantly lower at 47%.

Optegra Eye Sciences contribute outcomes data for wet AMD treated eyes to the National Ophthalmology Database Audit for independent analysis and publication.

63%

of Optegra-treated eyes could read 70 letters or more (close to driving standard) at one year after treatment, according to the last report published by NOD.

That compares to the NHS reference value of 39%.

This improves to

63%

of eyes achieving this standard after treatment.

Optegra also prioritises patient satisfaction by actively seeking feedback through their online Patient Satisfaction Survey, with 97% of patients rating their overall experience as either good or very good.

99% of patients reported that they felt their consultants explained their treatment clearly and showed understanding and 94% said that they found their treatment comfortable.

This feedback is instrumental in maintaining high standards of service and care throughout the patient's journey, ensuring a premium and expert experience for every individual. Optegra prioritises individualised care, transparency, and patient satisfaction, ensuring that every patient receives the highest standard of eye care tailored to their unique needs, ultimately aiming for the best possible outcomes and overall wellbeing.

2.4.6. Case Study – Professor Clare O'Donnell

Prof. Clare O'Donnell is Head of Optegra's Eye Sciences, with over thirty years of clinical and academic experience.

Clare's team is vital to the success of Optegra and the outcomes it provides, supporting the group to manage clinical outcomes, and develop its innovative new treatments to deliver for patients.

Clare and her research students have won a number of awards and accolades in recognition of their work.

In understanding and developing cutting edge new treatments that Optegra can put into practice, Clare has been appointed Honorary Professor at the University of Manchester and has supervised over 20 research BSc and MSc level research projects, as well as PhD and Post Doctoral students to successful completion.

Clare's leadership has been key in the development of Optegra's reputation in research and eye care services. Her contributions significantly enhance Optegra's commitment to sustainable eye health care.



2.5. Purpose Goal 14 – Achieve Equality through Diversity and Inclusion

Creating a level playing field on opportunity for all is vital to fully unleash Britain’s potential for the first time.



Diversity matters. The research is clear that more diverse companies make better decisions because they have a wider perspective and avoid groupthink.

– Edna Osborn, Finance & HR Director

Diversity extends beyond gender and ethnicity to sexuality, disability and other challenges that can lead to disadvantage. When we look across the leadership roles in business, the judiciary, government and politics, there is a continued skew towards those from the most privileged backgrounds. Britain will not succeed unless and until its leadership roles, wherever they are found in our society, better reflect the wider society at large.



Photo: Optegra Eye Clinic West London

2.5.1. Equality, diversity and inclusion at Optegra

Optegra is committed to delivering inclusive health services in a dignified and respectful manner by a workforce that is equally respected.

Recognising that all patients, colleagues, and members of the public are individuals, Optegra strives to create an inclusive culture where everyone can bring their whole selves to work.

For patients with additional needs, Optegra offers a range of services from disabled parking to dementia-friendly support, translations of patient literature, and a chaperone service, as well as direct support from Eyecare Community Liaison Officers.

Recognising and acknowledging the importance of this for colleagues themselves and in the quality of overall care for patients, Optegra is dedicated to promoting fairness and equality of opportunity for all its colleagues. To achieve this, Optegra seeks to understand who its colleagues are, where they are employed within the organisation, and their experiences working there.

All staff also complete mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training, and Optegra has recently developed a Management Skills Programme. This programme includes recruitment training to ensure a consistent, fair, and effective approach to recruitment and selection across the organisation.

In its role as an advocate and industry leader, Optegra’s HR team actively participates in Pride Month, having had a float in London Pride for the past three years. In 2024, Optegra attended Manchester Pride, allowing its Northern-based colleagues to participate. This reflects Optegra’s ongoing commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for all.

2.5.2. Monitoring and tracking diversity

As part of its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, Optegra is actively monitoring and tracking diversity to improve its colleague offering and continue breaking down barriers to opportunity internally.

For example, it examines the representation of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic individuals on Optegra's board compared to the overall Black, Asian and minority ethnic representation within the organisation. As of 31st July 2023, those from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic background representation on the Optegra UK Leadership Team stands at 33%, compared to 28% across the organisation. This indicates a positive alignment between leadership and the broader workforce.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of its workforce demographics, Optegra has taken significant steps to update the data held on colleagues, increasing the percentage of self-reported ethnicity from 91% to 98%. This improvement provides a clearer demographic picture, enabling Optegra to identify and address barriers to employment and career progression effectively.

Optegra also employs 508 staff members in the UK, with 28% being either Black, Asian or from minority ethnic backgrounds. This robust data collection allows Optegra to ensure fair representation and to tailor initiatives that foster an inclusive and equitable work environment. By understanding the diversity within its workforce, Optegra can better support all colleagues and promote equality of opportunity.



2.5.3. Patient Case Study – Elizabeth Owen

Elizabeth Owen had cataract surgery at Optegra Eye Clinic Uttroxeater and said: "I still drive locally and it is important to me to keep my independence, so I was keen to have my eyes treated. I was offered to have treatment at this new, local clinic – much easier than having to drive any distance or having to wait for treatment at another hospital to sustainable eye health care."

2.5.4. BeYou@Optegra

BeYou@Optegra, an internal group managed by the Employee Relations team, plays a pivotal role in advancing Optegra's broader agenda of promoting diversity, inclusion, and wellbeing within the organisation. This group meets monthly to address and highlight the challenges faced by colleagues, ensuring a supportive and understanding work environment.

Established in March 2021, BeYou@Optegra aims to raise awareness, celebrate individuality, and foster an inclusive culture. By connecting colleagues through shared experiences and resources, the group provides a safe space for support across diverse backgrounds. Led by a member of the UK Leadership Team and encompassing representation from across the organisation, BeYou@Optegra focuses on key priorities to enhance diversity and inclusion.

Through these initiatives, BeYou@Optegra has grown in visibility and impact, contributing significantly to Optegra's mission of fostering an inclusive, supportive, and equitable



Photo: Optegra's attends Pride in London

BeYou@Optegra's initiatives are featured in EyeLife, the monthly colleague newsletter, ensuring ongoing visibility and engagement. Over the past year, Optegra has made significant strides in various areas:

- **Pride Month:** A series of events brought colleagues together, culminating in 50 colleagues representing Optegra at the London Pride Parade.
- **International Women's Day:** Focused on breaking biases and celebrating the achievements of women.
- **Menopause Guidance and Training:** Developed and delivered training to support colleagues and managers in understanding and addressing menopause.
- **Guide Dogs for the Blind:** Our chosen charity of the year, as voted for by employees at the annual conference, is Guide Dogs.
- **Wheelchair Football:** Optegra is the official sponsor of the 2024/25 National League for the Wheelchair Football Association (WFA) and will be supporting both the Premiership and Championship divisions.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Spotlighted important observances such as Ramadan, Mental Health Awareness Week, and Autism Awareness Week, sharing information and staff stories.
- **BeYou@Optegra Video:** Launched to provide insights into the challenges faced by colleagues who are BAME, LGBTQ+, women, and those with mental health issues, showcasing the support provided by BeYou@Optegra.



2.6. Purpose Goal 15 – Working in Partnership

We need organisations to work in partnership to boost opportunity.

Now more than ever, amidst challenges such as the rising cost of living and global trade tensions, collaboration between the public and private sectors is essential to address barriers to opportunity effectively. The private sector, representing over 82% of the UK workforce, plays a pivotal role in facilitating equal access to opportunity and breaking down barriers.

However, there have been significant missed opportunities in leveraging the private sector's potential as a delivery partner for social and economic progress. By fostering strategic alliances with both public and private sector organisations, purpose-led businesses can take the lead, harnessing diverse talent and perspectives, and ensure their initiatives are grounded in the needs of real-world communities.

Optegra leverages its potential by fostering strategic alliances with universities and NHS Trusts - boosting opportunity and bringing down waiting lists. Through research and development collaborations, Optegra also advances innovative eye care solutions. These partnerships ensure Optegra's initiatives are innovative, responsive to community needs, and drive social and economic progress.



By fostering strategic alliances with both public and private sector organisations, purpose-led businesses can take the lead.

2.6.1. Research and development partnerships

Optegra has recently been awarded a Knowledge Transfer Partnership grant in collaboration with the University of Manchester. This was built on the success of previous research collaborations with the same institution. Dr Maryam Fatehifar will be supervised by Prof Clare O'Donnell and Dr Nabila Jones at Optegra in partnership with Dr Ajay Harish and Professor Hema Radhakrishnan from the University.



Photo: Optegra Eye Clinic Preston delivers life changing eye care for patients across Lancashire

Optegra was part of an international research consortium funded by the EU. This collaboration comprised four internationally renowned universities and Optegra to provide supervision and support for a network of 10 early stage researchers. Optegra's two PhD students, supervised by Prof Clare O'Donnell, worked on the impact of dry eye on surgical outcomes and looked at how to optimise outcomes for patients affected by dry eye. Dr Tugce Ipek and Dr Alberto Recchione's award-winning research outputs were presented at key conferences and the entire network were hosted at Optegra as part of their training and development programme.

Professor Radhakrishnan said “The research collaborations between University of Manchester and Optegra Eye Sciences have been highly valuable in progressing vision research in the UK. This unique collaboration has enabled us to evaluate the impact of cutting-edge treatments on patients visual performance before they are available in the public sector. Optegra has co-funded research to improve patient outcomes, using new technology such as AI, which is likely to have a significant impact in making surgeries safer and more effective in future.”

2.6.2. Working in partnership with the NHS

Across the UK, Optegra works in partnership with the NHS to put patients first, with twenty partnerships in place across nearly 50% of all NHS Integrated Care Boards (ICBs). With over one million patients benefiting from its treatments, Optegra has emerged as a top-rated eye hospital renowned for its excellent facilities, treatments, and clinical teams.

One of Optegra’s key offerings involves providing high volumes of NHS cataract surgery within weeks of referral.



Photo: Patients receive outstanding and personal care at Optegra Eye Clinic Brighton

This commitment to NHS patients is demonstrated in its contribution to reducing ophthalmology waiting lists – with a ten-fold increase in patients treated compared to the pre-pandemic period. Patient satisfaction for this pathway is also impressive, with 97% expressing satisfaction and 91% stating they would refer Optegra to family and friends.

97%

of NHS patients are satisfied with the service provided by Optegra.

91%

of NHS patients would refer Optegra to family and friends.

For NHS patients, Optegra offers leading cataract surgery and medical treatments, including injections for age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Over the past decade, Optegra has consistently delivered high-quality care to NHS patients, emphasising its dedication in providing exceptional eye care to all.

Optegra’s impact on NHS patients is evident in its impressive outcomes, including thousands of completed cataract surgeries, post-operative care appointments, and YAG laser treatments. Infection rates also remain low, reflecting Optegra’s wider commitment to patient safety and quality of care – in 2023/24, Optegra carried out 51,102 cataract surgery procedures, with 99.1% of these procedures having no recorded operative complications.

2.6.3. Optegra outcomes

NHS Cataract	Visual outcomes of cataract surgery 6/12 or better best measured	Refractive outcomes % of eyes within 1D of predicted post-operative SE refraction	PCR rates (Posterior capsular rupture)	Endophthalmitis rates
Optegra 2023/24	94%	93%	0.26%	0.01%
NHS reference standard	91.8% (NOD 2024)	85% (Gale et al 2009)	0.79% (NOD 2024)	0.02% (NOD 2024)

Wet AMD	Most common letter score one year after treatment	% of treated eyes able to read 70 letters or more (close to driving standard or better) at one year	% of patients who had the initial phase of treatment completed within 10 weeks
Optegra Manchester	75 letters	63%	87%
Benchmark value (Reference standard)	65 letters (NOD 2024)	39% (NOD 2024)	66% (NOD 2024)

One example of this partnership is Optegra’s work to reduce waiting lists with University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust – particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. In England, the pandemic saw a 40% reduction in cataract surgery, and by June 2021 over 500,000 patients in England were waiting for ophthalmology services.

The partnership has seen Optegra work closely with the Trust to help them reduce their cataract treatment waiting list, supporting the Trust to meet NHS targets – ensuring local patients get the treatment they need, improve quality of life, and allow the Trust to focus on acute care.

On top of treating and curing cataracts, Optegra strives to improve the vision, independence, and quality of life of NHS patients through its comprehensive services.

In addition to clinical services, Optegra provides educational support to patients through informative events like the “Living with Macular Degeneration” evening. These events offer invaluable advice on lifestyle, nutrition, and psychological support, demonstrating Optegra’s holistic approach to patient care.

2.6.5. Academic partnerships

Optegra maintains a number of strategic partnerships and collaborations with key academic institutions, in particular Aston University and The University of Manchester.

Optegra's presence on the Aston University campus – along with academic appointments within the university – continues to foster collaborative projects and proposals.

As mentioned previously, Optegra Eye Sciences also plays a critical role in organising ophthalmic training placements for University students, allowing them to gain hands-on experience with Optegra's surgeons and clinical teams. Optegra also offers support and supervision for student research projects, contributing to wider research innovation.

Optegra's partnership with Aston University extends to the establishment of a world-class wet lab facility at Optegra Birmingham Eye Hospital – enhancing opportunities for aspiring ophthalmic professionals.

In collaboration with ZEISS Academy – an e-learning platform – Optegra Eye Hospital Birmingham hosts educational events including the Contemporary Solutions Symposium & Workshop, featuring renowned speakers and interactive sessions on cutting-edge topics in ophthalmology. These events serve as platforms for knowledge exchange and professional development within the ophthalmic community.



2.6.6. Case Study – University of Manchester Partnership

At The University of Manchester, Optegra's collaboration spans interdisciplinary research projects, research papers, and grant proposals, particularly in partnership with Prof Hema Radhakrishnan. It also provides supervision for PhD and Masters level research projects – contributing to advancements in eye care and vision science.

Through the partnership with the University, Optegra also runs weekend training events for undergraduate and pre-registration optometrists, offering practical workshops, case analyses, and lectures led by Optegra's experienced clinicians and optometrists.

3. Analysis

Since 2008, Optegra has established itself as leading a thoughtful and patient-centric approach to eye care. The company has delivered life-changing vision correction for one million patients and been recognised as a top-rated vision correction provider.

Underpinning Optegra’s customer focus is the foundation of its business model. The company was amongst the first providers to develop a simple, streamlined and personalised experience from consultation to post-operative care. The company provides a blueprint for the future of the NHS.

Optegra’s approach to its colleague development offer places a strong emphasis on training, and in building an environment where employees want to work, evidenced by its 88% employee satisfaction rating. The company’s dedication to skills training, not only for its workforce but the NHS too, places value on training to the highest possible standard, and ensuring patients get the best possible care.

Optegra is also at the cutting edge of technology – pioneering Artificial Intelligence (AI) in post-operative eye care assessments for NHS cataract patients. As a leader in technology, Optegra harnesses it to provide the best care possible for patients and staff.



Through its comprehensive partnerships – not least with Manchester University – the company is providing often hard to access training opportunities to the next generation, and through its over twenty partnerships in place across 50% of NHS Intergrated Care Boards, Optegra is leading the way as a top-rated eye provider renowned for its excellent facilities, treatments, and clinical teams.

In summary, Optegra’s approach to putting patients first and cutting waiting lists for crucial, life-changing cataract treatment places the organisation at the heart of the health community, and as a force for purpose-led social good.

Through its comprehensive partnerships, Optegra leads the way in training the next generation of ophthalmologists – providing a benefit not only to its patients, but those accessing treatment through other providers. Optegra has positioned itself as a UK and international leader in the industry, setting a leading example for how independent healthcare providers can work in partnership to put patients first.



“At Optegra, we believe that quality eye care should be a right, not a privilege. By working alongside the NHS, we are breaking down barriers and creating a future where every patient receives the care they need, when they need it”

– **Mr Amir Hamid, Optegra Medical Director**

4. Local Community Opportunity Barriers Data Assessment

In its social impact work and wider partnership with the Patients First Coalition, Optegra has committed to a number of strategic recommendations as set out in Section 5 of this report.

Critically, the organisation will apply the recommendations in the areas and communities around its sites of most strategic need.

In these tables, a lower number is worse. Being in Decile 1 means the LSOA is amongst the 10% most deprived areas. Having a Rank of 1 means the LSOA is the most deprived LSOA in the country.

Conversely, being in Decile 10 means the LSOA is amongst the 10% least deprived areas and having a Rank of 32,844 would mean it is the least deprived LSOA in the country.

Using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), the Patients First Coalition has identified key communities close to Optegra's main sites, which score the highest on deprivation against key indices most relevant to the organisation:

1. Health Deprivation & Disability, which measures the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health
2. Education, Skills & Training, which measures the lack of attainment and skills in the local population
3. Employment, which measures the proportion of the working age population in an area involuntarily excluded from the labour market
4. Overall, which combines information from the seven 'domains' below to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation



What are the IMDs?

The IMDs break Britain down into small, easy to understand areas - this makes it possible to target projects and resources effectively to those areas where barriers are the greatest. This report identifies communities on the key areas of deprivation to highlight those in need of the greatest support.

What is a LSOA?

LSOA stands for Lower layer Super Output Areas. They comprise between 400 and 1,200 households and have a usually resident population between 1,000 and 3,000 people.

4.1. Newcastle upon Tyne: Walker Road / Felling View

LSOA Name (most recent): Newcastle upon Tyne 030C
 LSOA Code (most recent): E01008427

Newcastle upon Tyne 030C	Decile	Rank (out of 32,844)
Overall , which combines information from the seven 'domains' below to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation	1	32
Income , which measures the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income	1	47
Employment , which measures the proportion of the working age population in an area involuntarily excluded from the labour market	1	31
Education, Skills & Training , which measures the lack of attainment and skills in the local population	1	431
Health Deprivation & Disability , which measures the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health	1	116
Crime , which measures the risk of personal and material victimisation at local level	1	483
Barriers to Housing & Services , which measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services	4	12,030
Living Environment , which measures the quality of both the 'indoor' and 'outdoor' local environment	6	17,995

4.2. Barnet: Brent Cross Interchange / Claremont Road

LSOA Name (most recent):
Barnet 039B

LSOA Code (most recent):
E01000221

Barnet 039B	Decile	Rank (out of 32,844)
Overall , which combines information from the seven 'domains' below to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation	1	2,878
Income , which measures the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income	1	2,886
Employment , which measures the proportion of the working age population in an area involuntarily excluded from the labour market	2	3,909
Education, Skills & Training , which measures the lack of attainment and skills in the local population	4	11,630
Health Deprivation & Disability , which measures the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health	4	11,027
Crime , which measures the risk of personal and material victimisation at local level	1	2,639
Barriers to Housing & Services , which measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services	1	44
Living Environment , which measures the quality of both the 'indoor' and 'outdoor' local environment	3	8,955

4.3. Preston: Meadow Street/ St Pauls Road

LSOA Name (most recent): Preston 015C LSOA Code (most recent): E01025293

Preston 015C	Decile	Rank (out of 32,844)
Overall , which combines information from the seven 'domains' below to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation	1	835
Income , which measures the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income	1	1,151
Employment , which measures the proportion of the working age population in an area involuntarily excluded from the labour market	1	1,415
Education, Skills & Training , which measures the lack of attainment and skills in the local population	1	1,728
Health Deprivation & Disability , which measures the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health	1	1,278
Crime , which measures the risk of personal and material victimisation at local level	1	1,466
Barriers to Housing & Services , which measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services	7	21,628
Living Environment , which measures the quality of both the 'indoor' and 'outdoor' local environment	1	2,136

4.4. Sheffield: Prince of Wales Road/ Angleton Green

LSOA Name (most recent):
Sheffield 039A

LSOA Code (most recent):
E01008011

Sheffield 039A	Decile	Rank (out of 32,844)
Overall , which combines information from the seven 'domains' below to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation	1	107
Income , which measures the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income	1	119
Employment , which measures the proportion of the working age population in an area involuntarily excluded from the labour market	1	187
Education, Skills & Training , which measures the lack of attainment and skills in the local population	1	229
Health Deprivation & Disability , which measures the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health	1	450
Crime , which measures the risk of personal and material victimisation at local level	1	910
Barriers to Housing & Services , which measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services	4	12,893
Living Environment , which measures the quality of both the 'indoor' and 'outdoor' local environment	8	24,517

4.5. East Staffordshire: Eton Park/ Horninglow Linear Park

LSOA Name (most recent): East Staffordshire 008B
 LSOA Code (most recent): E01029427

East Staffordshire 008B	Decile	Rank (out of 32,844)
Overall , which combines information from the seven 'domains' below to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation	1	2,660
Income , which measures the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income	1	3,012
Employment , which measures the proportion of the working age population in an area involuntarily excluded from the labour market	1	2,173
Education, Skills & Training , which measures the lack of attainment and skills in the local population	1	2,513
Health Deprivation & Disability , which measures the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health	2	4,614
Crime , which measures the risk of personal and material victimisation at local level	2	3,756
Barriers to Housing & Services , which measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services	6	18,245
Living Environment , which measures the quality of both the 'indoor' and 'outdoor' local environment	3	7,783

4.6. York: Chesney Field/ Kingsway West

LSOA Name (most recent):
York 018B

LSOA Code (most recent):
E01013443

York 018B	Decile	Rank (out of 32,844)
Overall , which combines information from the seven 'domains' below to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation	1	3,155
Income , which measures the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income	2	4,583
Employment , which measures the proportion of the working age population in an area involuntarily excluded from the labour market	1	3,091
Education, Skills & Training , which measures the lack of attainment and skills in the local population	1	1,810
Health Deprivation & Disability , which measures the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health	1	3,057
Crime , which measures the risk of personal and material victimisation at local level	2	4,912
Barriers to Housing & Services , which measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services	3	6,977
Living Environment , which measures the quality of both the 'indoor' and 'outdoor' local environment	8	24,842



NHS



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