

SightCare LIVE

Conference | Awards | Expo

26 - 27 April 2026

Edgbaston Stadium

entry guide

Independent Optician Awards

We're so excited you're thinking about entering the SightCare Independent Optician Awards 2026!

These awards are all about celebrating you – the independent practices, teams, and individuals who go above and beyond every day. Whether you've been in business for years or are just starting out, your story matters, and we'd love to hear it.



Why enter?

- Shine a spotlight on your achievements – big or small
- Give your team the recognition they deserve
- Build trust and credibility with patients and your community
- Gain PR opportunities and visibility across the UK optical sector
- Celebrate at the awards evening with peers and friends

“

So proud of our team winning Practice Team of the Year at the SightCare Awards and being finalists in Independent Practice of the Year. We were thrilled to be up there with the leading practices in the UK. **Webb, Lucas and Stubbs Optometrists**

”

Award categories

You can enter one or more of the following categories:

- Independent Practice of the Year
- Clinical Excellence Award
- Customer Service Excellence Award
- Specialist Clinic Award
- Community Practice of the Year
- Practice Team of the Year
- Heart of the Practice (individual award)
- Start-up Practice of the Year
- Long-standing Practice of the Year
- Business Innovation of the Year
- Frame Styling Practice of the Year
- Environmental Practice of the Year

👉 Full category descriptions and criteria are available on our website

www.sightcare.co.uk/awards-2026



Key dates

- Entries open: Tuesday 4 November 2025
- Entry deadline: Monday 12 January 2026
- Finalists announced: Tuesday 3 February 2026
- Awards evening: Sunday 26 April 2026

How to enter

- Choose your category (or categories – you can enter more than one).
- Complete the online entry form – each category has set questions with word limits, so your answers can be clear and focused.
- Add your supporting material – you can upload up to 3 files (photos, testimonials, press coverage, etc.).
- Submit your entry and celebrate pressing that button! 🎉

Writing your entry – top tips

- Read the judging criteria carefully – each question links directly to how the judges will score.
- Keep it simple – short, clear answers are often stronger than long ones.
- Share real examples – whether that's a patient story, a new idea you tried, or results you're proud of.
- Use supporting material wisely – choose items that bring your story to life.
- Don't worry about "perfect" wording – judges value authenticity and passion over polished language.

Judging criteria

Judges will be looking for:

- Evidence of positive impact on patients, staff, or community
 - Innovation and fresh ideas
 - Teamwork and collaboration
 - Measurable results or outcomes
 - A clear story of why your entry stands out
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First time?

If this is your first time entering an award, you might be wondering whether your story is really “big enough.” The truth is, every story matters. You don’t have to be the biggest or flashiest practice to impress the judges - in fact, some of the most inspiring entries we’ve ever received have come from small teams making simple but meaningful changes.

Small steps can make a huge difference. Whether it’s trying a new way of engaging patients, introducing a fresh idea in your community, or improving how your team works together, those moments are exactly what the awards are here to celebrate.

And remember, you’re not on your own in this. Many past winners were first-time entrants who almost didn’t submit because they felt their story wasn’t “special enough.” So if you’re hesitating, take the leap. Sharing what you do day in, day out for your patients and community is more than enough — and you might be surprised by just how award-worthy your everyday achievements are.

Sample entry

Sample Entry – Environmental Practice of the Year

Practice Name: GreenView Opticians

Main Contact Name: Sarah Patel

Email: sarah@greenviewopticians.co.uk

Phone Number: 01234 567890

Are you a SightCare member? ☒ Yes

Brief description of your practice (Max 100 words):

GreenView Opticians is a family-run independent practice in Bristol, established in 2008. We're a small but passionate team of 7, committed to combining excellent eye care with a strong environmental ethos. Over the past three years, we've made sustainability a central part of how we operate – from reducing waste and energy use to choosing suppliers who share our values. Our goal is to show that even a small practice can make a big difference in protecting the planet.

1. How has your practice taken steps to reduce its use of energy, water, or other resources? (Max 200 words)

In 2024 we carried out an energy audit and replaced all our lighting with LED systems, cutting our electricity use by 18%. We upgraded our dispensing area with energy-efficient appliances and introduced motion-sensor lights in low-traffic areas. To save water, we fitted aerators on taps and use water-conserving cycles on our cleaning equipment. We've also invested in a smart thermostat, which helps us monitor and reduce heating use across the week. As a result, our annual energy bills have dropped by 15% and we've significantly reduced our carbon footprint.

2. What measures have you implemented to minimise waste in your practice? (Max 200 words)

We've introduced a frame and lens recycling scheme with a local partner – patients can return old eyewear, which is either refurbished for reuse or responsibly recycled. Contact lens blister packs are collected in-store through a recycling scheme, diverting around 12kg of waste from landfill last year. We've switched to digital communication wherever possible, reducing paper use by around 60%. In-store, we encourage reusable cleaning cloths and biodegradable cleaning wipes instead of disposables. Packaging from suppliers is reused or recycled, and we're trialling a "bring back your case" initiative where patients can reuse frame cases.

Sample entry (continued)

3. How are your team members involved in supporting sustainability within the practice? (Max 200 words)

Every team member takes part in monthly “green check-ins,” where we share progress and ideas for further improvements. Staff training includes sustainability awareness, so everyone feels confident talking to patients about our initiatives. Our optical assistants champion recycling in-store, making sure bins are used correctly and explaining schemes to patients. One of our dispensing opticians leads a “Green Ideas Board,” where staff can post suggestions. Recent ideas from the team include introducing paperless patient consent forms and encouraging patients to opt for electronic receipts — both now in place.

4. How do you work with suppliers to ensure ethical and sustainable sourcing? (Max 200 words)

We prioritise suppliers who demonstrate clear sustainability commitments. For example, we stock frames from companies using recycled materials and natural sources like wood and bio-acetate. We’ve moved to lens suppliers who minimise water and chemical use in production. All new supplier agreements are reviewed against our sustainability checklist, which covers packaging, carbon footprint, and product lifecycle. Where possible, we request consolidated deliveries to reduce transport impact. We’ve also encouraged a key supplier to switch to recyclable packaging — a change now benefiting other practices too.

5. What makes your sustainability efforts innovative, and how are you committed to ongoing progress? (Max 200 words)

Our biggest innovation has been integrating sustainability into patient engagement. We launched “Eco-Eyewear Days,” where patients bring in old glasses for recycling and receive a discount on sustainable frame ranges. This has been well received and increased awareness in our community. We’re also trialling refillable spectacle cleaner stations to cut down on single-use bottles. Looking ahead, we’ve set a target to become carbon neutral by 2030. We’re working with a local university on a student project to track our environmental data and identify further reductions. For us, sustainability isn’t a one-off project — it’s an ongoing journey, and we’re proud to lead by example as a small independent practice.

Supporting Materials

1. Video tour of our sustainable practice and recycling station (GreenView_SustainabilityTour.mp4)
2. Photos of our frame recycling display and Eco-Eyewear Day posters (GreenView_Recycling.jpg)
3. Testimonial from a patient about our sustainability initiatives (GreenView_PatientFeedback.pdf)

FAQs

Q

Can I enter more than one category?

A

Yes! As long as your answers meet the criteria for each one.

Q

What kind of supporting material should I include?

A

You can upload up to three files per entry. These could be photos of your practice, screenshots of patient feedback, etc. A short video tour of your practice (which can be easily filmed yourself on a smartphone) is really valuable. Choose things that help bring your story to life.

Q

Is there a cost to enter?

A

No - entry is completely free.

Q

What if I don't have big statistics or figures to include?

A

Don't worry! Evidence can be numbers, but it can also be stories, feedback from patients, examples of what you've done differently, or the positive changes your team has seen. Judges love to see the human side, just as much as the data.

How to get started

The hardest part of entering is often just beginning. Our advice? Keep it simple. Pick one category that feels like the best fit for your practice and start by jotting down a few notes in response to the questions. It doesn't need to be perfect on the first try - you can always polish it later.

Think about moments you're proud of: a patient story, a change that made a difference, or something your team worked on together. Those everyday achievements are exactly what the judges want to hear about.

And remember, you don't have to do it alone. Involve your team - sometimes a quick chat around the coffee table sparks the best examples to include in your entry.

Before you know it, you'll have a strong submission ready to go. The most important step is simply to start.

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