



# Confidence to do the job

**J**o Hearle had spent 21 years as a support member of staff at a dental surgery when two of her patients, Edward and Ann Ukleja, approached her to join their optical practice. 'After having worked for the same people for so long, it wasn't a quick decision,' she recalls. 'But one way or another the decision was made.' Hearle has now been with Peepers Opticians, an independent in Banbury town centre, for nine years.

'In some ways, dentistry and optics are quite similar. You're dealing with the general public, and a lot of the patients I knew at the dental practice are patients here. In other ways, they're quite different. There's more selling in optics, for instance, especially for support members of staff.'

Soon after she started, Hearle approached Edward Ukleja to ask about formal training. 'I said, I had 21 years to learn what I know about dentistry. I haven't really got 21 years to spend learning about optics. What can I do, qualification-wise?'

Hearle enrolled on two distance-learning courses with the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers. First, she took the Level 2 Certificate in Optical Practice Support, which is designed for receptionists and assistants who are new to optics, as well as more experienced members of staff who want to build on their skills and knowledge. She then moved on to the Level 3 Certificate, which is aimed at supervisors and managers, and which can be a stepping stone towards becoming a DO.

What did she find useful about the course? 'All sorts of things,' she says. 'The basic eye anatomy, for example: I'm never diagnosing patients, but I have enough understanding to know how quickly the patient needs to be seen. The fitting of frames and doing repairs: it's given me the knowledge to do my job with more confidence. Contact lenses and contact lens solutions: I can teach patients about insertion and removal, and talk to them about the solution they've been prescribed by the optometrist.'

'I'm not saying I wouldn't have become able to do what I do now had I not done the course. But it's surprising how having the certificate on the wall – which patients see – gives me

Two distance-learning courses run by the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers have been of great benefit to support staff member Jo Hearle and her practice, as **Graham Jones** reveals



### CERTIFICATES IN OPTICAL PRACTICE SUPPORT

- Level 2 units: (1) roles and communication in optical practice; (2) the eye and ametropia; (3) supporting the provision of spectacle lenses in optical practice; (4) supporting the provision of spectacle frames; (5) supporting the provision of contact lenses
- Level 3 units: (1) the legal requirements in an optical practice; (2) managing people in optical practice; (3) general optics and optical screening; (4) supporting the provision of spectacles in optical practice (Level 3); (5) supporting the provision of contact lenses (Level 3)

confidence to do the job and deliver the information. And it gives patients confidence, too.'

The course has also benefited Hearle's employers, and not just in the immediately obvious ways. When Hearle asked Ukleja how he thought the course had helped the practice, his first answer was: 'I didn't have to teach you.' It's a good point, thinks Hearle. 'The danger is, if you rely on picking things up as you're working, there's never time in the practice to sit down and have someone teach you on a regular basis. Plus, it doesn't give you that qualification at the end.'

A final benefit has been the inspiration it has given to Hearle's colleagues, one of whom has just completed the Level 2 course, another

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of whom will be starting in September. 'Having had a situation where no one among the support staff had done exams, it's encouraged other people in the practice to see that if I can do it they can do it as well.' ●

● The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers: a London livery company, and an awarding body accredited by Ofqual (in England), DELLS (Wales), CCEA (Northern Ireland) and SQA (Scotland)

● For further information visit: [www.spectaclemakers.com/education](http://www.spectaclemakers.com/education)

### OTHER WCSM QUALIFICATIONS

- Level 2 Award in Optical Screening
- Level 2 Award in Glazing Spectacles
- Level 2 Certificate in Optical Customer Service
- Level 2 Certificate in Optical Production Processes
- Level 2 Diploma in Optical Retail Skills
- Level 3 Award in Rimless Glazing
- Level 4 Diploma for Optical Technicians
- Level 5 Certificate in Optical Care (Scotland)
- Level 7 Certificate in Optical Care (Scotland)