



# Nottinghamshire LOC: Collaborative Public Eye Health Campaign

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With increasing demand on ophthalmology services, missed routine sight tests and lifestyle factors contributing to unnecessary sight loss, there has never been a more crucial time to raise awareness about eye health. Research from the East Midlands indicated that 50% of residents felt their vision impacted their daily lives and nearly a quarter (24%) had not had a sight test in the recommended two-year period. Fear of costs, lack of awareness about the importance of eye health, and a lack of knowledge about available NHS support were significant barriers.<sup>1</sup>

Eye conditions account for the largest number of outpatient appointments in the NHS, costing the UK economy £25.2 billion annually, projected to rise to £33.5 billion by 2050. Reducing the prevalence of sight-threatening conditions by just 1% could save the UK economy £9.5 billion by 2050.<sup>2</sup>

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## At a Glance

**Challenge:** Growing demand on ophthalmology services, missed routine sight tests, and unhealthy lifestyle behaviours contributing to preventable sight loss in Nottinghamshire.

**Objective:** To raise awareness of eye health across Nottinghamshire, promote routine sight tests, and encourage lifestyle changes to reduce sight loss, by engaging a wide network of stakeholders.

**Solution:** Formation of a cross-sector stakeholder group to plan and deliver a localised public eye health campaign aligned with National Eye Health Week (NEHW).

**Result:** Increased public awareness and engagement, media coverage, optometry practice involvement, and greater public participation in eye health promotion activities.

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## Introduction

As demand on ophthalmology services continues to grow, millions are missing routine sight tests, while unhealthy lifestyle behaviours contribute to preventable sight loss. There has never been a more important time to talk about eye health.

According to research conducted by the charity Eye Health UK, half of all residents living in the East Midlands say the quality of their vision impacts their daily lives, making it harder to do, or enjoy activities like reading, watching TV or driving.

So, it's crucial that the public are aware of the simple steps they can take to protect their vision and improve eye health.

Almost a quarter (24%) of people in the East Midlands have not had a sight test in the last two years, despite national recommendations. Sight tests are vital for everyone, just like dental check-ups, and NHS screening programmes. Sight tests can detect eye conditions, such as glaucoma, years before a change in vision is noticed, and uncover signs of general health problems including diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease.

Worry about cost is the number one reason people delay sight tests.<sup>3</sup> Yet, there are many affordable eye care options, and for those most in need, sight tests and prescription eyewear are free on the NHS.

Ophthalmology accounts for the highest number of outpatient attendance in the NHS. Eye conditions have been calculated to cost the UK economy £25.2 billion per year, a figure predicted to rise to £33.5 billion by 2050. Reducing the prevalence of eye conditions by just 1% is projected to save the UK economy up to £9.5 billion by 2050.

Many people are unaware of the 'red flag' symptoms linked to sight-threatening eye conditions. Patients are advised if they notice a change in vision, to seek advice from their local optical practice. Advice given;

Symptoms such as a curtain, veil or shadow in your vision, sensitivity to light, acute redness or suddenly seeing lots of flashes/floaters should never be ignored.

Lifestyle choices also matter when it comes to protecting health. Yet, only 4 in 10 East Midlanders believe that exposure to the sun's UV impacts eye health, despite cumulative UV exposure increasing the risk of cataracts and other sight-threatening conditions.<sup>4</sup> Eating a healthy diet, staying active, not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight and drinking in moderation are all essential to minimise the risk of future eye disease. Smokers, for example, are up to four times more likely to suffer sight loss than non-smokers.<sup>5</sup>

With 68% of people living in the East Midlands worried about their long-term vision,<sup>6</sup> it's vital people learn about the simple steps they can take to care for their eyes and keep their vision healthy for the future.

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## Objective

To address these issues, the Nottinghamshire LOC aimed to:

- Raise public awareness about the importance of routine sight tests
  - Encourage healthy lifestyle behaviours to protect vision
  - Engage with a broad stakeholder group to coordinate and amplify messaging
  - Deliver a high-impact campaign during National Eye Health Week (NEHW), while creating a model for ongoing, year-round public health engagement
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## What Was Done?

### Stakeholder Engagement

The first step was forming a stakeholder group including representatives from across the ICB, engaging key partners, including:

- ICB Systems partners or local health and care services
- ICB Communications Team
- Local Professional Networks (LPC, LMC, LDC)
- Local NHS Trusts
- Healthwatch
- Local Authority (public health team)
- Local vision charities
- Local employers– across all types of businesses, both optical and non-optical – were encouraged to get involved. This initiative aimed to raise awareness of what good practice around eye care in the workplace looks like, and to support employers in sharing useful information and advice with their employees and customers

Leveraging the existing **Ophthalmology Delivery Group (ODG)** in Nottinghamshire provided a ready platform for collaboration. As eye health awareness was already part of the ODG's remit, it was straightforward to secure buy-in from its members. Early engagement with the ICB communications team was critical for access to wider dissemination channels.

Note: Across an ICB, it can be challenging to identify the right contacts and clarify responsibilities, so it's important to start this process as early as possible.

### Identifying Local Health Needs and Target Audiences

As part of our planning, the LOC considered whether there were specific local health needs or target audiences to focus on. Should we tailor our approach to specific groups, or was this best delivered as a mass-audience public eye health promotion campaign? After careful thought, it was decided to focus on doing a few key initiatives well this year, with the intention of building on this foundation for future campaigns.

### Potential Interventions and Actions Considered

The LOC explored a wide range of interventions to raise awareness and promote better eye health in our community. These included:

#### LOC Engagement with members

- Remind all local practices to sign up for the NEHW resource pack

#### NHS Communications Team Collaboration

- Publish information on local NHS websites about the importance of routine sight tests, common eye conditions, and practical eye care advice

#### Public Engagement Events

- Host an eye health information stand at local shopping centres or hospital foyers.
- Create educational displays in local libraries.
- Conduct vision screening in schools or workplaces.

#### Media Promotions

- Run editorial features and paid advertisements in local press
- Contact local radio stations to host listener phone-in segments focused on eye health

### Community Challenges and Interactive Activities

- Organise an Eye Spy Trail in town or city centres, promoting the benefits of outdoor activity to prevent myopia progression children
- Highlight the importance of peripheral vision with a Batak Wall challenge —maybe even attempt to break a world record (currently 212 lights in 60 seconds!)
- Launch a community challenge encouraging participation in eye health activities.

### School and Community Group Engagement

- Host talks or assemblies in schools and local community groups to share essential eye care advice
- Run a poster design competition for school children, encouraging them to think about eye health and why vision matters

### Poster Campaigns and Visual Outreach

- Launch static poster campaigns at key locations (bus stops, shopping centres)
- Use roaming eye charts in town and city centres to engage passers-by and hand out leaflets

### Digital and Social Media Campaigns

- Promote eye health messages on platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook
- Invest in targeted public health messaging via the Next Door app to reach local communities

### Eye Health Unplugged Initiative

- Encourage people – especially teenagers – to give their eyes a break through a digital detox. Promote reducing screen time to less than an hour a day as an important step for maintaining eye health

### Messaging & Campaign Development

The campaign focused on clear, impactful messaging:

- Importance of routine sight tests as part of general health checks
- Early detection of sight-threatening conditions (glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy)
- Lifestyle choices influencing eye health (smoking, diet, UV exposure)

### Implementation

Activities during NEHW included a range of initiatives to engage both professionals and the public. Practices were encouraged to sign up for the NEHW resource pack through direct communication via the LOC database, helping to increase practice participation. The ICB Communications Team supported the campaign by sharing daily content on their social media channels, both in the lead-up to NEHW and throughout the week itself. Engagement was also extended to local professional networks, with the Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC) and Local Medical Committee (LMC) informed about NEHW and encouraged to sign up for and use the resource pack; this information was circulated through their newsletters. An eye health information stand was set up in Nottingham's main shopping centre, providing the public with resources and raising awareness about eye health.

Additionally, Roma Malik, Nottinghamshire LOC Chair, recorded a video discussing key messages around eye health. This was shared on the Nottinghamshire Health website, reaching a broader audience [x.com/NHSNotts/status/1838247636689662106](https://x.com/NHSNotts/status/1838247636689662106)

Press releases were issued to local news outlets, TV stations, and radio channels highlighting NEHW and its daily themes. This resulted in stories being published in local newspapers and lifestyle magazines, further amplifying the campaign's reach.

### **Previous Initiatives for Reference**

- Radio phone-ins and Q&A sessions, sometimes targeting at-risk communities.
  - TV interviews on local stations like Notts TV.
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## **Impact**

The impact of the NEHW campaign is reflected in strong public engagement, increased online interest and positive professional feedback:

**Public Engagement:** 27% of people remembered seeing or hearing about eye health during NEHW, with 76% saying it encouraged them to take better care of their eyes.<sup>7</sup>

**Online Interest:** Internet searches on eye health increased by 36% during the week.<sup>8</sup>

### **Professional Feedback:**

- 70% of optical practices agreed NEHW boosted staff engagement and morale
  - 85% found it provided a valuable opportunity to talk about eye health beyond pricing promotions
  - 63% of optometrists noticed an uplift in sight test bookings immediately following NEHW.<sup>9</sup>
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## **Reflections and What We Would Do Differently**

As we reflect on this year's campaign, there are several key areas we've identified for improvement in future initiatives:

### **Include Local Case Studies**

Develop and share compelling case studies featuring local patients and their eye health journeys. These stories would act as powerful draws to secure greater media interest and help personalise the importance of eye health messages.

### **Start Planning Earlier**

Begin the planning process earlier to allow more time for stakeholder engagement, coordination, and campaign development. Early preparation will also help in securing wider participation and promotion.

### **Identify Key Contacts Across the ICB and Local Authorities**

Proactively identify and establish relationships with additional key individuals within the ICB and local councils who can help disseminate messages. For example, in Nottinghamshire, it was challenging to determine who within the council held responsibility for public health communications – starting early would help overcome this barrier.

### **Sustain Eye Health Promotion Year-Round**

Explore opportunities to replicate elements of the campaign throughout the year. Eye health awareness should not be confined to one week. For example, we could participate in broader 'Health Days' or wellness events where multiple health topics are featured, ensuring eye health remains on the agenda.

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## Core Resources Supporting Our Activities

Throughout these activities, we were supported by an excellent range of core NEHW resources (available at [visionmatters.org.uk](https://visionmatters.org.uk)).

These included:

- Vista Magazine (read the latest issue here at [vistamagazine.co.uk](https://vistamagazine.co.uk))
- A4 and A3 posters
- A5 leaflets and flyers
- Social media assets
- EyeSpy challenge materials
- Podcasts, blogs, and digital animations
- Recipe cards
- “My Vision Matters Because...” banners and more

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## Conclusion

The Nottinghamshire LOC NEHW Campaign demonstrated the power of coordinated stakeholder engagement to deliver impactful public health messaging. By leveraging existing networks, focusing on clear health messages, and using multiple communication channels, the campaign successfully increased public awareness and encouraged healthy behaviours. The initiative also highlighted areas for future improvement detailed above.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Eye Q Report survey data, Eye Health UK & Thomas Pocklington Trust (2022)
- <sup>2</sup> Time to Focus Report, Fight for Sight (2020)
- <sup>3</sup> Eye Q Report survey data (n 1)
- <sup>4</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>5</sup> Kelly SP, Thornton J, Lyratzopoulos G et al. Smoking and blindness. *BMJ* 2004;328:537-8
- <sup>6</sup> Eye Q Report survey data (n 1)
- <sup>7</sup> NEHW Omnibus Survey of 1,094 UK Adults
- <sup>8</sup> Search Engine Analysis
- <sup>9</sup> NEHW Supporter Survey

## LOC Case Study: Nottinghamshire LOC. Project supported by the LOC and individual members

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