

During September 2024 Nottinghamshire LOC led a cross-sector public health promotion pilot designed to promote optometry, highlight the importance of routine sight testing and encourage the adoption of healthy lifestyle habits to benefit eye health and reduce the risk of avoidable sight loss.

The pilot brought together stakeholders from NHS organisations, the local primary care network, voluntary sector organisations and charities to address local population eye health needs, and, highlight the vital role optical practices play in keeping communities healthy and reducing health inequalities.

National Eye Health Week (23-29 September 2024) provided the ideal platform for this activity by creating a national conversation around eye health and supplying a wide-range of independent promotional resources.

Joint sector working elevated public awareness and engagement of eye health matters across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire with a reach of over 3.5 million. It also enabled Nottinghamshire LOC to position itself as a profession leader by sharing expertise with the local public health community, including Nottinghamshire ICB.

Background

Better Eye Care Needed To Improve Public Health and Wellbeing

With 19 million people in the UK missing out on regular routine eye tests, ophthalmology waiting lists remaining high and 95% of us admitting we could lead healthier lives, action was needed to prevent avoidable sight loss and keep the nation's eyes healthy.

There are no national DHSC optometry campaigns so action is needed locally. NEHW made it easy to do this.

Sixty-eight percent of people living in the East Midlands worry about their long-term vision, yet research showed almost a quarter (24%) had not had a sight test in the last two years, despite national recommendations. Furthermore, just 22% believed sight tests were an important factor for maintaining good eye health.

Half (49%) of local residents said the quality of their vision had a negative impact on daily life. Awareness of how lifestyle factors can affect eye health was also worryingly low. Just 38% of local people associated UV exposure with eye health, one in five linked their diet and eye health and just 8% thought physical activity could affect their eyes.

What We Did

Joined-up local health communications deliver better health outcomes, so the first step for Nottinghamshire LOC was to form a stakeholder group including representatives from across the ICB.

Invitations were sent to the following groups:

- 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

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.

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.

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)

Outputs and Impacts

This initiative increased public and professional awareness of the importance of regular sight tests and the factors that can affect eye health through wide-reaching multi-channel communications. All communications successfully conveyed one of more of the key campaign messages and enjoyed a combined reach of over 3.5 million.

Activities included:

- Nottinghamshire LOC member practices signing up for NEHW resources and using these materials to engage local communities
- The ICB Communications Team sharing daily content on digital and social media channels. This included a powerful patient case study and a reach of over 5,000 on Facebook alone
- My Sight Nottingham sharing information across social media and at in-person events
- Local Professional Networks sharing information through digital channels and newsletters
- An eye health information stand in Nottingham's main shopping centre
- Roma Malik, Nottingham LOC Chair, recorded a video podcast which was shared on the Nottinghamshire Health website
- Press releases were issued to local news outlets, TV stations, and radio channels highlighting NEHW and its daily themes



An eye health information stand in Nottingham's main shopping centre.

NEHW evaluation shows strong public engagement with 27% of people recalling eye health messaging and 76% of these saying it would encourage them to take better care of their eyes.

Professional feedback showed 70% of optical practices agreed the NEHW campaign boosts staff engagement and morale. 63% of optometrists noticed an uplift in sight test bookings immediately following the week.

To bolster awareness and encourage increased uptake of primary eye care services, earlier planning, wider engagement, targeted and novel interventions will be implemented for NEHW 2025. Nottinghamshire LOC will also work with the Eye Health UK team on the creation of an LOC toolkit for NEHW.

Acknowledgements

- Nottinghamshire LOC
- Nottinghamshire ICB
- My Sight Nottingham
- Ophthalmology Delivery Group
- Eye Health UK
- Local Pharmacy Network (Nottinghamshire)
- Local Medical Committee (Nottinghamshire)

Supporting Information

- visionmatters.org.uk

Further LOC case studies can be found [here](#)

