

# 'Back to School' Children's Eye Health Campaign 2011

**BACK TO  
SCHOOL**

How does a  
child know that  
this is not normal?

Children with undiagnosed  
eye conditions are more  
likely to have **difficulties**  
with learning at school.

**A FREE SIGHT TEST**  
can give every child the ability  
to see clearly, learn effectively  
and develop normally.

Optical  
Confederation  
The voice of UK optics

## Practitioner Resource Pack

## Why you should get involved



Getting involved with the children's campaign is a great way to raise the profile of your practice locally and spread the word about eye health. One child's vision problem solved by you can lead to an entire family of new, loyal patients for your practice, as well as making a difference to their future. There are many ways for you to get involved with this year's campaign, from displaying the poster to contacting your local media and giving school talks. To help you, we have created:

- A new **campaign poster** which you can download and print locally
- A **press release** template for you to personalise with your own practice details
- Ideas on **photography and images** to help promote your practice
- **Media guidance** and **key messages** for you to refer to during an interview
- Suggested text on children's eye health for **newsletter and magazine features**
- A national register of **volunteers** for you to sign up to help with school talks
- **A parent's leaflet** that you can personalise with your own practice details
- **A Power Point presentation** outlining the key issues around children's eye health aimed at parents and teachers
- **A video** about children's eye health which you can show in your practice
- Guidance on giving **school talks**, including a parent's letter for you to print out and personalise with your own practice details
- **Top Tips** for examining children's eyes and dispensing spectacles

If you need any help, do get in touch and we will do our best to support you. We are also keen to hear any feedback – so let us know how you get on and anything we can do to build on this campaign next year. Thank you.

**The Association of Optometrists**  
**On behalf of the Optical Confederation's Children's Campaign**

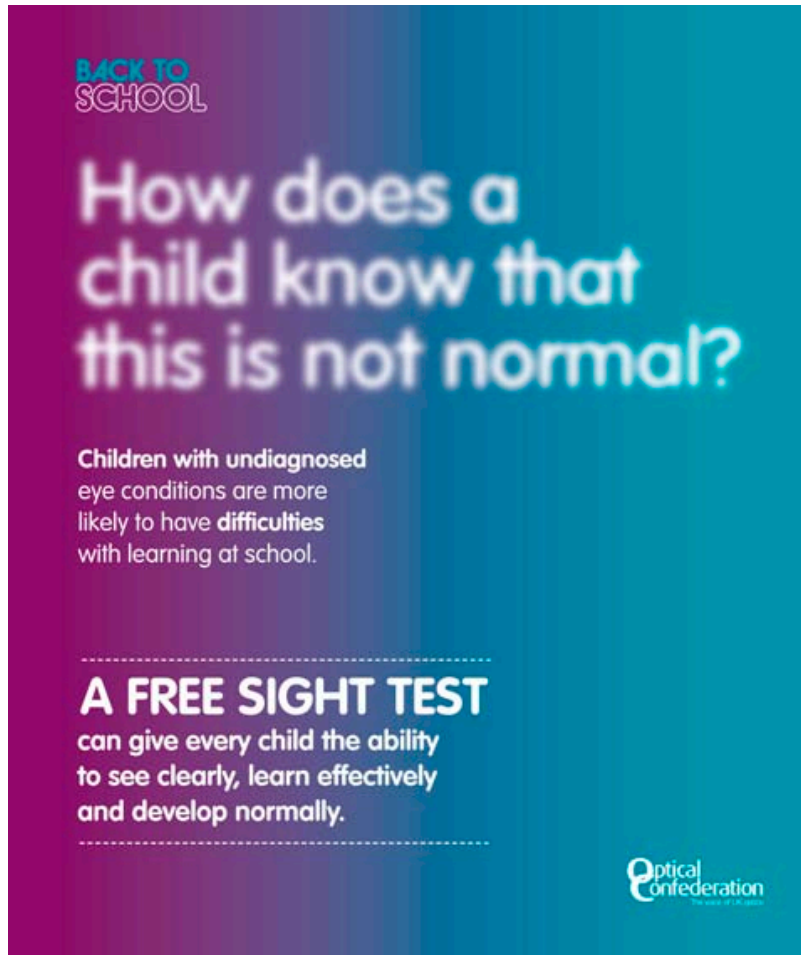
Website: [www.aop.org.uk/childreseyehealth](http://www.aop.org.uk/childreseyehealth)

Email: [childreseyecare@aop.org.uk](mailto:childreseyecare@aop.org.uk)

Telephone: 020 7202 6653

## New campaign poster

This year's poster highlights a key problem associated with children's vision: how does a child know whether or not their sight is normal?



There are three variations of the poster:

- Standard (as above)
- As above, with a 'no appointment necessary' message at the bottom
- As above, with a customizable box for you to add your own message at the bottom

We recommend that you print the poster in **A3**, **A2** or **A1** size for maximum impact in your practice window. See the print specification below to pass on to your local printer.

### Print specification

4-colour process to single side  
150gsm Gloss, trimmed to size

# Local media coverage



Local media is a great way for you to spread the word about children's eye health and to promote your practice. You can target your local newspaper with a press release or a letter to the Editor.

## Issue a press release

- Download the template press release and insert your own information where directed
- Print your personalised press release on practice-headed paper

## Contact your local media

If you don't already have editorial contacts in your local press you can find telephone numbers listed in the Yellow Pages or on the internet. Call the paper or radio station and ask for the name, telephone numbers and email addresses for either the health correspondent or a news editor.

## Sending your release

Email your press release to the journalist. For daily papers and radio stations you should do this a few days prior to the story appearing. Emailing a release to a reporter does not guarantee that he or she will see it. It could get lost, ignored, or buried. A day after issuing the press release you should call the journalist to check that they have received your release. If not offer to re-send it and ask if it's a topic they would like to cover. Ask if they would like any further information or photography (see the 'Photography and Images' section).

## Letter-to-the-Editor

- The press release template can be shortened and sent as a letter to the Editor of your local newspaper. Monitor any responses and be prepared to comment further
- If your local school does not have vision screening – why not highlight this issue? See the recent children's vision screening report by Which? for more information

**Keep an eye out for any media coverage** and remember to display any press cuttings in your practice.

## Photography and Images



Images always help a story. Do you have any good images of you in your practice? Why not take a photo of yourself with the campaign poster displayed in your practice window?

A journalist may be interested in taking your photo. Before the photographer arrives think about the best position in your practice with plenty of light for a photo, perhaps with the campaign poster in the background.

Think about your staff and branding – and the best way to promote your practice visually.



If you are interested in photography – why not take a few close-up shots of eyes yourself? Remember to ask the permission of anyone in the photos before you send them to the media. Perhaps you could include close-up shots of your staff's eyes on your website?



# Preparing for a media interview

## What to say

There are three key messages you should try to convey in your interview:

1. It is estimated that **1 million** children will return to school with an undiagnosed vision problem
2. The eye is still developing throughout childhood so if problems are treated early it can make a **life-lasting difference**.
3. A **free sight test** can give every child the ability to see clearly, learn effectively and develop normally

## During the interview

- Try to give short, concise answers so there is time for more questions
- Speak slowly and clearly - many people speed up when they're nervous
- Give examples and tell (short) anecdotes where relevant
- Use everyday language, avoiding long words and technical jargon – remember to explain any technical terms you use (see the 'Glossary' section)

## Children's facts and figures

- Up to **1 million** children in the UK currently have an undetected vision problem. (Statistics provided by the Eyecare Trust and based on DCSF 2009 School Census 0-12 year olds)
- Research shows that around **20% of school-aged children** have an undiagnosed vision problem - that's one in five children. (Professor David Thomson, City University, London)
- Over 90% of children visit a dentist **regularly**, whilst only 53% of children have **ever** had an eye examination. (Johnson & Johnson Vision Care Survey 2009)
- **84%** of parents agree that improved vision would have a **positive impact** on their child's performance at school. (Johnson & Johnson Vision Care Survey 2009)
- '**Optics at a Glance**' is a useful source of information about optometry, opticians, the market and services provided to patients. The latest version can be downloaded from this pack.

# Media interview tips

## Terms to use during media interviews

As medical practitioners, optometrists and dispensing opticians operate in a very specific field where professional terms are understood. However, it is important to remember that when you are speaking to the media, you are actually speaking to 'Joe Bloggs on the street' who doesn't operate within a healthcare setting and thus, is likely not to understand optic-specific and some health-specific language. Below are some terms that are used regularly, and the wording we suggest you use so that the public will have a better understanding of what you are talking about.

### Glossary:

<b>Optical/healthcare term</b>	<b>Public term</b>
GOS Sight Test	NHS Sight Test
Optometrist	An optometrist is the person who tests your sight. They can also fit and supply glasses or contact lenses.
Dispensing Optician	A dispensing optician is the person who fits and supplies your glasses or contact lenses.
<p>The public think that opticians are the people we see for a sight test. So it's vital that if you are going to describe yourself as an optometrist the journalist and public knows what this means - so remember to explain the difference between a dispensing optician and an optometrist.</p>	
Primary Care Community	Community setting
Community-led	Based in the community
Myopic/presbyopic	Short/long-sighted
Presbyopic	Literally "old sight"; the inability to focus on near objects as a result of natural ageing
Lenses	Be specific about what sort of lenses you mean
Enhanced services	Extra services that optometrists can carry out in their practice that a patient would normally go to hospital for. Give examples – diabetic screening, children's cycloplegia, cataract monitoring, glaucoma monitoring

Try to avoid using acronyms when speaking to the media.

Keep in mind that you are talking to someone for the first time about the issue and you don't want to lose them with technical jargon.

# Features for community newsletters and magazines

You may be asked to provide a short feature on children's eye health for a local magazine, engagement group or community newsletter. The text below can be adapted to suit different publications. We have suggested a few titles – you may think of something more relevant for a particular magazine.

The text also includes a quote from Bob Hughes, AOP Chief Executive. This is particularly powerful as it is emotive. Also included is a quote from Polly Dulley, Chair of the Optical Confederation's Children's Campaign. This is useful to explain what the optical sector is doing about this issue. You may wish to add your own quote and make it relevant to the publication.

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## **Sight now for success later: Why children's eye health is so important**

### **Children's eye health: Still a buried issue?**

### **Helping children to see their future**

### **A clear vision for every child**

It is estimated that 1 million children will return to school this year with an undiagnosed vision problem. Poor eyesight can have a significant effect on children's ability to learn and on their behaviour - yet often goes unrecognized by teachers, parents and by the children themselves. Children may not be aware of or may not be able to explain their vision difficulties and a parent or teacher may not notice any problems.

Commenting on children's eye health, Bob Hughes, Chief Executive at the Association of Optometrists, said: "It's an absolute public health disgrace. There are problems which can be corrected in young people's eyes and yet it's a buried issue, an unknown issue, that children are losing out on a good education because they can't see properly."

The sooner that vision problems are detected - the better the outcome. Many childhood eye conditions, such as lazy eye and squint, can be treated if they are picked up early - as the eye and visual system are actively developing during the school years. If vision problems are identified and treated, it can make a difference that lasts a lifetime.

Sight Tests are free for all children under the age of 16. Parents can take their children along to a local optometrist or optician for a free NHS Sight Test. Optometrists in the community are qualified to examine the eyes of all children, paid for by the NHS. Help towards the cost of glasses is also available on the NHS for all children. Toddlers and young children do not need to be able to read, as an eye examination can be carried out using pictures.

The UK is a long way behind the rest of Europe in the number of children who have regular eye examinations and the proportion of children who wear vision correction. In France, it's part of the summer back to school routine to book children in for an eye exam. In the US state of Kentucky, it is law that every child must have a comprehensive eye examination before they are allowed to start school.

Many parents still assume that their child will have their vision checked at school, regardless of whether this actually happens or not. Vision screening provision is patchy – many areas do not provide it. Even where vision screening is provided in school, there are many conditions which, although they may cause significant problems to a child and their ability to learn, will not be picked up at a screening. Screenings are designed to pick up amblyopia; what about moderate refractive error, binocular vision anomalies and the overall health of the eyes? A proper sight test is free – why not have one?

The optical sector has been campaigning to raise awareness of the importance of children's eye health with parents and teachers. Polly Dulley, Chair of the Optical Confederation's Children's Eyecare Initiative, said: "We are gathering scientific evidence of the importance of eye care for children, as well as producing a policy statement on children's eye health. This will include the issue of vision screening and key stage interventions to ensure all children have access to eye care at the time they need it and, as a consequence, are fully able to develop their social and educational potential."

For more information about the children's campaign, visit [www.aop.org.uk/childreneyehealth](http://www.aop.org.uk/childreneyehealth) email [childreneyecare@aop.org.uk](mailto:childreneyecare@aop.org.uk) or call 020 7202 6653.

(550 words)

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## Terms you may need to clarify

### **The Association of Optometrists**

The Association of Optometrists (AOP) represents individual optometrists in negotiations with government and other organizations. It also promotes the profession and development of high professional and clinical standards.

### **Optical Confederation - The voice of UK optics**

The Optical Confederation – The voice of UK optics was launched in April 2010 to bring together the voices of the representative bodies within the optical profession to speak with a united voice for patients, professionals and the sector. The Confederation is committed to greater cohesion for the five optical bodies: the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO); The Association of Contact Lens Manufacturers (ACLM); the Association of Optometrists (AOP); the Federation of Manufacturing Opticians (FMO) and the Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians (FODO).

### **Optical terms**

- **Optometrists** are eye health professionals and the services they provide are far wider than a simple test to determine whether spectacles or contact lenses are required to correct vision. An eye test is not just about getting a pair of glasses – it is a vital health check for your eyes. There are currently more than 9,000 practising optometrists in Great Britain. Optometrists are regulated by the General Optical Council.
- **Dispensing opticians** dispense, fit and supply spectacles; some also undergo additional training and certification to fit contact lenses. Dispensing opticians interpret a patient's visual and fitting requirements and translate the prescription into specifications and instructions for the optical manufacturer. There are more than 5,000 dispensing opticians in Great Britain registered with and regulated by the General Optical Council.
- A **Sight Test** includes (by regulation) a number of other health tests. Many conditions can be detected, including: glaucoma, cataract, diabetes, age-related macular degeneration (the commonest cause of blindness in the UK), some forms of cancer, as well as other conditions not usually associated with eyes, such as high blood pressure and brain tumours.



# How to get involved

## National register of volunteers

The AOP is compiling a list of optometrists and dispensing opticians who would be prepared to visit schools to give talks in assemblies, to children in class, or to members of staff or parents.

This national list will be on our website for teachers to find local optometrists and opticians in their area who can help with school talks. Whilst this is a useful resource for schools – we are encouraging optometrists and opticians to be proactive and make contact with local schools themselves.

## Visit your local school

Giving a school talk is a great way to raise the profile of your practice locally and spread the word about eye health.

Commenting on school talks, Polly Dullely, chair of the Children's Eyecare Initiative, said: "I've been doing this myself for many years and can testify just how good this is for your profile in the community. It never ceases to amaze me how receptive both children and staff can be when I visit the school with a member of my team to talk about eyes. We've had a stall at Health Week in one school, had a 'drop in for a chat' session at an evening for new parents, as well as giving talks to individual classes to help them with their Key Stage 1 and 2 curriculum."

## Sign up

To sign up to our national register of volunteers, please email [childrenseyecare@aop.org.uk](mailto:childrenseyecare@aop.org.uk) We will need to know the postcode areas you can cover and your practice details, including a named contact and your telephone number.

## More information

Parents and teachers may ask for more information about children's eye health.

Remember to print out the parent's leaflet in this pack and stamp it with your practice details. There are also template letters for you to give to children to pass on to their parents. You can also use the PowerPoint presentation at parents' evening and health awareness events.

If you sign up on the Transitions website you can access useful resources for school talks, visit [www.transitionsnet.co.uk](http://www.transitionsnet.co.uk) Resources for parents and teachers are available on the EyeKnowEyeCare website [www.eyeknoweyecare.com](http://www.eyeknoweyecare.com)

National Eye Health Week takes place on **13-19 June 2011**. For more information, visit the website [www.visionmatters.org.uk](http://www.visionmatters.org.uk)

The Eyecare Trust - a registered charity that exists to raise awareness of all aspects of ocular health – also has useful information about eye health [www.eyecaretrust.org.uk](http://www.eyecaretrust.org.uk)