

Edinburgh optometrist set for life-changing India trip



A dedicated optician from Murrayfield, Edinburgh, is gearing up to take the trip of a lifetime to provide vital eyecare services for those suffering from sight problems and blindness in India.

Catriona Hastie, 23, an optometrist at Specsavers Morningside, has signed up for a two-week charity mission in the Indian city of Chennai.

Catriona will help practitioners within the district's hospitals and take part in an outreach programme, bringing eyecare professionals to the areas most in need.

The Edinburgh optician will be travelling overseas with Unite For Sight, a charity which supports eye clinics worldwide.

She says: 'I'm looking forward to getting the chance to make a real difference to those in need. My team will be getting up early each morning and making a three-hour drive to villages and schools to screen people for eye problems.

'There are only a handful of optometrists in the whole region so I'll be on-hand to help out as much as possible, providing glasses and other treatments.'

The kind-hearted eyecare specialist has been given leave from her usual duties at Specsavers Morningside to deliver a range of prescription glasses – 150 pairs in total – specifically designed to meet the needs of locals in Chennai. As well as providing Catriona with time off, the store has generously stepped in to fund the cost of her flights in order to make the trip possible.

She added: 'I'm so excited about the trip and have lots to organise before I go. Unite For Sight has prepared me well for what to expect. The charity funds treatment for people who can't afford it but the project is about sustaining local services rather than taking over.'

'This type of work is so important. Improving someone's vision can improve their entire life. For adults, they may be put out of work because they can't see and be left unable to provide for their families. And children need to be able to see properly to continue with their education and have hope of securing employment in future. It really is an honour to be part of something so worthwhile.'

Michael O'Kane, store director of Specsavers Morningside, says: 'We are all extremely proud of Catriona – she is really excited to be going to India where her assistance could be truly life-changing for some of the people she meets, so we wish her the best of luck.'