

Specsavers raise funds to help Simpsons Special Care babies

Specsavers' Scottish stores have collectively raised £73,000 to help the country's premature and sick babies.

The funds have been donated to Simpsons Special Care Babies to buy a cutting-edge piece of equipment called a PanoCam Pro for the Simpson Neonatal Unit in Edinburgh.

Premature babies need their eyes checked regularly due to rapid changes in organ development, in what would have been the last three months of pregnancy, which can put them under a lot of stress – the PanoCam provides a much quicker and safer way to examine them.

Specsavers was encouraged to launch the ambitious fundraiser by Edinburgh optometrist Michael O'Kane whose daughter Sophie (now 7) was born at 24 weeks weighing just 1lb 15oz. Colleagues rallied round, donating a £2 from optical coherence tomography (OCT) scans and earwax removals, making donations and holding a raffle.



Pictured is Sophie O'Kane, who was born prematurely and received vital care form the unit. Photography by Colin Hattersley Photography

Michael, a partner at the Morningside and Cameron Toll stores, said: "The support from colleagues across Scotland, with help from our customers, has been overwhelming and we are extremely proud to have raised this impressive sum.

"It will make a huge difference to the neonatal unit, which helps premature and sick babies across the country. When my daughter was born, I learned first-hand how incredibly supportive everyone at the unit is and will be forever indebted to them."

When Specsavers Scotland launched the fundraiser in autumn 2021, it was part of a dual announcement which saw Bliss Scotland designated as the opticians' Charity of the Year, to generate additional funds to support Scotland's premature babies and their families.

Lending support at the launch announcement was Bliss ambassador Lady Sarra Hoy, a lawyer by profession and wife of cycling champion Sir Chris Hoy, whose son Callum was born at 29 weeks back in 2014.

Reflecting on the success of the PanoCam fundraiser initiative, she said: "I want to thank Specsavers and all of their customers who have made this possible. What a fantastic achievement! It's so rewarding for everyone involved to be able to see the reality of their donation, which will have a direct impact and positive outcome on babies and their families."

MED Surgical, who supply the Visunex PanoCam Pro, usually charge £113,000 but generously contributed £40,000 to make the fundraising target of £73k more attainable.



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