

Advice on eye care for homeless

Staff from Specsavers have been giving free eye tests and advice to people who are homeless at special [Crisis at Christmas](#) charity eye care clinics in Edinburgh.

Six members of Specsavers' staff treated ten people at clinics held in the city earlier in December dispensing new glasses and issuing health care interventions to those who need it most.

The special clinics are part of a nationwide initiative by Specsavers to improve access to eye care for people experiencing homelessness and other disadvantaged groups, such as those who cannot leave their home unaided.

Dispensing optician Laura Baird, optometrist director Samantha Davidson and optical assistant Samantha Howie treated five patients at the first clinic, where four people received glasses on the day.

Samantha Davidson, optometrist director at Specsavers, said: "Volunteering with Crisis gives me an opportunity to give back to the local community, and allows me to provide an essential service to those who need it.

"I believe access to eyecare should be available for everyone, and so this clinic at Crisis is a great step forward to achieving this.

"If I can use my skills to make people's lives a little bit

better, then that makes volunteering worthwhile.”

Meanwhile, optical assistant Lesley Carrie, optometrist Tess Bunyan and optical dispenser Ryan Turner treated five patients at the second clinic, dispensing six pairs of glasses and two health care interventions.

Ryan Turner, dispensing optician at Specsavers, said: “Every day, we improve people’s quality of life by helping them achieve better sight and hearing.

“Unfortunately, for the several thousand people that are experiencing homelessness in the UK, it can be incredibly difficult to get access to this care and it is very much a key tenet of our founding vision – to make expert care accessible to everyone, regardless of the circumstances they might find themselves in’.”

One in three people who are homeless need glasses, so the clinic, which is one of many running at Crisis centres throughout the country, offers an invaluable service to people who experience eye problems¹ yet can face major barriers receiving eye care, whether those be financial, residential or not being eligible for NHS support.

As a charity working to end homelessness, Crisis supports thousands of people to provide education, training and help with housing, employment and health. Through its frontline services across Britain, the charity helps people find a path out of homelessness for good.

Matt Downie, Crisis chief executive, said: “People experiencing homelessness can face significant barriers when trying to access the healthcare they need and can go for years without having an eye test.

“We know half are likely to develop serious eye health conditions. Being able to connect the people we support at Christmas to vital health care services can make a huge

difference to people's lives and why we're incredibly grateful to be working with Specsavers to deliver much needed eye tests and advice."

As well as running eye care clinics at Crisis outreach centres, Specsavers is collaborating with [Vision Care for Homeless People](#), [Big Issue](#) and other homelessness services to create long-term solutions to tackle this health inequality.

Specsavers is also calling for changes to government policy to remove unnecessary barriers that make it difficult for people experiencing homelessness to access the eye care they need.

Long term plans include influencing policy and systems so people experiencing homelessness have access to free eye tests and glasses, domiciliary services and replacement glasses if broken, lost or stolen.

[specsavers.co.uk/news-and-information/community/homelessness](https://www.specsavers.co.uk/news-and-information/community/homelessness)



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