

Bus drivers benefit from free eye test initiative targeting transport industry for Road Safety Week 2018

Eye tests offered to Nottingham-based coach operator Sharpes as Vision Van continues its 'Eye Tests Save Lives' campaign

East Midlands premier bus and coach operator, Sharpes of Nottingham, encouraged its fleet of drivers to have an essential eye test in support of Road Safety Week (19 - 25 November 2018), with one driver's high blood pressure being picked up.

The detection, made during a routine eye test, will allow the condition to be monitored and treated – which is vital due to high blood pressure being a key risk factor for stroke.

The Vision Express' Vision Van visited the company as part of its award-winning 'Eye Tests Save Lives' campaign, which is committed to reducing around 3,000 road casualties each year that are attributed to poor driver sight.

47-year-old Simon Hassell from Nottingham, who received the high blood pressure warning, said: "My last eye test was only a couple of years ago, but I've found out today that I need glasses. The referral to my doctor for high blood pressure came as a shock – I didn't know an eye test could detect something like that. You only go to your doctors when you're feeling unwell and I felt fine, so who knows when the high blood pressure would have been detected without the eye test.



Simon Hassell visiting the Vision Van at Sharpes of Nottingham during Road Safety Week.

“I came onboard the Vision Van today because it was really convenient, being at my place of work. Big companies should be encouraging their staff to have eye tests regularly.”



Vision Express' Vision Van at Sharpes of Nottingham during Road Safety Week.

Sharpes of Nottingham is one of the coaching industry's biggest successes, having started with three used vehicles in 2004. It has expanded to a fleet of 50 with 50 drivers. The recent visit to the Langar, Nottingham depot provided free, comprehensive eye tests to around a third of its employees.

Sharpes of Nottingham Operations Director, James Sharpe, said: “We supported this because it's an important initiative and we acknowledge that the health and safety of professional drivers is a crucial part of reducing accidents on UK roads. As Group 2 licence-holders, bus drivers need to meet higher vision standards than other drivers, however there is no legal obligation for eye tests every two years, as recommended by the NHS. All of our drivers who visited the Vision Van had undergone an eye test since passing their test but that's not necessarily the norm within the professional driving community. We know from Vision Express that eye test uptake is an issue within the UK's general driving population, so we're happy to help them spread the message to all about the importance of regular eye tests.”

According to the Department for Transport's latest figures, the average age of UK bus drivers is 49 years, with 25% of drivers being aged 60 or over.¹ Given the increased risk of high blood pressure for ages 40 to 70 and research revealing high

¹ Department for Transport, Annual Bus Statistics, England 2016/17, Statistical Release 14 December 2017

blood pressure is a common occupational health issue for bus drivers², Vision Express is urging the industry to monitor their health by having regular eye tests.

Jay Ghadiali, director of professional services at Vision Express, added: “As Simon’s experience highlights, even if you believe your vision is fine, it is still crucial to get a regular eye test, and the NHS recommends one at least every two years. The value of sight checks is as a preventative step to safeguard vision for life, and our expert optometrists can help detect a range of conditions, including high blood pressure and high cholesterol.”

Over half of all strokes can be caused by high blood pressure³, and it is estimated that over five million people across the UK don’t realise they have the condition.

-ENDS-

Notes for editors

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About Vision Express

Vision Express is one of the largest optical retailers in the UK and part of [GrandVision](#), the global leader in optical retail operating in more than 40 countries, spanning over 6,500 stores and online.

With almost 600 stores nationwide, Vision Express first opened its doors in Newcastle in 1988. Built on a passion for the profession, it has gone from strength to strength, driven by a commitment to unparalleled customer service and providing the best individual optical care, the right product and great value. Customers can select from a vast range of genuine designer brands and the latest technology lenses, through to complete glasses from £39.

With around 6,000 employees, Vision Express makes a significant difference to the communities it operates within, and the organisations it chooses to support. As part of its commitment to [Vision. Taken Seriously](#), and as a responsible and caring retailer, Vision Express is proud to partner with a range of healthcare charities,

² Kompier, Michiel. (1996). Bus drivers: Occupational stress and stress prevention.

³ Royal College of Physicians Sentinel Stroke National Audit Programme (SSNAP). National clinical audit annual results portfolio March 2016-April 2017. Available: <http://bit.ly/INHylqH> Last accessed 24 October 2017

which have touched the lives of customers and teams. These companies provide vital support to people affected by vision-related conditions. They are part of the [Vision Express Charity Project](#) and include:

1. Childhood Eye Cancer Trust (CHECT)
2. International Glaucoma Association
3. Macular Society
4. Stroke Association
5. Temple Street University Hospital
6. Brake