

## Surrey toddler battling rare eye cancer is guest of honour to open new optician

“Full of life” five-year-old from Guildford cuts the ribbon marking new Vision Express store open

A brave youngster who is battling a rare eye cancer helped Vision Express open its new Haslemere store - raising awareness of an aggressive condition called retinoblastoma, which has seen her endure months of chemotherapy.



Olivia Lodge with Optometrist Zainab Chaudhry at the Vision Express Haslemere store

Olivia Lodge, aged five, officially cut the ribbon at the Vision Express store on Saturday 17 August 2019 accompanied by mum Magda, who describes her daughter as ‘full of life’. This is despite a diagnosis of retinoblastoma (Rb) from The Royal London Hospital just before Olivia’s third birthday, after Magda

noticed a reflective glow in her left eye – a common sign of the disease.

Still receiving treatment, Olivia originally had six months of chemotherapy with mixed results. Magda explains: “The diagnosis came with endless hospital visits and horrible side effects. Despite this, Olivia stayed very strong and rarely complained - she lost her hair, appetite and weight, but she didn’t lose her happy cheeky self.”

The treatment was working well and Olivia’s tumour had shrank from 16mm to 7mm, but the Lodge family received the devastating news shortly before Christmas last year that doctors had discovered new growth – the tumour had relapsed and Olivia needed new treatment.

For the last three months, Olivia has undergone further chemotherapy to battle the aggressive eye cancer. Magda said: “Olivia has still been attending school throughout the treatment and once again, she’s dealt with everything like a superstar. Olivia is a very strong, brave little lady - retinoblastoma is part of her, but it does not define her.”



L-R: Store manager Rom Sohal, Magda and Olivia Lodge, Kat Higgs from CHECT, optical assistant Nikki Weekes and optometrist Zainab Chaudhry.

A ribbon cutting led by Olivia and Magda celebrated the Vision Express store’s recent extensive refit and marked the optician officially open to the public – in the same convenient location on High Street.

Vision Express Haslemere store manager Rom Sohal added: “It was brilliant to have Olivia and her family join us to officially declare our new store open. Her story of battling retinoblastoma, and the courage shown at such a young age, is humbling and awe-inspiring.

“We’re proud to support the Childhood Eye Cancer Trust and we urge any parents that suspect retinoblastoma or notice any potential symptoms, such as a white glow or squint, to visit their local opticians or GP.”

To book an eye test at the new Haslemere store call 01428 642 224 or visit:

<https://www.visionexpress.com/opticians/opticians-in-the-south-east/surrey/haslemere/>

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## 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 healthcare charities, 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:
  - Childhood Eye Cancer Trust (CHECT)
  - Macular Society
  - Brake