

Macular Society joins forces with optician ahead of Macular Week to beat eye disease epidemic

Vision Express joins with charity to raise awareness of funding shortfall and announces free eye tests at its stores nationwide

With almost 1.5 million people in the UK affected by macular conditions, the most common form of sight loss in the UK; the Macular Society and Vision Express have teamed up to highlight there's still a lot more that needs to be done to raise awareness



Zac Shaw, Paralympic sprinter and ambassador for the Macular Society.

of the disease, starting with an eye test at Vision Express which is free when booked online.

New research shows macular disease is more prevalent than dementia – and is now an urgent public health issue because it is forecasted to reach epidemic proportions unless at least an extra £6 million a year is invested in research.

This Macular Week (24 – 29 June 2019), the Macular Society and Vision Express are encouraging others to consider the

impact of such a substantial funding shortfall. Vision Express is offering a free eye test during Macular Week, across all of its stores – which number around 600 in the UK and Ireland.

The latest collaboration builds on a successful four-year partnership, with a recent campaign by Vision Express, supported by Paralympic sprinter Zac Shaw, raising over £100k to fund the charity's research programme.

Zac Shaw was diagnosed with Stargardt's Disease, a very rare condition, following an eye test at Vision Express aged nine after he noticed his vision deteriorating. Now an

official ambassador for the charity, Zac continues to support the partnership and raise awareness of the much needed research into the condition.

Cathy Yelf, chief executive of the Macular Society, said:
“We are grateful to Vision Express for raising more than £100,000 at the end of last year and for their continued support for Macular Week. Support like theirs is vital in helping us achieve our aim of beating macular disease.

“Macular disease is cruel and isolating. It steals your sight, your confidence, your independence, and your ability to do the things you love. Day to day we hear from people about the devastating impact it has on their lives – taking away their dreams and plans for the future.



Cathy Yelf, chief executive of the Macular Society.

“Today, more and more people are being diagnosed with macular disease. In fact, the number of older people living with the condition is set to double in the next 20 years. It is already a major public health crisis —with far more people living with macular disease than dementia.

“We must urgently find a cure and the only way to do this is by funding much more research.”

Vision Express director of professional services, Dan McGhee, commented: “Our partnership with the Macular Society works so well because our concerns are the same. People really value their eye sight, especially in later life, but they aren’t doing enough to safeguard it. We’re proud to continue to join forces with the Macular Society, given the vital funding that is needed.

“Anyone can get an eye test at their local Vision Express for free during this week when booked online, and I would encourage anyone who has been thinking about getting their eyes tested to act now!”

To find out more about the Macular Society and the work they're doing for Macular Week 2019, visit here: <https://www.macularsociety.org/>

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Notes for editors

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About the Macular Society

- The Macular Society is the only charity determined to beat the fear and isolation of macular disease with world class research, and the best advice and support.
- Here in the UK, nearly 1.5 million have sight loss as a result of macular disease and this is on the increase.
- For general information on macular degeneration, call the Macular Society's helpline on 0300 3030 111 or email help@macularsociety.org

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