

# VISION CARE

FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

*Helping homeless people see  
a brighter future*

*... where you are!*

*Opening a new Opticians  
Clinic for Homeless People*



# What we do

Eight clinics operating weekly within homeless day centres. Over 100 volunteers - optometrists and assistants. Full sight tests and prescription glasses free of charge to people who are homeless.



## Also

- **Crisis at Christmas Opticians Service**
- **Research on homeless eye health**
- **Help local opticians to run pop-up clinics for homeless people.**
- **Talk to Government about homeless eye health.**

## ***Who we serve:***

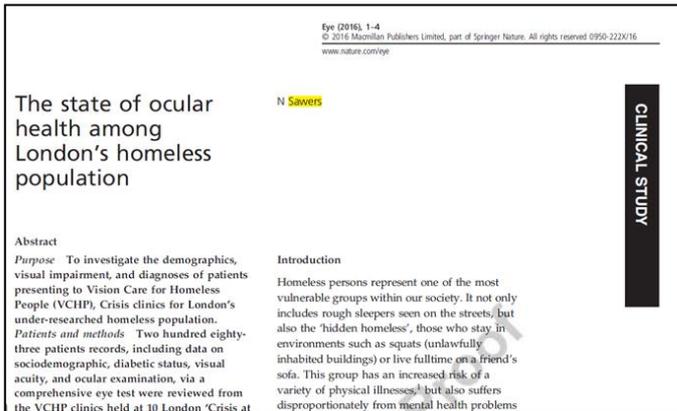
Homeless and vulnerable people: varied backgrounds;  
various challenges:

- Mental health issues
- Addiction to drugs and alcohol
- Ex armed service personnel
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Ex-offenders
- Financial problems/bankruptcy
- Unable or unwilling to integrate into normal society

Homeless people are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to obtaining sight tests, glasses and eye care.

*"I think what you guys have done is brilliant because it is "IN HOUSE" and it feels like you guys are part of the family and not outsiders." " **Anonymous Patient, Crisis Skylight***

# What's the need? Some of our earlier research.



Published 2016 – student volunteer.

80% of homeless people need glasses to see properly.

20% have an ocular pathology

12% are functionally visually impaired without glasses.



10% need to be referred

## *Homeless people have more eye problems than the general population*

- High prevalence of uncorrected refractive error
- Cataract
- Glaucoma
- Binocular vision problems
- Anterior eye problems – dry eye & blepharitis

*“I remember a time when a lady came to collect her glasses. She tried them on and asked me ‘how do I look?’. I replied ‘they look great’. Tears started to run down her cheeks and I asked her why. She said it was the first time she had owned a pair of glasses and the first time she had seen clearly.”* **Nick Sawers, VCHP Volunteer**

## Our Latest Research 2019 – Homeless Voices

*Understanding the eye health needs of people who are homeless and the barriers they face in getting eye care.*

*Experts by Experience conducted four focus groups at homeless day centres in London and asked 168 homeless people about their eye health.*

*Everybody should have an eye test every two years*



2  
YEARS

*A third of homeless people are ten years out of date for their eye test.*

## Voices of homeless people

*“The opticians – they’re strange places. I went into one and felt really out of place. I turned around and left”.*

*“I couldn’t afford the £90 I would need to get an eye test and some glasses. It may as well have been £90,000 for someone in my position.”*

Client who had not had an eye test for 6 years.

*“Everyone should be able to see properly, shouldn’t they? In this day and age? It’s a nightmare when you’re squinting, trying to work things out all the time. I can hardly wait to see my daughter. She’s 12 and I haven’t seen her face clearly for five years.”*

## *Research 2019 Questionnaires - What stops homeless people getting eye tests and glasses?*

*Over two thirds have been put off going to an opticians. Why?*

### **What homeless people said;**

32% Glasses are too expensive

31% It was not a priority for me

30% I did not know whether I can get the glasses free.

18% Not comfortable going into a High Street Opticians

Yet 67% of homeless people need glasses now.

*"I last had an eye-test 20 years ago in the army, my first concern wasn't me eyes."*

*Chris, Patient at Skylight*

## *Running a VCHP clinic*

So you want to run an opticians clinic for homeless people ...

VCHP branch clinics:

- local groups are helped to set up and run a VCHP clinic
- supported within a branch structure
- Fitting into an existing administration and governance framework.
- Part of a national charity, branch network and brand

A partnership between:

- Local Leadership Team
- VCHP charity and central support

*"I like to spend time in the local library reading and so my glasses mean a lot to me. Thank you."*

*Mr. Brian Shepherd, Patient*

# Opening a new VCHP Branch



Harinder Paul, one of our founders, with a patient.

## **VCHP provides:**

- **GOS contract management**
- **Governance and compliance systems**
- **Volunteer recruitment, communications and rotas.**
- **Operational systems, standards and performance processes.**
- **Publicity and fundraising**
- **Finding equipment and in-kind resources**
- **Accounting, finance and insurance.**

**A clinic can be started by a small team of local champions to lead the project. The team and clinic can grow from there.**

## ***What we offer you to get you going:***

Advice, materials and resources to help you plan, organise and get off the ground

- Operational models. Model needs analysis, business plan and financials.
- Publicity, fundraising and volunteer recruitment materials and ideas.
- Governance structure, Policies, Terms of Reference, role and team descriptions.
- A Memorandum of Understanding between the Local Leadership Team and VCHP.
- Start up project requirements, activities and project plan.
- Equipment/facilities requirements

**Consultancy, advice and contacts. Central fundraising support.**

**Help with finding volunteers for your local team.**

*“There is definitely a need for this service. Thank you Vision care for creating a service like this for homeless people!”*

*Amanda Malek, Cold Weather Shelter, London*

## *What the local team does to open a branch*

The Local Leadership Team heads and takes responsibility for the branch. Its functions:

- Ready the clinic
- Ready the volunteers. On site supervision and training
- Team building
- Prepare for NHS inspection
- Oversee Clinic Operations, compliance
- Outreach
- Fundraising and Events.
- Equipment/gifts in kind/glazing (we can help)

*"I remember a time when a lady came to collect her glasses. She tried them on and asked me 'how do I look?'. I replied 'they look great'. Tears started to run down her cheeks and I asked her why. She said it was the first time she had owned a pair of glasses and the first time she had seen clearly."* **Nick Sawers, VCHP Volunteer**

## ***What we can offer you to keep you going:***

- General Optical Services (GOS) contract management.
- Volunteer recruitment, mandatory training, communications and rotas
- Systems, compliance, accounting and finance
- Insurance
- National PR and fundraising
- Campaigning
- Statistics, evaluation, monitoring and research
- Sharing learning and good practice.
- Assistance finding funds, gifts and services in kind.
- Standards and performance processes.

*“Being homeless means I can’t pay for my glasses in a high street store, because of Vision Care I now have no pain when reading because of my new glasses.” **Mr Ogurek, Patient***

## **What are the challenges? Finding finance**

Start up costs include fitting out a clinic. The optical industry will usually help out, but depending on equipment donations, the cost to start a clinic ranges between £5,000 and £8,000.

On-going, local branches have a target to raise at least £5,000 per year towards local running and central support costs.

Fundraising is facilitated by VCHP's dissemination of research and campaign information to the public, opticians and the NHS.

Fundraising help, handbook, systems, ideas and collateral all provided.

## What are the challenges? Local Fundraising

In order to break-even we need to fund each branch by around £5,000 value per year. This is achieved in different ways by each branch, such as:

- With local funding from NHS, Council , Trusts or businesses
- Increased volunteer support
- Central and branch fundraising activity
- Increasing patient numbers by outreach
- Arranging HC1 eligibility

**This is achievable for each branch and we will help**

## Other challenges

Clinics can, after an initial fanfare, start to falter. Volunteers can become hard to find.

**Solutions:** *Local ambassadors recruit volunteers. Local support & development of volunteers. Central recruitment, support & PR. In extremis, may use locums.*

Turnover of homeless people is low. Once they are all tested, patient numbers may drop off.

**Solutions:** *Outreach Team brings patients in. Go mobile. Open another branch under GOS mandatory services contract.*

Performance and administration issues.

**Solutions:** *Central support. Strong local leadership team with accountability to VCHP though: dialogue; monitoring and evaluation systems; a planning and review process.*

## Next steps– work with us on ...

### Phase 1 - feasibility

Survey to check level of local support: leadership team members, volunteers, in-kind support and financial support.

Check need for service, find potential sites.

### Phase 2 - planning

Develop business case, plan. Seek start up funding.

Preliminary agreements with partners.

Recruit and organise volunteers.

### Phase 3 - implementation

Formally partner with VCHP.

Get ready. Prepare clinic. Start up.

