

IMPACT SUMMARY:

WHAT WE LEARNT FROM LISTENING TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES ABOUT EYE HEALTH

How Aston University, the Aston Villa Foundation and Citizens UK worked together to understand the barriers Birmingham communities face when accessing eye health services

Project background

Vision screenings are routinely carried out in schools by the NHS and glasses are subsidised through General Ophthalmic Services (GOS), however:



15%

of pupils fail eye screenings



1/3

do not attend follow up assessments



Pupils from the poorest backgrounds are more likely to suffer from uncorrected vision problems



Untreated vision problems result in more learning support needed

Reference Bruce et al. BMJ Open 2018;8:e021277

Our project

The research team

Researchers from Aston University partnered with the Aston Villa Foundation and Citizens UK to secure grant funding from UKRI's Enhancing place-based partnerships in public engagement programme. It allowed the research team to better understand the barriers communities face when accessing eye care.

The team also included optometrists so that all community questions could be accurately answered and a translator so that all community members could participate.

What we did

We ran a series of listening events to hear the difficulties that communities faced accessing eye health services first-hand in some of the most deprived wards of Birmingham with the help of Citizens UK anchor partners in Aston, Birchfield, Lozells, Nechells and Newtown.

What we learnt

From listening to our partners and local citizens, several barriers to eye care were identified in our local community:



Some optometrists are not open outside of '9-5'



Attendees understood optometrists correct vision, but not their role in eye health



The cost of eye tests and glasses



Lack of available information about NHS funded eye services



NHS and GOS information is in English, and optometrists are not supported by interpretation in the same way GPs are



There can be a stigma associated with wearing glasses



Waiting rooms in the optometrist are not always child friendly



Parents felt that children required two pairs of glasses so that one could be left at school

This listening project allowed Aston University and The Aston Villa Foundation to help the community through the Villa Vision project. So far, the project has:



1,130

Engaged with 1,130 children and adults in educational workshops



475

Delivered 475 vision and colour screenings



100s

Villa Vision has made its remote eye health learning resources available to several hundred children in local primary schools during the third lockdown



FREE GLASSES

The Villa Vision project now provides a second free pair of glasses to those that need them

*The schools that have been covered (in person and remotely) and are scheduled to be covered by the Programme in 2021 fall into the following wards, Aston, Birchfield, Lozells, Nechells, Smethwick, Handsworth, Erdington, Hodge Hill, Witton, Great Barr, Stockland Green, Selly Oak, Acocks Green, Kings Heath, Bordesley Green, Hall Green, Sheldon, Sutton Coldfield)



Aston Villa Foundation invested in a software system to provide free vision screening for adults during Aston Villa Football Club match days



Development of eye health workshops for adults to raise awareness and provide information on eye health conditions (to be delivered once COVID restrictions are relaxed)

This project has also resulted in:

The potential creation of a health hub

Aston University is planning to develop a health hub open to the community.

Empowering communities

Aston University is working with Birmingham City Council to develop a strategic approach to support communities to translate official information quickly and effectively.

An engagement guide

We now have a guide to ensure projects are win:win and communities feel valued, empowered and engaged.

Further community engagement

Aston University is funding a project to understand the barriers older ethnic minority adults face when accessing services digitally.

Strengthened regional relationships

Working closely with Citizens UK and the Aston Villa Foundation has improved Aston University's working relationships and allows us to support our communities better.

Strengthen community relationships

The project demonstrated there is a demand from our communities to engage with Aston University. We now have contacts, and ways of communicating that are feeding into our website, communications plans and regional strategy.

Updating the Red Book

Aston University's School of Optometry has initiated discussions with the College of Optometrists to support the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health to update the Personal Child Health Record (known as the 'red book'), to provide more detailed information on eye health.

Evaluating findings

Aston University Health Psychology researchers are evaluating the impact of Villa Vision.

Sharing findings

In order to share the findings with Optometrists, a report with key aspects from the listening events has been submitted to be published in the Optometry Today magazine.

Shaped Civic Agreement

This project provided insights into the challenges local communities face and helped to shape Aston University's Civic Agreement.

For more information



avfc.co.uk/foundation/community-engagement/villa-vision/



Enquiries: villa.vision@avfc.co.uk

General community support questions: astonengages@aston.ac.uk

Partners



Funded and supported by



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