



Opticians & Audiologists

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Autism friendly service to be launched by Lincoln opticians

STAFF at Specsavers in Lincoln High Street are developing what they believe is the first 'autism friendly' store in the county.

Training has been progressing since mid-June to ensure all staff understand the specific needs of autistic people and create the right environment to make them feel comfortable.

The initiative is the brainchild of optical assistant Tracy Orchard and has led to the store working closely with many local autistic organisations, including CANadda, Gain, Paact, Lincolnshire Autistic Society as well as Supporting Children with Autism – a Lincolnshire Children's Services run course. Discussions have been taking place for more than two months.

From 6 August, the store will be able to offer a service to all autistic customers, which will not only consider the building but also the approach of staff and the surrounding noise. It comes as the store is also launching colorimetry testing, with consultations available to ascertain if overlays or specially tinted glasses can help alleviate some dyslexic or visual stress symptoms.

Store manager Nigel Taylor said: 'Tracy is one of our newest assistants but she came up with this proposal not long after joining us. We all felt it was a great idea because many people don't realise how daunting a visit to a busy opticians can be.

'Our aim is to make the experience as welcoming and calming as possible and we would be delighted if our template was picked up by other shops and stores in Lincoln and beyond.'

Debbie Marshall from CANadda said: 'This is excellent news and I was delighted when I was contacted by Specsavers in Lincoln. It has been an absolute pleasure working with them. It's extremely important that autistic people are listened to, as we often feel unheard and left out of any involvement in delivering training on autism awareness and understanding.

'I wish Specsavers the best of luck and I am confident the store will do fantastically, as we were taken seriously. This means that autistic children, young people and adults, can access an optician and feel included when Specsavers hold its autism friendly sessions.'

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