

Jolly Giraffe Scheme

Eye specialist in Suffolk have launched the Jolly Giraffe Scheme to encourage **ALL** children to visit an optometrist for a free NHS Sight Test before entering school and to raise awareness of the availability and benefits of free NHS Sight Tests for under 16's and to encourage more parents to take their children and be tested.

Children who have not yet reached school age can benefit from an eye examination, as some conditions are recognisable before they become obvious to parents. Early diagnosis can help a child's development, both in terms of their visual development and ability to learn.

Suffolk County Council Children's Centre Programme has worked in partnership with Suffolk Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Local Optometric Committee to launch the Jolly Giraffe scheme across the county.

Using a cartoon character, Jolly Giraffe, the scheme promotes free eye tests for children under 16 to help early detection of possible squints and reduced vision. Jolly Giraffe is also the star of a short story or booklet put together by local eye specialists about the little giraffe who went to get his eyes tested.

Optometrists who show a special interest in testing children's eyes display a Jolly Giraffe poster in their window. Posters and booklets have been sent to all pre-schools, nurseries, children's centres, GP practices, outreach clinics, health visitors and school nurses and secondary schools advising all parents that eye examinations are free on the NHS for under 16-year-olds.