

## **Orthoptists- Profession specific descriptor for registered professionals and support workers**

As experts in eye function and movement, Orthoptists are ideally placed to make a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of the population. The focus is on Making Every Contact Count (MECC) healthy behaviour conversation and highlighting the negative effects of risky behaviours on eye health. The Orthoptist workforce have a role in public health and support this through conversations with people in their care about other parts of their lifestyle that contribute to the development of ill-health such as physical activity, smoking, alcohol consumption and loneliness.

### **Wider Determinants**

Orthoptists play a key role in addressing the wider determinants of health. Working strategically to contribute to the [PHE falls consensus statement](#), to support and encourage effective commissioning and the spreading of good practice to ensure older people are able to live without fear of falling and injury. Orthoptists also play a key role in paediatric health, ensuring children have the best start in life which we know is important when considering the first 4 years of a child's life have a significant impact on future health and life chances. There are many initiatives and good practices relating to orthoptist and paediatric health, including work taking place by orthoptist assistants working with school nurses to ensure timely provision of glasses and patches.

By treating problems with vision, Orthoptists promote access to education, social activities, play, and work. They work with teachers, and educational services for sensory impairment to ensure that any children with visual impairments can meaningfully engage with the curriculum and their peers. Research has been carried out which stated that teachers noticed huge improvements in how children who received treatment were able to relate to peers and were better able to focus on their work. Other research has shown that by screening children aged 4-5 for visual problems and treating any issues, Orthoptists were able to contribute to improved confidence and learning in children.

### **Health Improvement**

The Orthoptist workforce integrates Making Every Contact Count (MECC) within their daily practice. This includes using consultation opportunities to talk to service users about smoking cessation, alcohol consumption levels and signpost to other services as needed. Further examples where Orthoptists are supporting health improvement through behaviour change includes the role of Orthoptists in the delivery of falls rehabilitation talks about maintaining and checking sight, helping service users who have had a fall to prevent further events in the future. In addition, Orthoptists and their support workers can signpost people or socially prescribe individuals to other services as needed for example, Improving Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT), or citizens' advice, and other services, ensuring access to wider support to improve health and mental wellbeing.

### **Population Healthcare**

Orthoptists were instrumental in the development of [Vision Screening materials and guidance](#) for 4-5 year old children in England. Vision screening for 4 to 5-year-olds is part of the healthy child programme, and the new materials summarise best practice for commissioners and those who carry

out the tests, including school nurses, to ensure orthoptic-led screening is of a consistent high-quality and equitable across schools.

Orthoptists host clinics in the community so that they are accessible to patients. This supports vulnerable communities and ensures that as many children are screened and treated during their critical period which minimises vision problems during later life.

Orthoptists liaise with educational services, and third sector charities with low vision services or who are related to the key populations that the orthoptists work with, for example local liaison officers can be employed by charities to deliver services in local area.

## **Health Protection**

Orthoptists often pick up signs and symptoms in the early detection of cancer or illness. Orthoptists are able to identify problems in patients before they realise, they have a problem, enabling them to receive treatment before any significant symptoms or secondary conditions develop.

There is a strong safeguarding element to Orthoptics. Orthoptists monitor the children and families during appointments, particularly where there are cases of missed appointments. If there are signs of neglect, Orthoptists can liaise with social services to establish safeguarding plans.

## **Orthoptists – Wider Reading and Case Study Examples**

Public Health - British and Irish Orthoptic Society

<b>Health Protection</b>	<b>Wider Determinants</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domiciliary Orthoptic Assessments for patients unable to attend the Hospital Eye Service after a stroke or who have a neurological disorder</li> <li>• Visual processing difficulties assessment in children in Warrington, Widnes and Halton - a holistic approach</li> <li>• Improving access to eye care for adults with learning disabilities in South Devon</li> </ul>
<b>Population Healthcare</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Orthoptic visual processing difficulties (VPD) clinic during COVID-19 lockdown. The affectivity of telephone consultation implementation rather than face to face visits</li> </ul>	<b>Health Improvement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preceptorship Public Health Initiative: New Graduates</li> <li>• The evolution of the Orthoptists role in supporting patients with Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension</li> <li>• Implementing a public-health style questionnaire into the Orthoptic case history: A prospective case report</li> <li>• Orthoptists – Refer to a link worker Social Prescribing</li> </ul>