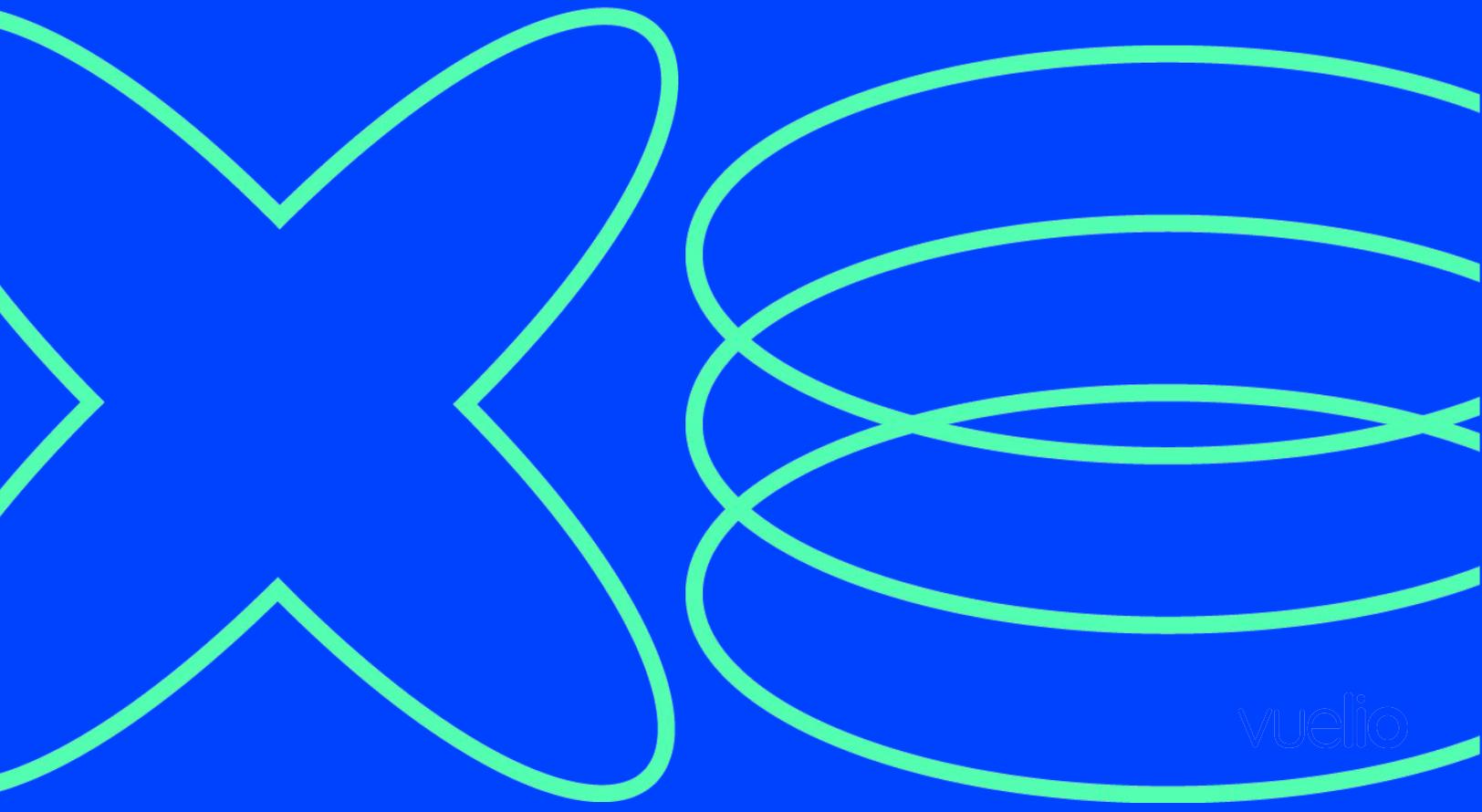


How the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) helped to halt controversial ticket office closures



RNIB is one of the UK's leading sight loss charities, and the largest community of blind and partially sighted people.

Offering help and support – from practical to emotional reassurance; campaigning for more accessible transport; reading services and products – RNIB aims to be a catalyst for change.

As 250 people begin to lose their sight each day, RNIB works to create a world with no barriers to people with sight loss.

The UK Government's [5 July 2023 announcement](#) of plans to close train ticket offices across England and Glasgow Central posed a number of challenges for RNIB in its support of sight-impaired people across the UK.

The challenge of opposing Government plans

The Government's proposal to close almost all ticket offices across England and Glasgow Central was met with controversy as many communities would be negatively impacted – blind and partially sighted people, the elderly, younger children traveling alone; anyone who would require extra help with their journey that can't be provided by a ticket machine.

Despite the potentially huge consequences of the proposed closures, a consultation was opened for just 21 days.

For the RNIB Policy and Campaigns team, the aims of the quick-turnout campaign were clear – push for an extension to the consultation period, and keep the ticket offices open for the communities that depend on them.

RNIB has regional teams across the country who all had to collaborate to spark engagement with the cause. Consultation response templates were shared, emails were sent out to subscribers encouraging contact with MPs, and news items were placed detailing how to submit responses.

As the consultation period was extended to 1 September on 8 August, RNIB continued to push on behalf of impacted communities, asking supporters to keep writing to their MPs and local newspapers expressing their concerns.

Social media was also vital, with use of hashtags and the sharing of personal stories encouraged. The RNIB team amplified videos of personal testimonies that demonstrated the [inaccessibility](#) of ticket machines and [online booking](#), as well as negative impacts on [day-to-day travel](#).

As of 4 September, 1,856 supporters had contacted their Member of Parliament, which meant a massive 90% of MPs in England had received a message about the issue from RNIB campaigners.

Politicians openly engaging in the campaign included the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Dr Nik Johnson, who met with RNIB campaigners at Ely train station to discuss the importance of accessibility and to experience for himself how difficult it is to interact with a ticket machine if you have sight loss. The work of RNIB was also mentioned during [Westminster Hall debate](#) in mid-September, as Labour MP Margaret Greenwood raised the concerns of her own constituency.

'When politicians talked about the issue in Parliament, they spoke about the experiences of blind and partially sighted constituents and shared those stories directly,' said RNIB local campaigns manager Lindsay Coyle.

'Labour actually used some of our statistics in their comms, as well.'

From #INeedATicketOffice to the BBC Breakfast sofa

National media outlets, and local outlets across the devolved nations, picked up the story, as volunteer campaigners, regional campaign officers, policy officers and spokespeople gave interviews.



Just some of the highlights in coverage were chief social change officer Vivienne Francis in [BBC News](#) reporting the groundswell of public opposition, an opinion piece from policy officer Erik Matthies in [Metro](#) highlighting what rail travel means for blind and partially sighted people; and time on the [BBC Breakfast sofa](#) with Naga Munchetty and Charlie Stayt.

Using a combination of Vuelio's Media Database, Media Monitoring, and Insight reporting, the RNIB secured 1,121 pieces of media coverage across broadcast print and online for this campaign, achieving a huge key message penetration rate of 98%, with 94% directly mentioning the charity's research.

'On the first day, we reached about 906 media outlets, which was a record for the charity for a one-day event,' said Gorki Duhra from the RNIB PR team.

'Our messaging resonated with so many different people across society. We were on target straight away in getting the message out.'

Success in making meaningful change

In October 2023, transport secretary Mark Harper asked operators to withdraw their proposals – ticket offices would not be closed, and RNIB had achieved both of their objectives. The team proudly shared the win [across social media](#) and their own networks including [RNIB Connect Radio](#).

'As a charity, we heard rumours about this a week before the announcement,' said Gorki.

'We had a few statements signed off and ready, and our distribution list of journalists – six minutes after it was announced, I had our statement out in the press.

'PR isn't just a press release, it's using social media content, audio content, other messages – it's sharing what people are really saying.'



Vuelio helps organisations make their story matter by providing monitoring, insight, engagement, and evaluation tools in a single platform.

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