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### **National Shoe Fitting Week and SOCPOD**

The Society of Shoe Fitters are delighted that we are working more closely with SOCPOD members. Despite approaching our 55<sup>th</sup> year as a not-for-profit organisation it was only last year that we decided to create a campaign aimed at encouraging people back into shoe shops (primarily independent shoe shops), for a professional shoe fitting service. National Shoe Fitting Week was born! Considering its small beginnings this year the initiative has taken wings and is flying, and we hope you will come onboard and enjoy the flight with us!

Lots of SOCPOD members joined forces with our membership to create special events in shops up and down the country. Some gave mini-consultations, others talks, one or two even set up clinics in stores for the week...the response was amazing and thank you to everyone who joined in. Our members reported a far greater understanding between our respective specialisations at the same time the public received far more information and education about what they should be wearing and how their problems can be treated.

This allowed SOCPOD members a preview of the new ranges instore and proved there are still some professional shoe fitters who understand about the foot and how it functions and the problems they face when selling to the public. Quality footwear with a service is primarily found at independent shoe shops (although there are some very good multiples too), all of whom are suffering due to self-service cheap outlets and online sale of footwear. Online is a necessary evil, but the public do not realise the importance of growing feet and that having a Qualified Shoe Fitter to fit and monitor their children's feet free of charge, is in fact preventative medicine. This service is now abused as parents then surf the web on their iPhones looking for a pound or two cheaper – but won't worry about the cost of p&p, or that shoes in the same size may not actually fit!

The S.S.F. believes that any online site selling children's footwear should carry a prominent Government Health Warning. Unfortunately we have not had any luck in getting a response from health officials – maybe something your organisation and members could address and would have more luck?

Another very positive thing to come from working together has been that many Orthotist's have seen how difficult it is to fit custom made orthotics into mainstream footwear and that it can help to find the shoe first and then adapt an orthotic to fit, thus saving precious NHS funding for more severe cases and speeding up the response time for children. However your members were unsurprised at the number of people who should be seeking help but have never been to a SOCPOD member and should be wearing an orthotic.

The Society of Shoe Fitters has never faced a more difficult task in educating the public about the importance of shoe fitting. Independent shops are finding it hard to compete and as they close, the expertise within them goes too. The number of queries we receive from the public increases year on year as they are faced with fashion stores and supermarkets swallowing up the little people. We feel this is a good reason for your members to be involved in the sale of footwear, as your advice is more likely to be taken. This is why we are currently putting the final touches to a course aimed at your members to tell you more about how the footwear industry works; the nitty-gritty of footwear, how it is made and the people selling it, and we will be launching this course toward the middle of the year.

In the meantime together we can bridge the gap between the shoe industry and the nation's foot health by promoting National Shoe Fitting Week and displaying posters – so thank you all for your support.

For more information about National Shoe Fitting Week go online: [www.shoefitters-uk.org](http://www.shoefitters-uk.org)  
or email: [secretary@shoefitters-uk.org](mailto:secretary@shoefitters-uk.org)