



Our strategy for 2021-2024



Tackling vision loss together

About us

Sight Scotland Veterans offers information, guidance and support to military veterans at a number of settings, including at their homes, in the community and at our activity centres. The vast majority of veterans that we support lost their sight after their time in service due to old age and conditions like glaucoma and macular degeneration. A smaller number of veterans lost their sight during active service.

Sight Scotland Veterans was founded during the First World War by our sister charity, Sight Scotland. Today, the charities operate in partnership, led by the same Chief Executive, Board and Senior Management Team, with each having its own Director of Services to lead operations. Each charity has its own finances and charity number.



New direction 2021-2024

As of autumn 2021, we support approximately 1200 veterans with significant sight loss in Scotland. With an ageing National Service population, and because age is the biggest risk factor for sight loss, in recent years there has been an increase in the number of blind and partially sighted veterans. Based on a range of sources, we estimate there are around 20,000 veterans with sight loss living in Scotland today and that by 2028, this number will decline to around 16,000. We therefore have an urgent need to reach out to significantly more veterans with sight loss while we have the opportunity to do so.

Over the last decade, our support has predominantly been for veterans with significant visual impairment through our centres and our outreach service. However, we recognise that there are many more veterans who could benefit from our support at an earlier stage in their sight loss journey. Early intervention can have significant benefits in terms of slowing down the impact of sight loss. We also recognise that family members of those experiencing sight loss can benefit from support and advice. Our new strategy aims to reach out to significantly more veterans with sight loss, at an earlier stage where possible, and also aims to extend our services to family and friends to provide advice and support.

Planning for our new direction

In early 2021, we engaged with colleagues and the veterans that we support to gain feedback on our current services and to develop ideas. Colleagues participated in a series of focus groups and a sample of veterans participated in telephone interviews with a market research team.

Our new aim

We want to support all veterans in Scotland who have sight loss, regardless of the cause.

Who do we support?

If a veteran is struggling with their sight or can expect to struggle with their sight after a sight loss diagnosis, we are here to support them, their family and their friends.



How will we provide support?

We are here to help veterans, and their families and friends, to connect, be independent and live well.



Being Connected

We know that connections and communities matter.

We help veterans to connect to the right information, services and local support. We are also here to provide opportunities for our community to share experiences, support each other and celebrate comradeship, for those who enjoy this.

These three pillars of support – being connected, being independent and living well – will be used as a framework to develop our services and measure our impact.



Being Independent

Helping veterans feel in control of their lives is important.

We are here to support the learning of new skills, provide the equipment needed, and build knowledge to enable veterans to live confidently and as independently as possible.



Living Well

It is important that veterans can live well with their sight loss.

We help veterans understand and manage their condition and to provide support for their physical, emotional and financial wellbeing, so veterans, their families and their friends can carry on doing, or can aspire to do, the things in their life that are important to them.



Our values

At every step we will sense-check and self-assess how our plans and our delivery support our organisational values:

Transform

We transform outcomes for people with sight loss

We embrace change and constantly look for ways to improve

Unite

We connect with partners and communities to support more people

We work across the organisation to maximise our impact

Thrive

We care about those we work with and want them to flourish

We do vital work and we want to thrive too!

Principles of Working

To help align our work to our values, and to best deliver our strategy, the following principles will shape how we work:

- Our services are underpinned by self-management principles – we will work in a person-centred way to empower veterans to manage their life with sight loss on their terms.
- We are insights-led – we draw on the insight from our work and wider evidence to proactively develop and address gaps collaboratively; to increase reach, relevance and impact.
- We are shaped by our community – we listen, learn, and improve accordingly using the knowledge that comes from direct lived experience.
- We are inclusive – we proactively reach out and engage those with diverse experience and backgrounds.



Stages of sight loss

We will use the following four categories to describe the stages of sight loss that a veteran we support might be at:

- Pre-diagnosis
- Recently diagnosed eye condition
- Deteriorating eyesight
- Those with significant sight loss or are registered as sight impaired.

Strategy Outputs

By the end of this three-year strategy period, we will be able to demonstrate:



Increased innovation and continued service improvement

We will innovate and continually improve our service offer, focusing on making a positive difference to our veterans' community.



Increased service reach, impact, and engagement

We will have increased our relevance and reach within our community and amongst those we currently underserve. More people are aware of our services and using them when they need them. Services are part of a coherent offering with clear entry points for veterans wanting to access them.



Increased partnership working

We will have developed appropriate partnerships to increase our support offer and reach in a way that best meets our community's needs, enables best use of resources, and increases our impact for veterans beyond our own specialised expertise in sight loss.



Increased use of technology

We will have the right technology for the job, and we are making the most of it to advance our work. We will use the opportunities provided via Assistive Technology, allowing us to provide more services and to spend more time helping our veterans and their families.



Support for family, friends, and carers

Not only are we able to offer a range of support to veterans, but also to those who are caring for veterans with sight loss either by directly providing support or working with others to do so.



Medical and social research

We have invested in appropriate avenues of medical and social research with the best potential to increase knowledge and understanding in ways which can benefit the veterans we support and those we have not reached.



What are we going to do?

Driven forward by our community, we will turn our strategic vision into a reality by delivering on four strategic goals.

Goal One - Enhance the support we provide

We will ensure that the individual is always at the heart of all our services by focusing on all stages of their sight loss journey, and we will extend our services and provide a more responsive approach at an earlier stage.

To achieve this strategic goal:

We will support veterans to increase their emotional wellbeing

We will develop a range of specialist services, including a counselling service, that supports veterans their families and friends to deal with the ongoing emotional impact of their sight loss and increase their resilience for the future.

We will support veterans to improve their financial wellbeing

We will provide veterans with information about the different types of financial support available to them, and provide veterans with help and advice to help them address their financial concerns seamlessly.

We will build our knowledge of Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology and aids have the power to transform lives. We will build and share our knowledge on Assistive Technology to inform and support veterans' independent living and provide grants for useful technology that could help a veteran live independently. We may invest in appropriate Assistive Technology and development opportunities.

We will build a community of peers to support others

Helping our community to self-manage, we will build a community of support, increasing the ways that our veterans, their families and friends can together increase their knowledge and confidence – sharing experiences, learning from and supporting each other.



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Goal Two - To remove barriers and become more accessible

We will help more veterans access our support by updating our eligibility criteria. We want to support all veterans in Scotland who are experiencing sight loss, not just those with significant sight loss. We will make it easier for veterans and their families and friends to contact us and get the support they need in a timely manner.

To achieve this strategic goal:

We will tailor our existing services

We will develop our existing services – outreach, rehabilitation and centres – to provide tailored support to our veterans based on their need and what matters most to them. We will identify areas where we need to expand and develop key areas of work so more veterans, families, and friends can be supported.

We will provide support quickly and easily

We will make it easier for people to contact us and will make sure that the information and support they need is available when people need it through the creation of a ‘Sight Scotland Veterans Support Hub’.

We will develop a centre without walls

We will extend the opportunities for our veterans to try sporting and meaningful activities, and then to self-organise, so they can continue to engage independently in these activities. We will build opportunities for our veterans to connect socially with each other by phone and online for those who seek it, sharing in a sense of comradeship.

We will review who we support

We will undertake a review on whether we should recognise others who have served beyond the armed forces, such as those who worked in munitions factories, the Bevin boys and other civilian uniformed forces. The review will be predicated on confidence and evidence that we are, and will continue to be able to, reach every veteran in Scotland with sight loss who needs our support.

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Goal Three - Understand what success looks like and ways to improve

We will capture and measure the success we are having, so we can strengthen our services and demonstrate the difference we are making.

To achieve this strategic goal:

We will understand the difference we are making

We will develop a set of people-driven and outcome-focused performance measures linked to our priority themes of Connect, Independence and Living Well to help us understand the difference we make to people's lives and the progress of our strategic goals.

We will work alongside our community

We will build our capacity and skills to work alongside those who we currently support and those we are yet to engage with; their families and friends; their carers; and the professionals who provide support. This will allow us to recognise the changing needs of the veterans' population that we support now and the needs of future populations.

We will respond to what people tell us

We will ensure that we are able to respond to what people tell us matters to them by introducing an innovation process which helps us to identify, prioritise and co-produce new approaches and ways of working.



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Goal Four - Use our resources wisely

We will balance how we plan, manage, and operate our services to make the best use of our resources and ensure our funding is spent responsibly.

To achieve this strategic goal:

We will develop an operating model which meets our needs

We will develop the best possible operating model and introduce a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring our processes, systems and services are delivered in the most efficient and effective way possible.

We will prioritise those in need

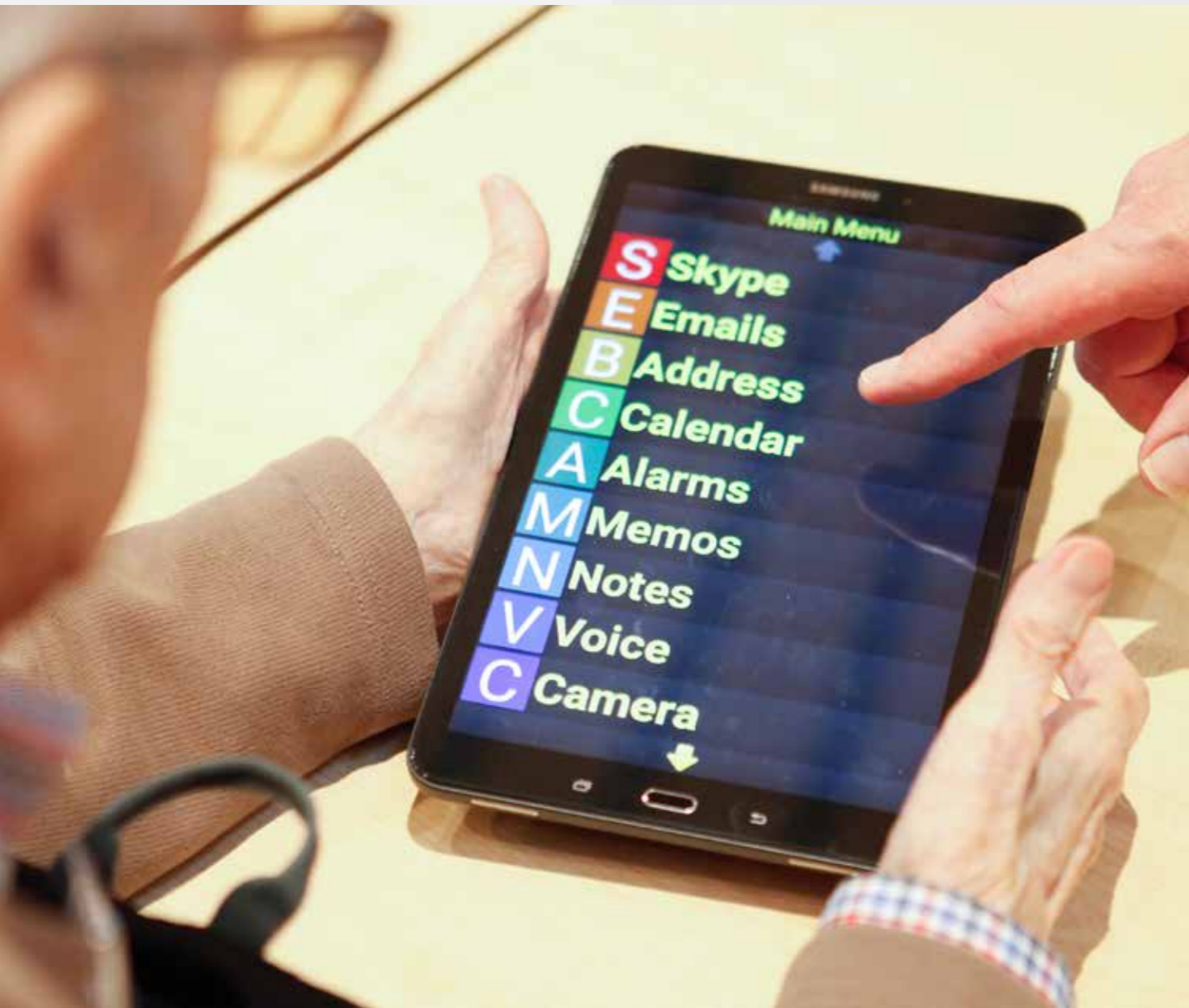
Whether equipment, financial support or the services we provide; our support will be based on clearly defined needs of the veteran, helping ensure that our resources are directed towards those who are most in need.

We will involve volunteers in our work

We will extend our community of support by developing meaningful roles for volunteers to be engaged in our work so we can extend who we support and together make the biggest difference.

We will introduce the right technology for the job

We will introduce new technology that allows us to operate efficiently and improve our ability to collect and use data in our work to guide us to make informed decisions, as well as to understand who is using our services and the value of the services to them.





**Sight Scotland
Veterans**



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