



Our Future Direction 2021



Tacking vision loss together



Supporting people of all ages with sight loss across Scotland and ensuring their voices are heard on the issues of most importance to them is what drives us.

Sight loss causes isolation and significantly alters lives, yet less than one in three adults get help within the first year of their diagnosis. People with sight loss are at a higher risk of poor education outcomes, unemployment, mental health problems, loneliness and financial challenges for the rest of their lives.

There are around 180,000 people living in Scotland today with significant sight loss.

Every hour someone in Scotland starts to lose their sight.

Our mission is to reach everyone in Scotland with sight loss – where and when they need us. I am grateful and proud of all our staff and volunteers who go above and beyond to make this happen.

Michael Craig
Chair
Sight Scotland / Sight Scotland Veterans





About us

Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans are sister charities. We are determined that no one should face sight loss alone.

Sight Scotland is one of Scotland's oldest charities and has been dedicated to meeting the challenges of visual impairment for over two centuries. Sight Scotland Veterans was established in the First World War. The charities are governed by the same Board and share a Chief Executive, senior management roles and head office functions. Each charity has its own Director of Services who leads the operations, as well as having separate finances.

In addition to running services, we support visually impaired people through advocacy and campaigning, making sure that the voices of those with sight loss and their families and carers are heard at the highest level. We aim to strengthen our focus on research and development through medical research, social research, impact evaluation and through new forms of technology and innovative models of support.



Our values: Who we are and what we stand for

Our values are our moral compass, they reflect who we are from the inside out; what we stand for. By living and breathing our values every single day we will successfully deliver our strategies and our ambitions of reaching many more people and communities who need our support. Our three values; Transform, Unite and Thrive, are closely entwined with our identity because they reflect what we do, how we do it and why we do it respectively.

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!

The case for change

A diagnosis of a sight loss condition is a life-changing event with both physical and emotional impacts, yet less than one in three adults get help within the first year after their diagnosis. The evidence is all too clear that visually impaired people are at high risk of unemployment, mental health problems, loneliness, poor education and financial challenges for the rest of their lives.

emotional wellbeing offer major preventative benefits on a human and system level. Most sight loss is ultimately age-related. Too often this results in people losing confidence and independence, and affects their emotional wellbeing, leaving them reliant on health and social care services, when with the right support they can gain the skills to remain independent and active in their communities.



The economic and social impact of sight loss is huge, impacting employability, productivity and welfare costs. Service models for visual impairment predicated on support for the learning or relearning of independent living skills and

Hospital care is far more expensive than formal social care, which in turn is more expensive than community-based support. The economic business case for Government and strategic commissioners to invest in preventative support services for people with sight loss is increasingly powerful and persuasive as the incidence of age-related sight loss continues to grow.

Core tenets of Scottish Government health and social care policy are ensuring that people are able to be in their own homes and communities when possible and appropriate and

that people are able to maintain their independence as they get older, and are able to access appropriate support when they need it.

Scotland's population is ageing. The number of people aged 75 and over is set to increase by 85 per cent by 2039. It means that, by then, over 800,000 people will be over the age of 75. The Scottish Government and Scotland's 31 statutory integrated joint boards (IJBs) – the strategic commissioners for health and social care services – recognise that most sight loss is age-related and that this has implications for how we provide healthcare, housing and support services.

We are making the case for change so that visually impaired people have equal access to employment and education and are fully included in our society. We want to ensure all blind and partially sighted young people in education have the specialist support they need. Pupils with visual



impairment have lower attainment at school than their fully sighted peers and are half as likely to progress from college into jobs. Only one in four visually impaired people are in work and we provide support so they have better chances in employment.

Sight is the most precious sense by far; when surveyed, 10 times more people (78 per cent of people) said sight was the sense they fear losing most compared to the next most popular sense, smell (8 per cent), followed by hearing (7 per cent). RNIB estimates the cost to Scotland of sight loss in the adult population each year is around £2.5 billion, including a direct healthcare cost of around £250 million.

Organisational development

To enable us to meet our goals of supporting significantly more people with sight loss across the whole of Scotland we will:

1. Create respectful partnerships and high-impact collaborations
2. Ensure that our long-term geographical reach reduces inequalities
3. Transform our understanding of our impact in order to improve
4. Value, support and develop our people, both staff and volunteers
5. Transform our income generation and efficiency
6. Make our new brand speak clearly about why we exist and who we are
7. Influence positive change for people with sight loss
8. Harness technology and innovation to help transform lives



Our services

Our opportunity and challenge is to continue to transform our delivery model into a vibrant, successful and sustainable suite of high-impact person-centred services with an ambitious growth in our community presence across Scotland, reinventing the organisation and its purpose once more in our long, proud and successful history.

Sight Scotland

Our services range from providing specialist education to visually impaired pupils both at the Royal Blind School and through educational outreach, to residential care and document transcription to enable visually impaired people to access vital documents such as bank statements. In early 2021 we launched a new community-based service that combines charity funded emotional and practical support with local authority contracts for rehabilitation and mobility.

Moving forward we will continue to innovate, strengthen and grow our existing services, ensuring that we are constantly learning and evaluating our impact. A wider geographical reach and presence in communities across Scotland will increase our profile and brand awareness which is in turn, a key lever to attract more voluntary income in the form of donations and legacies to support those activities into the long-term, married to statutory funding and increasing traction with trust and grant funders as well as better opportunities to leverage fundraising from corporates and philanthropy.

We will also build on our heritage of trading through the development of new, innovative social enterprise products and commercial services with the aim of creating sustainable income for Sight Scotland to support even more people with visual impairment across Scotland.





Sight Scotland Veterans

Sight Scotland Veterans offers information, guidance and support whether at home, in the community or at our activity centres. We are here to help veterans, and their families and friends, to connect, be independent and live well. 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, although we also have a small number of veterans who lost their sight during active service.

Driven forward by our community, we'll turn our strategic vision into a reality by delivering on four strategic goals:

1. **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, we will extend our services and provide a more responsive approach at an earlier stage.
2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **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.

Research

We fund and support research to save sight in the future and help people live well with sight loss today. We support research into eye health conditions aimed at encouraging innovation and improving diagnosis, treatment, person-centred care and better

outcomes for people with sight loss. We aim to support ground-breaking research in Scotland and beyond which will change the lives of people with sight loss in Scotland and around the world.



Both Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans are actively involved in funding medical research, as well as conducting our own social research which is key to our policy and influencing work. We support specific research initiatives which we have identified as being of strategic importance for our service users and where funding will have maximum impact for people with sight loss. Sight Scotland is currently providing funding for grants to the Royal College of Surgeons and is a partner in Scottish Collaborative Optometry-Ophthalmology Network e-research (SCONE) project. Sight Scotland Veterans is a founding partner of Action Against Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AAAMD).

Moving forward, we intend to strengthen our focus on research, potentially seek new opportunities and partners as well as developing an annual research impact report. We will also consider opportunities



to participate in research and development for new assistive technology to support blind and partially sighted people from the academic and commercial sectors.

In the area of social research, we will aim to not only consult with our existing service users but also to reach out across the wider blind and partially sighted community in Scotland to gather views on issues that are important, such as public transport, accessible public services, street design and inclusive communities.



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