Home
People and Places
People
People and Places
Community insight
Autistic People
Learning Disabilities
Eye Health and Sight Loss
Hearing loss
Veterans and ex-service personnel
Adult Social Care

Eye health and sight loss

Last Modified 11/05/2026 14:38:39

Introduction

Sight loss and blindness can be generally defined as a limitation in one or more functions of the eye or visual system, most commonly impairment of visual acuity (sharpness or clarity of vision), visual fields (the ability to detect objects to either side or above or below the direction in which the person is looking), contrast sensitivity and colour vision.

Over two million people in the UK, and 1.9 million in England, are estimated to be living with sight loss that has a significant impact on their daily lives.[1] These people meet the international definition of vision impairment (including everyone whose vision is worse than 6/12 Snellen - halfway down the optician's letter chart). This is the amount of vision loss that requires people to surrender their driving license in the UK.

The number of people living with sight loss in England is anticipated to increase by 21% over the coming decade.[2] It is therefore important when planning for local support and preventative services that the needs of people with sight loss, and those at risk of losing their sight, are understood.

People with sight loss are more likely to experience financial and employment difficulties, lower wellbeing and increased feelings of isolation. Sight loss can also lead to difficulties accessing a wide range of heatlhcare treatment and services, emotional and practical support, and transport for work and social engagement.

The estimated economic cost of eye health and sight loss in the UK in 2013 was £28.1 billion, including £3 billion in direct healthcare system costs, including inpatient and daycase costs of £735 million and outpatient costs of £771 million. Indirect costs include an estimated £2.4 billion in reduced employment and £2.4 billion in informal care costs.[3]

Facts and figures

An estimated 4,890 people in Blackpool were living with sight loss in 2022 (3.5% of the population), projected to rise to 5,500 by 2032.[4] This includes:

- 3,140 with mild sight loss
- 1,090 with moderate sight loss
- 660 people with severe sight loss

The older you are the greater the risk of sight loss. Since Blackpool has a higher than average population aged 75 and above, the estimated proportion of those living with sight loss is higher than the national average.

Sight loss can also be linked to deprivation, poor health and other health conditions. For example, smoking can double the risk of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and obesity increases the risk of developing diabetes, which can cause sight loss. High levels of deprivation and poor health (including obesity, smoking prevalence and diabetes) in Blackpool may also increase sight loss prevalence among the population.

The RNIB estimates that in Blackpool in 2022:[4]

- 6,730 people were living with the early stages of age-related macular degeneration (AMD)
- 1,620 people were living with cataract
- 2,920 people were living with ocular hypertension, and a further 1,590 people with glaucoma
- 2,740 people were living with diabetic retinopathy, and of these 250 had severe diabetic retinopathy likely to result in significant and potentially certifiable sight loss

National and local strategies

There was an eye health and sight loss pan-Lancashire JSNA published in 2019, and shortly after this needs assessment, the focus of health and care systems turned to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the response to priorities outlined in the assessment was curtailed. In order to provide a springboard for further action, the needs assessment was revisited in 2022/23 at a local level as part of a large multi-agency project, with updated data about eye health needs, reflections about what has been achieved, and NHS trust-specific recommendations for further work.

The RNIB Sight Loss Data pack for Blackpool also provides information about blind and partially sighted people and those at risk of sight loss at a local level: Blackpool sight loss briefing

Weblink: RNIB Sight Loss Data Tool v5.0 (2022)

In addition, there is a wealth of data and intelligence relating to eye health on the Lancashire Insight web pages – the online home of the Lancashire JSNA.

Weblink: Lancashire Insight

---

[1] RNIB (2021) Key Statistics about Sight Loss. Available at https://www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/health-social-care-education-professionals/knowledge-and-research-hub/key-information-and-statistics-on-sight-loss-in-the-uk/

[2] RNIB (2022) England Sight Loss Briefing, RNIB Sight Loss Data Tool Version 5.0. Available at https://www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/health-social-care-education-professionals/knowledge-and-research-hub/sight-loss-data-tool/

[3] RNIB / Deloitte Access Economics (2014) The economic impact of sight loss and blindness in the UK adult population, 2013. Available at https://www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/health-social-care-education-professionals/knowledge-and-research-hub/research-archive/the-economic-impact-of-sight-loss-and-blindness-in-the-uk-adult-population/

[4] RNIB (2022) Blackpool Sight Loss Briefing, RNIB Sight Loss Data Tool Version 5.0. Figures based on mid year population estimates for 2020.

↑ Back to top

© Blackpool Council 2026