

# Reimagining capacity and access to eye care services in the NHS



## In the UK:

It is estimated that over **2 million people [1]** are living with a condition that causes sight loss

Of those, **340,000 people [1]** are registered as **blind or partially sighted**



Eye conditions have been calculated to cost the UK economy **£25.2 billion** per year [2]...



...this is predicted to rise to **£33.5 billion** by **2050 [2]**



**84 percent** of the economic costs of sight loss lie **outside the health and social care system [2]**

# Vision loss: the facts

Vision loss – the partial or complete loss of vision – can lead to reactions similar to bereavement. Coming to terms with these emotions can take time. [3]

The leading causes of vision impairment globally are: [4]

- uncorrected refractive errors
- age-related macular degeneration
- diabetic retinopathy
- corneal opacity
- cataracts
- glaucoma
- trachoma

## Demand for NHS eye care

Ophthalmology is **the busiest outpatient speciality in the NHS, with 7.5 million attendances** in England in 2021/22 [5]



**1 in 11 patients** awaiting specialist treatment in England were in ophthalmology as of December 2022 [6]

Eye conditions need to be treated quickly to increase the chances of good outcomes [4]

Depending on the person's condition, they may be eligible for pharmaceutical treatments, laser treatments or surgery [7,8,9]

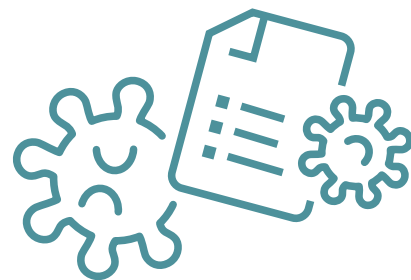
**Delays to treatment have negative consequences** – up to 22 people a month could experience severe or permanent sight loss resulting from delays to follow up care [13]

Some chronic eye conditions demand long term monitoring and treatment, requiring regular contact with eye services, sometimes as frequently as every month [7]

Some appointments can take up to 12 hours [14] of a patient's time including preparation, travel, waiting times and post appointment recovery.

In recent years, demand for eye services has risen rapidly, with referrals from primary care up by 12 percent since 2013/14 [10]

Partly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, some patients are facing six-month waiting lists to access care [11,12]



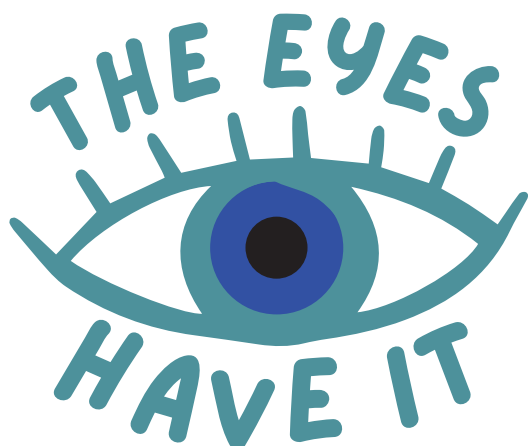
## **Tackling the capacity crisis in eye care**

To tackle the capacity crisis in eye care and reduce avoidable sight loss, we need a National Plan for Eye Care in England that supports local decision-making with national accountability.

A plan should:

- **Expand the eye care workforce**
- **Implement new models of care**
- **Invest in research**
- **Drive uptake of innovative treatments**

Visit [www.eyeshaveit.co.uk](http://www.eyeshaveit.co.uk) to find out more



**The Eyes Have It is a partnership between Macular Society, Fight for Sight, RNIB, The Royal College of Ophthalmologists, Association of Optometrists and Roche.**

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References available on request from  
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