

Eye care services in the NHS: **The scale of the challenge**



In the UK:

It is estimated that over **2.2 million people** are living with a condition that causes sight loss.

Of those, **366,000 people** are registered as **blind or partially sighted**.

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



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

Demand for NHS eye care

Ophthalmology is the busiest outpatient speciality in the NHS, with **8 million attendances** in England in 2022/23.

1 in 12 patients awaiting specialist treatment in England were in ophthalmology as of August 2023, with average waiting times in some ICBs exceeding **16 weeks**.

Over **75% of NHS eye units** do not have enough consultants to meet current demand.



Sight loss: the facts

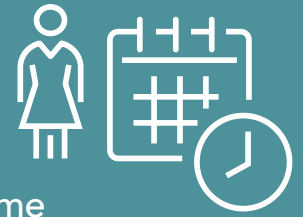
Sight loss – the partial or complete loss of vision – can lead to reactions similar to bereavement. Coming to terms with these emotions can take time.

The leading causes of sight loss amongst registered blind and partially sighted people in the UK are:

- Age-related macular degeneration
- Glaucoma
- Cataracts
- Retinitis Pigmentosa
- Diabetic eye disease

The number of people living with sight loss in the UK is projected to reach **4 million by 2050** which is likely to fuel further demand for eye care services.

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



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

Many eye conditions need rapid treatment to increase the chances of good outcomes which minimise avoidable sight loss. There have been over **550 reports to the National Reporting and Learning System** in relation to sight loss due to delayed appointments since 2019.

Tackling the capacity crisis in eye care

Coordinated action across the whole eye care pathway is essential to tackle the capacity crisis in eye care, improve eye health 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:

- Promote integrated care pathways and methods of multidisciplinary working, making the best use of available skills.
- Expand ophthalmology specialty training to meet ever-rising patient need.
- Invest in research to understand and tackle the diseases which cause sight loss.
- Drive uptake of innovative treatments, so all patients can access the best care.
- Address the health inequalities which drive poor eye health.
- Empower patients throughout their eye care journey.

Visit www.eyeshaveit.co.uk to find out more

The Eyes Have It is a partnership of Macular Society, Fight for Sight / Vision Foundation, RNIB, Association of Optometrists, The Royal College of Ophthalmologists and Roche Products Ltd. Roche has funded the activities of the partnership.

References available on request from Roche Products Limited

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Date of preparation: October 2023. Material Number: M-GB-00013653