

Shaping the Future Report Summary

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The following is a five-page summary of the 'Shaping the Future of the UK Vision Strategy' project report which includes the background to the project, our findings, conclusion and recommendations.

About the UK Vision Strategy

The UK Vision Strategy (the Strategy) is a cross-sector initiative seeking to unite everyone in the UK who wants to take action on issues relating to vision.

Created in 2008 and refreshed in 2013, the Strategy is led by the Vision Strategy Leadership Group (VSLG) which has representatives from across the eye health and sight loss sectors. There are country implementation plans for each of the four nations of the UK.

About the project and the data

‘Shaping the future’ is a review and consultation project to gather views on the extent to which progress has been made on the Strategy’s outcomes and to gather ideas to shape the future of work in eye health and sight loss.

This project was carried out from June to December 2016 by an independent team from NCVO Charities Evaluation Services. We took a collaborative approach to this project involving a range of stakeholders in designing the work, inputting their views and co-producing recommendations.

A mix of qualitative and quantitative data was gathered via surveys, interviews, group discussions, workshops and events, engaging approximately 750 unique individuals.

This sample size is relatively small and does not allow us to generalise to the whole population. However we have been able to identify common themes in respondents’ experiences and opinions, as well as to look in-depth at how and why progress has or has not been made, and to draw conclusions and make recommendations for the future.

Context

Our findings and recommendations are set against a backdrop of contextual factors, gleaned from our data and literature review, which are important to consider when shaping future work.

First, in relation to the operating environment for eye health and sight loss services, there are three main issues: a decline in funding, an ageing population and increasing demand for services which is greater than current supply.

Second, cross-cutting themes include increasing devolution and localisation, the pros and cons of collaboration and the existence of a number of other frameworks, strategies and plans.

Progress towards the Strategy's three outcomes

Our data shows an overall perception that some progress has been made against all three outcomes of the Strategy but more needs to be done. Given the broad nature of the outcomes and in the absence of systematic monitoring and evaluation since its inception, it is not possible to state whether this progress can be attributed to the Strategy.

Around 40% of respondents to the professionals' survey perceived some progress to have been made on each of the three outcomes in the Strategy. However 42% said that they did not know whether the Strategy had contributed to these changes, 30% said it had played a minor role, 24% said it had played a major role and 4% said not at all.

In relation to **Outcome 1 (everyone looks after their eyes and their sight)** perceived achievements include:

- the **Public Health Indicator for Eye Health in England [1]** (referred to as the Public Health Indicator from now on)
- awareness-raising initiatives, such as **National Eye Health Week [2]**
- greater availability of eye tests in some areas and for some groups of people.

But more needs to be done to further raise awareness and to enable people to take better care of their eye health.

The perceived achievements of **Outcome 2 (timely treatment and appropriate support)** are that there have been some improvements to:

- early detection
- services and support when sight loss occurs
- cross-sector collaboration enabling a more joined-up pathway for some conditions, meaning more timely treatment.

More needs to be done to improve availability and accessibility of support, research on treatments and cures to help tackle currently unpreventable causes of sight loss, and move towards more seamless, person-centred treatment and support.

For **Outcome 3 (a society in which people with sight loss can fully participate)** perceived achievements include:

- improvements to transport
- technological developments
- more accessible information.

However more needs to be done to increase public understanding of the realities of living with sight loss. The public should be enabled to identify with people with sight loss more and to challenge discrimination. This should involve taking an asset-based view of people with sight loss, focusing on what they can do rather than what they cannot.

Learning for the future

Alongside the outcomes data five cross-cutting themes emerged that are important to consider when shaping any future work. Details of progress made and future considerations in each of these five thematic areas are provided below.

1. **Reduce service fragmentation.** The Strategy has fostered collaboration and given the eye health and sight loss sectors a more unified voice to governments. However more work could be done to reduce fragmentation across the eye health and sight loss pathway and increase collaboration, most notably in the voluntary sector.
2. **Involve people with sight loss more.** The Strategy has involved people with sight loss, including at design stage. This needs to continue and grow in the future including better engagement of people with sight loss in the leading of the Strategy.

3. **Consider the nature and role of the Strategy.** The three outcomes are comprehensive and the Strategy has enabled local groups to come together to take action. However further thought needs to be given to: the Strategy's role in achieving the outcomes; making the Strategy more actionable; better monitoring and evaluating; how to reach a wider audience; and leadership and governance of the Strategy.
4. **Consider the UK-wide remit.** The Strategy has helped improve collaboration at the country level, including with government, and devolved nations have been able to influence some aspects of government strategies. What needs re-thinking is how to better resource in-country work and to what extent a UK-wide Vision Strategy is still relevant.
5. **Connect better with government.** There has been some government support for the Strategy particularly in the devolved nations. More could be done to gain more involvement at various levels of government; to respond better to government and health service priorities; and to connect with other sector initiatives more effectively.

Each of these issues play out to varying degrees in the four nations.

Recommendations

We recommend considering the following, some of which are about **what** future work could focus on and some are about **how** future work could be organised.

What future work could focus on:

- Increasing public awareness about eye health and taking care of sight.
- Lobbying for more research into treatment and cures.
- Understanding what barriers exist for people to access currently available support.
- Promoting an asset-based approach, encouraging people to look at what people with sight loss can do, rather than what they cannot.
- Reviewing the **Adult UK eye health and sight loss pathway [3]** and co-creating a theory of change with accompanying measures of success that can be regularly monitored, evaluated, shared and learned from.

How future work could be organised:

- Nature: should there be another strategy and if so consider how best to write, communicate, lead and implement it? If not what would the alternative be?
- Greater input and leadership by people with sight loss.
- Story telling: share people's stories of the realities of living with sight loss.
- Campaigns: run simple, public-facing, targeted campaigns.
- Collaboration: encourage organisations working in eye health and sight loss to work together.
- Influence local and central governments and the NHS, linking into their existing policies and agendas.
- A devolved endeavour designed in-country with specific, relevant pursuits.
- Quality and self-assessment, for example, developing a national standard and templates of good practice with a catalogue of actual good practice that can be showcased.

Next steps

A final draft of this report was reflected on and discussed at the Vision Strategy Leadership Group meeting in December 2016.

The learning and recommendations in this report will be taken forward by a Vision Strategy Transition Programme. This Programme will seek a renewed agenda for change across the eye health and sight loss sectors, building on the ambition, experience and lessons learnt from the UK Vision Strategy. The Programme will work to agree the future priorities for collaborative work with cross-sector endorsement, and will establish channels for delivery.

References

1. Public Eye Health Indicator for England: <https://www.rcophth.ac.uk/2013/03/first-ever-public-health-indicator-for-eye-health-3/>
2. National Eye Health Week: <http://www.visionmatters.org.uk/>
3. VISION 2020 UK, 2015. The Adult UK eye health and sight loss pathway. [online] VISION 2020. Available at: <http://www.vision2020uk.org.uk/adult-uk-eye-health-and-sight-loss-pathway-revised-january-2015/> [Accessed 04/08/16].