



The ROYAL COLLEGE of
OPHTHALMOLOGISTS

2019 Manifesto for change to deliver sustainable eye services in the UK

The Royal College of Ophthalmologists is calling on the next government to invest in, and adopt, an innovative approach to creating a sustainable eye health service that meets the needs of patients and healthcare staff.

Ophthalmology is at the forefront of transformational change and is leading in areas of workforce, digital and data driven healthcare. Ophthalmology is the busiest outpatient speciality with a 40% increase in demand predicted over the next 20 years.

A lack of long-term planning, investment in the workforce, inadequate hospital systems and poor data collection means that some patients are experiencing an unacceptable loss of vision.

Poor vision affects health, economic well-being and productivity of individuals, families and society as a whole



More than **2 million** people have reduced vision in the UK and it is estimated that this figure will double by 2050

£28
BILLION

The direct and indirect costs of blindness in the UK are **£28 billion** per annum



People with vision impairment are **twice as likely** to have falls



Sight loss is associated with increased levels of **depression** and **anxiety**



Loss of vision is recognised to mean **earlier dependency on care homes** and care support

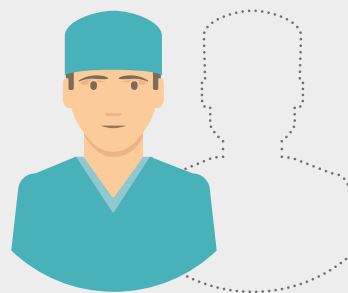
The Workforce

Create a sustainable workforce now and for the future

The workforce continues to be over stretched and over worked. Ophthalmology is a major service, delivering 6% of all elective surgery and dealing with nine million outpatient appointments every year in the NHS. Patient demand has increased due to an ageing population and improvements in the treatment of eye disease. Our latest workforce survey shows the current effects of government policy and a chronic lack of investment:



A quarter of eye doctors are nearing retirement

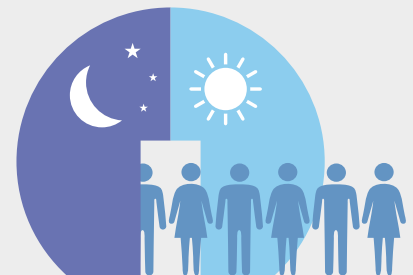


67% of hospital eye units are using locum doctors to fill consultant posts, an **increase of 52%** since 2016

434 extra consultant posts are needed over the next two years



85% of units are undertaking waiting list initiatives and out of hours session to manage demand



Multidisciplinary working

Ophthalmology is leading workforce transformation in the NHS by introducing consistent training and standards for the ophthalmic led multidisciplinary teams. This ensures that patients are cared for by skilled non-medical professionals and release ophthalmologists to manage more complex cases.

What needs to change

We urge the government to address critical resource gaps in the workforce. Ophthalmology is an oversubscribed specialty and we can easily fill the additional training places needed to match the demand. But this can only happen if more ophthalmology training places are released by NHS England.

Protecting the Nations Eye Health

Facilities fit for patient demand

Ophthalmic services are best delivered in specifically designed facilities but cannot achieve their potential due to a lack of space in hospitals. Ophthalmology services must expand out of major hospitals into accessible, community-based locations which create efficient, high volume patient workflows.

Working smarter

These out of hospital locations can also act as hubs for clinical diagnostic data and imaging capture to allow remote working by clinicians, creating virtual clinics that produce cost savings and reduce hospital attendances.

What needs to change

The government has promised to build 40 hospitals. RCOphth is asking that the NHS estate leadership be innovative and reflect the needs of eye patients. The NHS needs to work with ophthalmology to create the right space for the most efficient service delivery to meet the needs of patients.

Technology

Ophthalmology leading a digital evolution

A joined-up approach

NHS basic IT systems are in need of urgent improvement. New modern networked systems across community, primary and secondary care ensures a patient-centred approach. In ophthalmology, we need optometrists to communicate electronically with hospitals for advice and guidance on pre and post patient care. This can help prevent unnecessary outpatient appointments.

More funding for the National Ophthalmology Database (NOD)

NOD is at the cutting edge of big data, transforming patient care. Collecting meaningful data safeguards high quality patient care and improves professional development, leading to major improvements in cataract surgery and patient outcomes such as:



A **decrease of 38%** in complication rates of Posterior capsular rupture (PCR) and identifying high risk patients to be managed more effectively



Greater investment in **NOD** would effectively utilise big data, resulting in substantial savings of **£2 million annually**

What needs to change

We urge the government to push the NHS digital agenda further on behalf of ophthalmology to ensure robust IT systems are capable of managing patient care between community, primary and secondary care.

With proper investment, NOD and its use of electronic patient records can also be rolled out for age related macular degeneration, the leading cause of eye disease in the UK.

About RCOphth

The Royal College of Ophthalmologists believes that everyone should have access to high quality eye care. We champion excellence in the practice of ophthalmology through standards in training, education and assessment of ophthalmologists; supporting the promotion of research and innovation throughout the ophthalmic community.

Our **RCOphth Strategic Plan 2020-2022** sets out our purpose and our aims to ensure a sustainable and accessible ophthalmic service for all eye patients through leadership in the eye health sector and influencing health policy.

The Royal College of Ophthalmologists
18 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD

T. 020 7935 0702

contact@rcophth.ac.uk rcophth.ac.uk

