



## The RCOphth's response to DHSC consultation Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s

October 2019

We are living longer than ever before thanks to advances in medicine and innovation. But the health sector must look at how it manages the growing demand for care so that it can deliver high quality services that support quality of life.

Ophthalmology is the busiest outpatient specialty in England, with NHS Digital data showing there are around 9 million appointments, accounting for nearly 10% of all outpatient activity. Demand for ophthalmology is predicted to increase by 40% over the next 20 years<sup>1</sup>.

Managing long-term and age-related eye disease should be considered as part of the prevention strategy, to ensure the services are in place to prevent these conditions deteriorating and adding to the burden on social care. Our data suggested that 22 people a month lose their sight due to hospital-initiated delays<sup>2</sup>. Investing in the right hospital staff, resources and capacity would help us to prevent avoidable sight loss and successfully maintain vision and quality of life.

Vision UK has produced a comprehensive response to the Green Paper setting out the key issues for eye health and prevention. As a member of Vision UK, the RCOphth supports this response. In particular, we wish to draw attention to the link between lifestyle, socioeconomics and eye health, and the need for public health campaigns to address the impact of smoking and unhealthy lifestyles on eye sight. For example, the NHS quit smoking campaign<sup>3</sup> does not mention eye health or vision despite the increased risk of sight loss caused by smoking.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rcophth.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/RCOphth-The-Way-Forward-Executive-Summary-300117.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/eye20171>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/>