



The Royal College of Ophthalmologists' response to the Communities and Local Government and Health Committees' joint inquiry on the long-term funding and provision of adult social care

February 18

The RCOphth is the professional body for ophthalmologists and trainees in the UK. We work to ensure quality of patient care through the maintenance of high standards in ophthalmology and the wider eye service. We work closely with leaders across the sector to help shape eye care for the benefit of patients.

Loss of vision is recognised to mean earlier dependency on care homes and social care support, the direct and indirect costs of blindness in the UK having been estimated to be £8 billion a year¹. Eye disease and sight loss have a significant impact on people's ability to work, study, travel, maintain their health and remain independent. Falls are twice as likely if you have visual impairment², and depression and anxiety are associated with loss of vision³. A 2014 RNIB survey found that 44 percent of UK adults said they feared losing their sight more than any other long-term health condition, reflecting the fundamental role of vision in people's lives⁴.

Since most eye disease is age-related, the burden these complications place on the wider health and social care system is set to become a bigger challenge as the population ages and eye conditions become more common.

Therefore, the ability to effectively detect and manage sight-threatening conditions will be important to the long-term planning of social care and we urge the committees to consider eye services as a key part of the system during their inquiry. We would be happy to discuss solutions and opportunities for reducing the impact that eye disease has on people's independence and need for social care.

For more information please contact policy@rcophth.ac.uk

¹ www.rnib.org.uk/sites/default/files/Sight_loss_UK_2013.pdf

² Scuffham PA, Legood R, Wilson E, Kennedy-Martin T. Incidence and Cost of Injurious Falls Associated with Visual Impairment. *Visual Impairment Research*. 2002; 4 1-14

³ Williams RA, Brody BL, Thomas RG et al The psychosocial impact of macular degeneration. *Arch Ophthalmol* 1998;116:514 – 20

⁴ <http://www.rnib.org.uk/blindness-feared-more-alzheimer%E2%80%99s-parkinson%E2%80%99s-and-heart-disease>