



Sight Loss in Northumberland: Causes, Impact, and Local Support

Understanding Sight Loss, the challenges and the support available for people with sight loss

Presentation Agenda

- Understanding Sight Loss: Definitions and Causes
- Prevalence and Demographics in Northumberland
- Everyday Challenges Faced by People with Sight Loss
- Support Services and Local Initiatives
- Raising Awareness and Promoting Inclusion



Understanding Sight Loss: Definitions and Causes

Types and Degrees of Sight Loss

There are more than 13,000 people living in Northumberland with sight loss. This level of sight loss is severe enough to have a significant impact on their daily lives.

On top of this, there are many more people with an eye condition who are at risk of developing sight loss in the future.

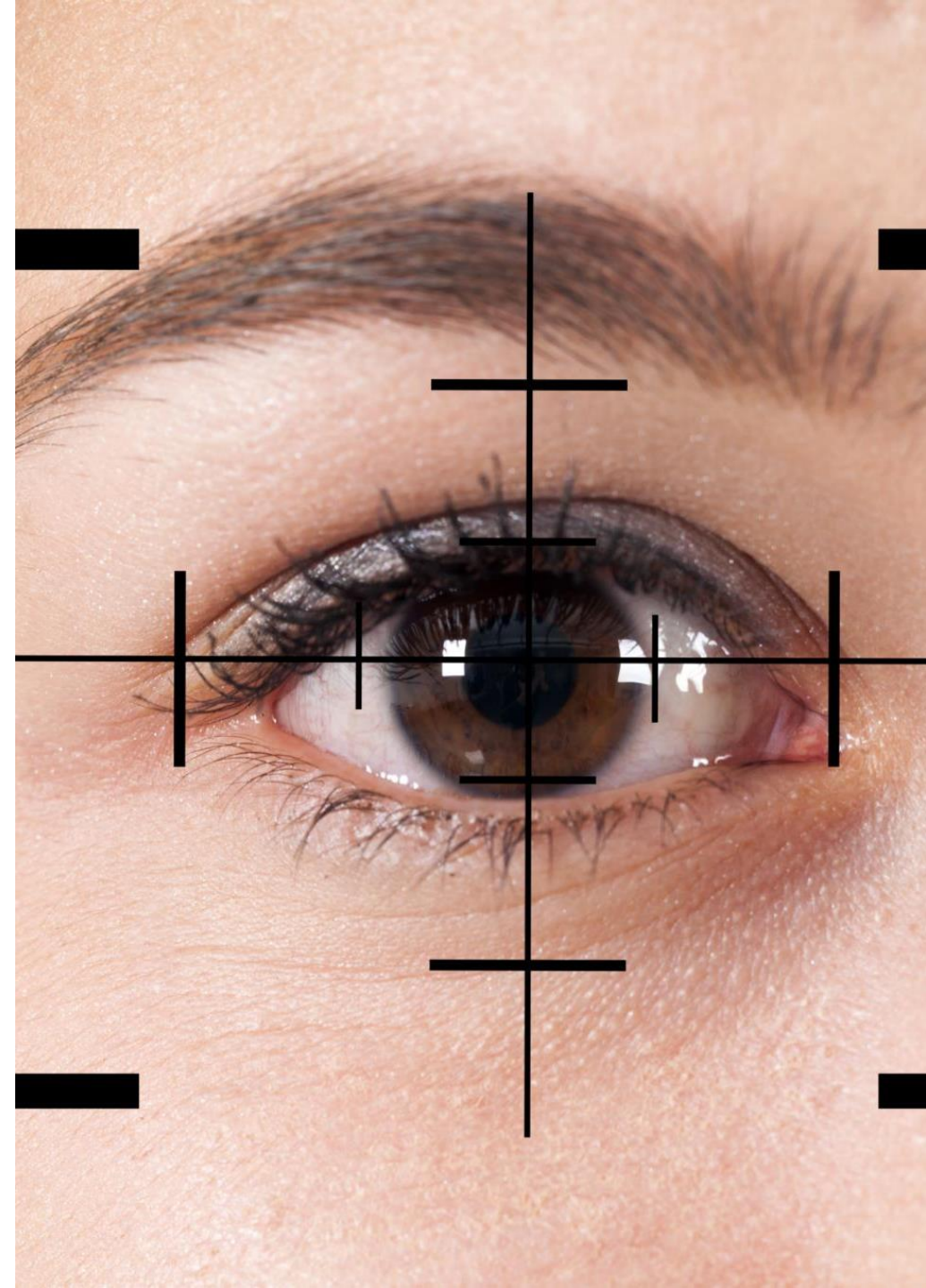
These include people who are registered as sight impaired or severely sight impaired.

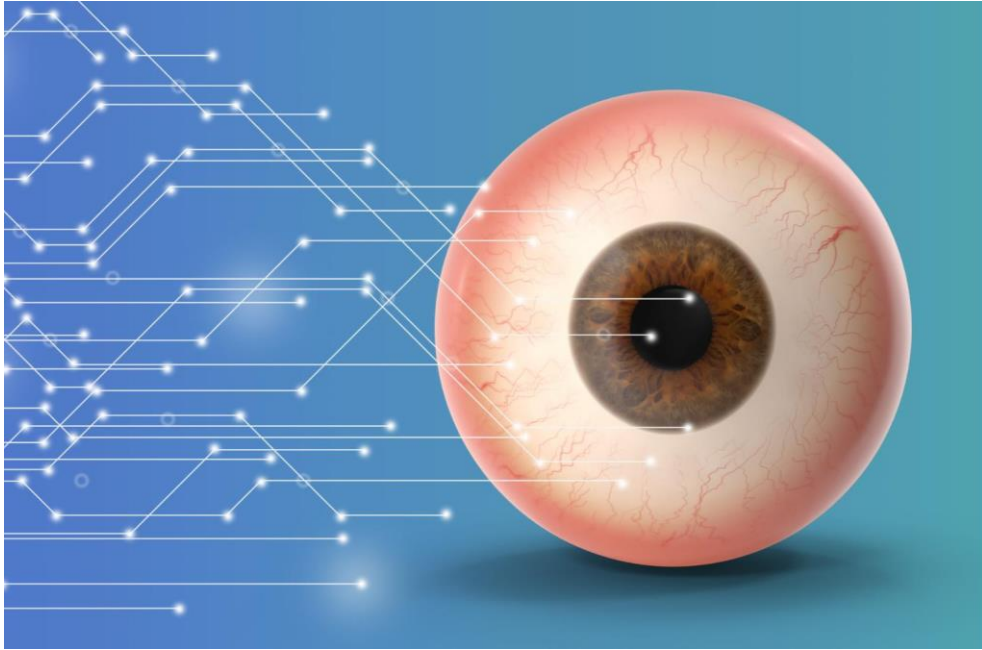
People who qualify for registration but aren't registered.

People waiting for treatment that may improve their sight

People whose sight loss could be improved by wearing correctly prescribed glasses.

WE ONLY KNOW 2000 PEOPLE





Common Causes of Sight Loss in the UK

Age-related Macular Degeneration

A leading cause of sight loss, affecting the central part of the retina and impacting detailed vision.

Glaucoma Impact

Glaucoma causes damage to the optic nerve, often linked to raised eye pressure, leading to peripheral vision loss.

Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy results from blood vessel damage in the retina due to diabetes, causing vision impairment.

Cataracts

Cataracts cause clouding of the eye's lens, leading to blurred vision and potential blindness if untreated.

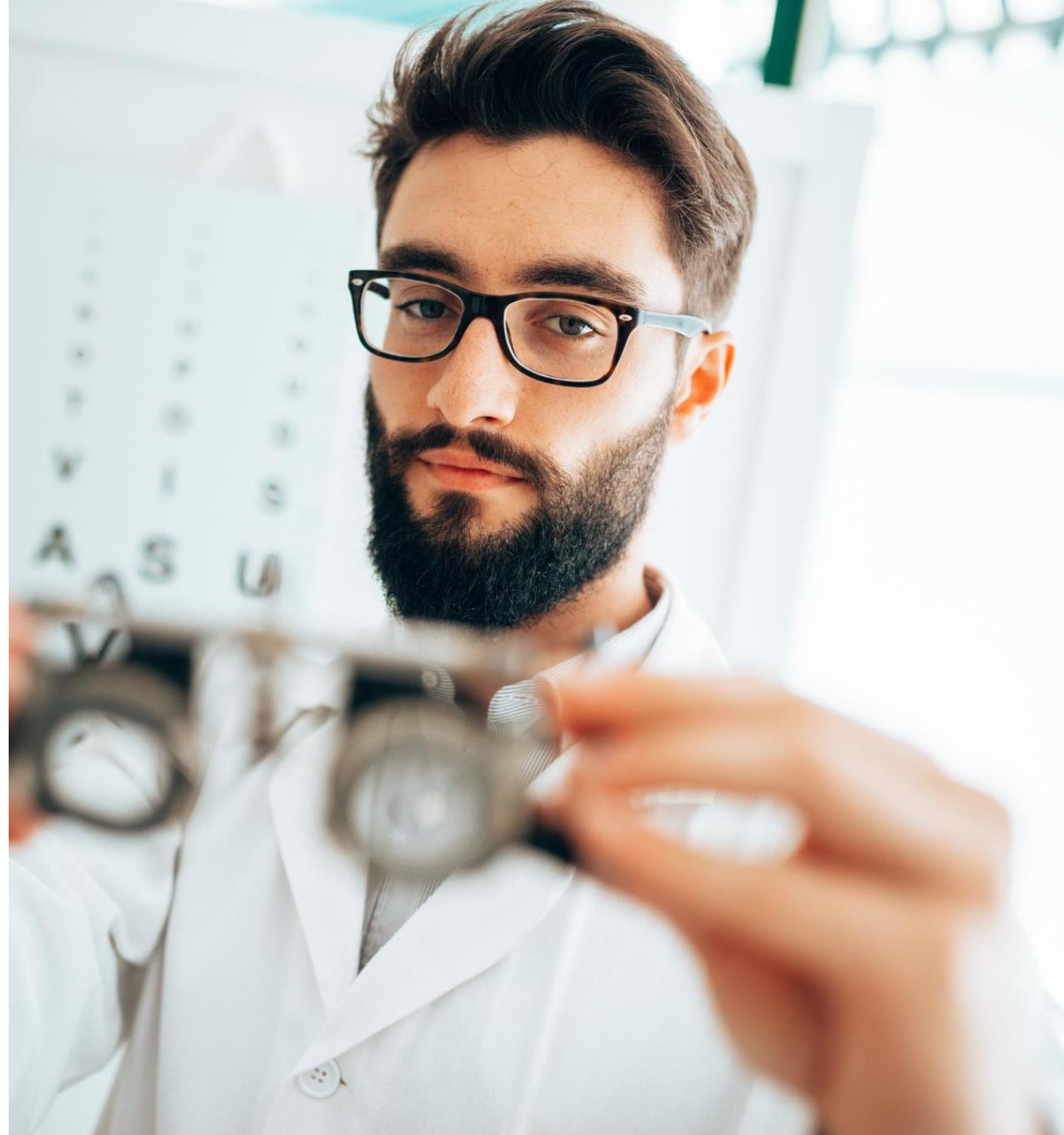
Trends and Statistics in Northumberland

Increasing Sight Loss Cases

Data shows a rising trend in sight loss cases in Northumberland, mirroring national patterns, (more people living longer)

Importance of Data Analysis

Statistical analysis helps healthcare providers plan and improve community support services effectively. However there is very little statistical evidence except registration data (which does not include the majority of people with sight loss.)



**Prevalence and
Demographics
in
Northumberland**

Age Groups Most Affected

Older Adults and Sight Loss

Older adults are the largest group impacted by sight loss due to common age-related eye conditions.

Younger People with Sight Loss

Younger individuals with congenital or acquired sight loss have unique needs requiring specialised support.



Geographical Distribution Within Northumberland

Variations in Sight Loss

Age related – (AMD) leading cause of sight loss, increases significantly with age.

Socioeconomic status – people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds/areas of deprivation / remote rural areas, often experience higher rates of uncorrected refraction errors (due in part to limited access to eye care services.)

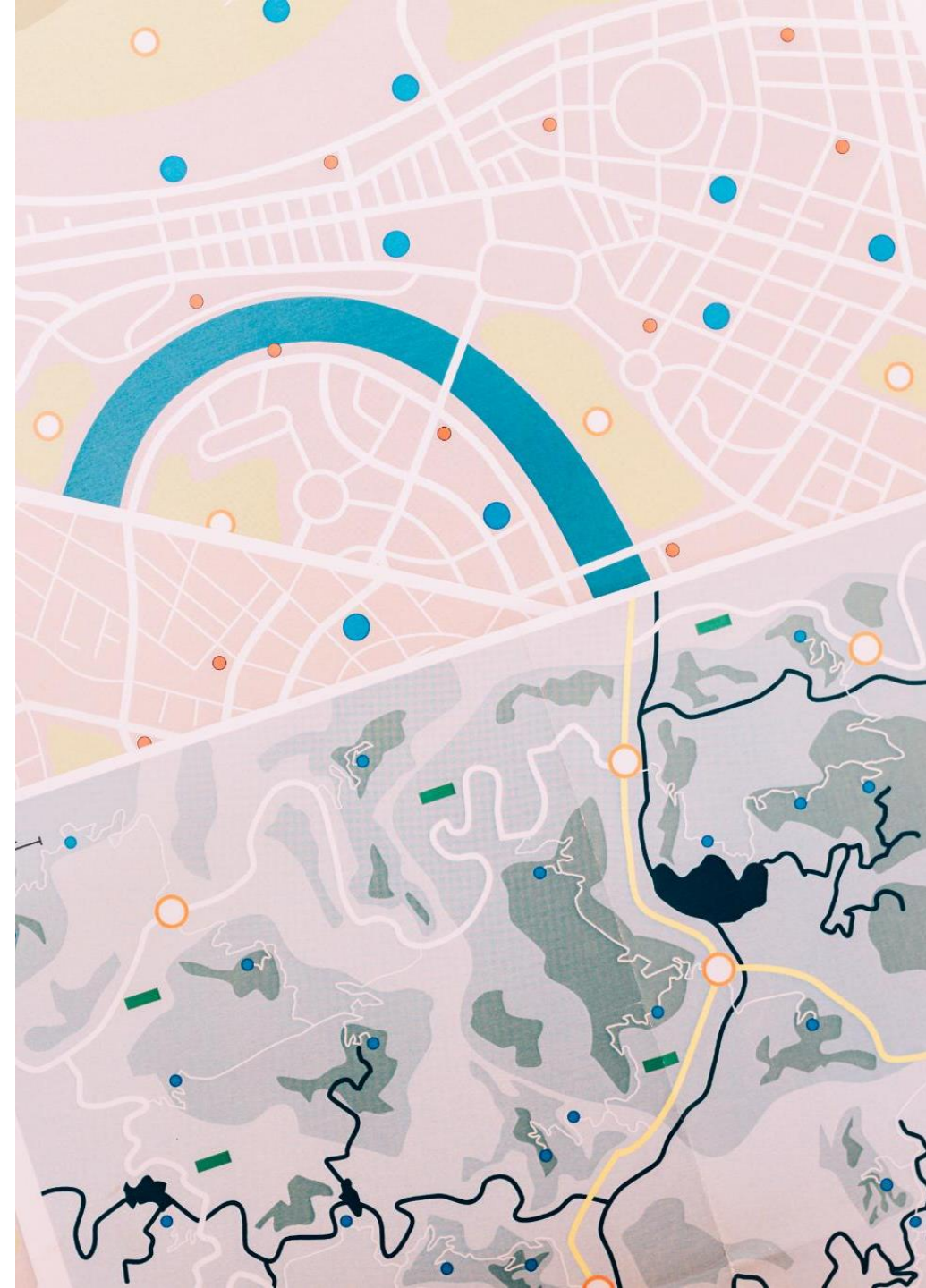
Diabetic Retinopathy is a major cause of vision loss and blindness.

Access to Services

Access to vision care and support services varies significantly by location within Northumberland. (there are considerable barriers to accessing services)

Impact on Quality of Life

Geographical disparities in services affect the quality of life for individuals experiencing sight loss.



Impact of Socio-economic Factors

Socio-economic Risk Factors

Lower socio-economic status increases the risk of sight loss due to limited access to healthcare and resources.

Importance of Addressing Inequalities

Reducing socio-economic disparities is essential for equitable eye care and intervention across communities like Northumberland.



**Everyday
Challenges
Faced by People
with Sight Loss**

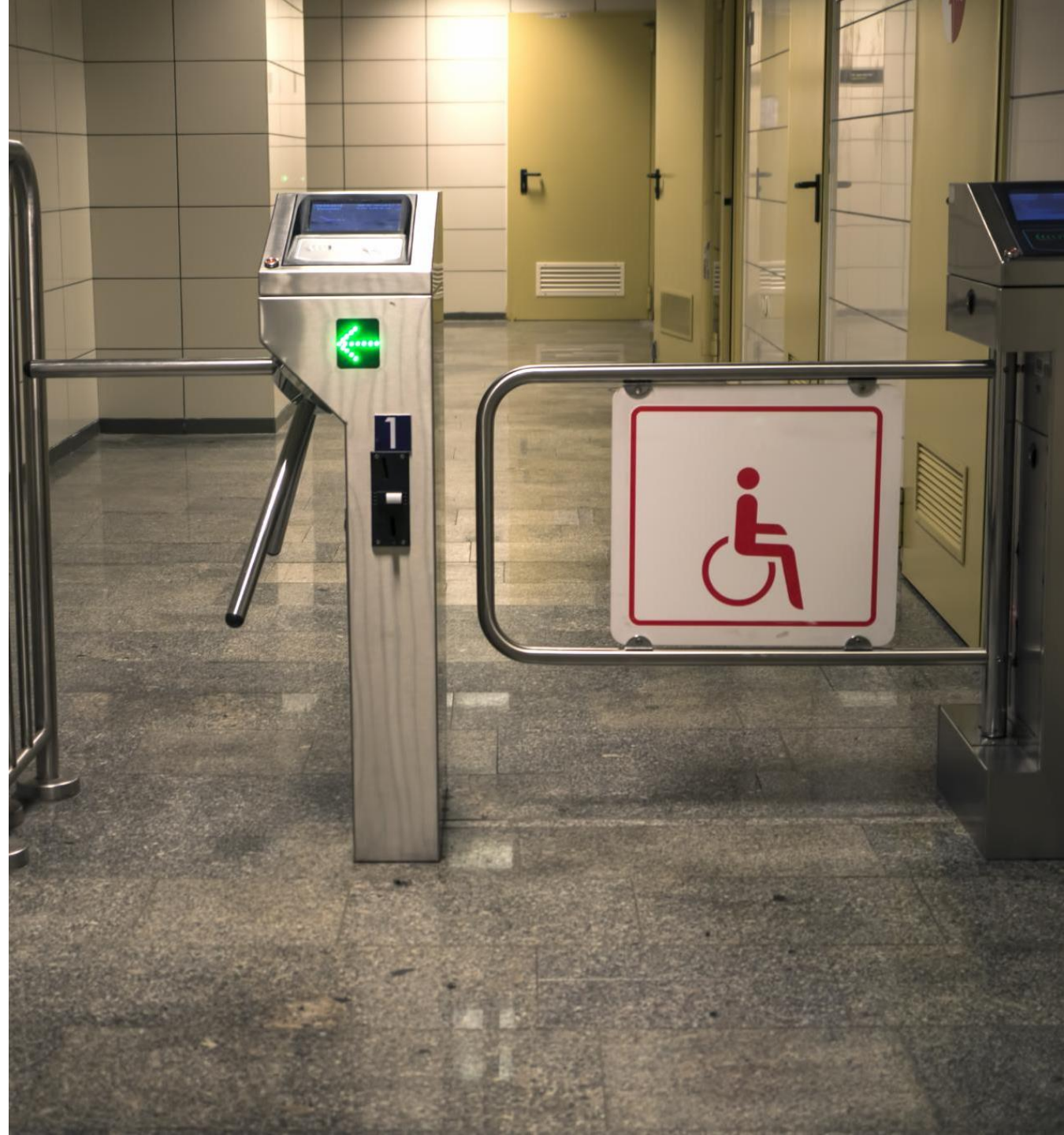
Mobility and Access to Public Spaces

Challenges in Navigation

Inadequate signage, poor lighting, and obstacles make navigating public spaces difficult and unsafe for many people.

Importance of Accessibility

Improving accessibility promotes independence and confidence for people with sight loss or mobility challenges.





Barriers to Employment and Education

Limited Workplace Opportunities

Sight loss restricts access to many jobs due to insufficient workplace accommodations and understanding.

Educational Barriers

Educational settings often lack adequate support, limiting learning opportunities for those with sight loss.

Economic and Social Impact

Reduced employment and education access contribute to economic hardship and social exclusion for visually impaired individuals.



Mental Health and Social Isolation

Loneliness and Anxiety

Sight loss often leads to feelings of loneliness and anxiety due to fewer social interactions and communication challenges.

Impact on Mental Health

Reduced social contact can increase risks of depression and emotional distress among people with sight loss.

Need for Support

Mental health support is essential alongside physical assistance to improve wellbeing for people with sight loss.

Digital Exclusion



Disproportionally affects people with sight loss

- Lack of access to technology
- Inaccessible websites and online content.
- Inadequate skills
- High cost of equipment
- Ie. Access to Gov.UK. NHS app, local authority website etc etc.

Support Services in Northumberland

Vision Northumberland offers.

Low Vision Pathway

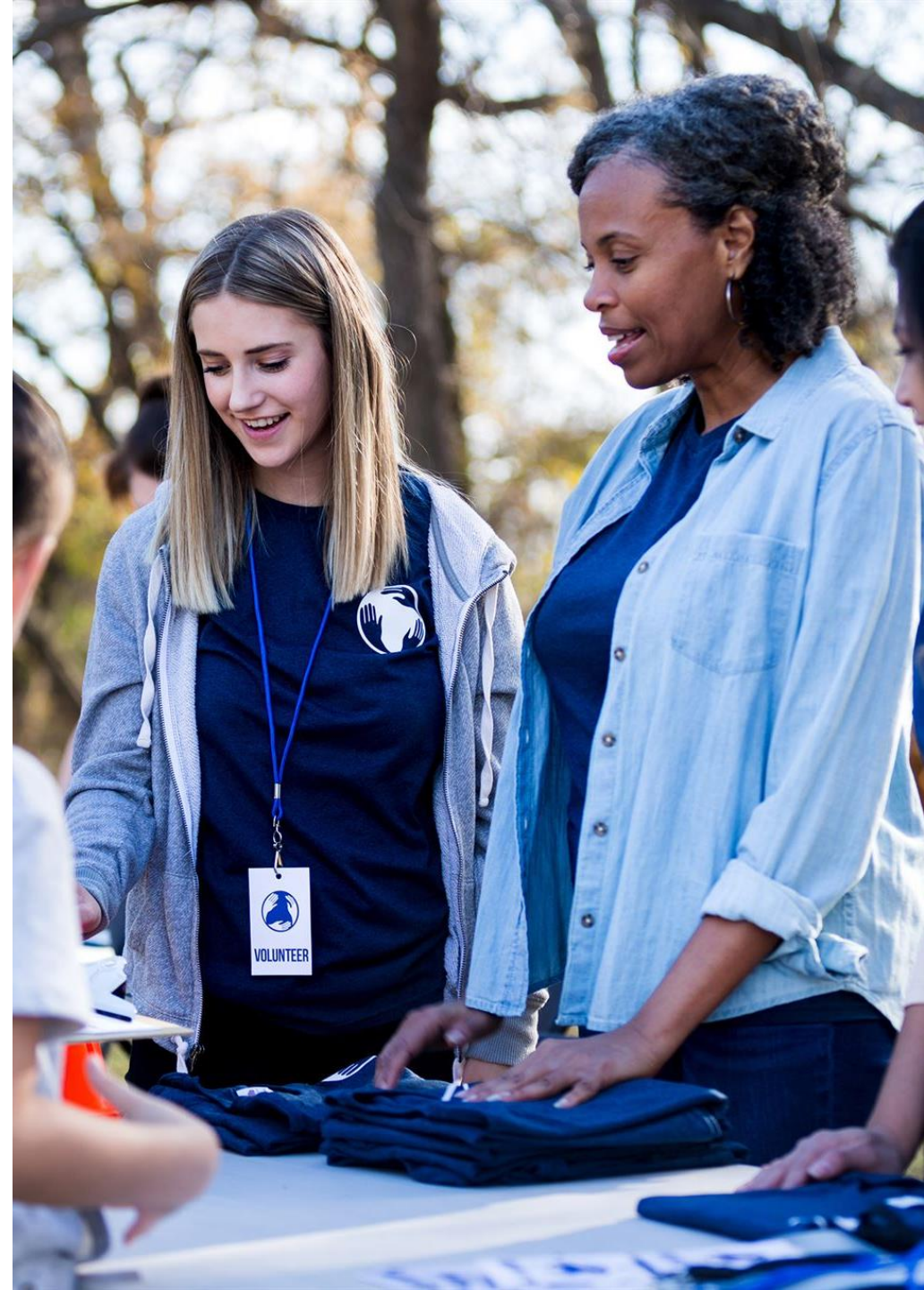
Initial Low Vision Assessment leading to advice, information, hands on demonstration of a wide range of magnifiers, screen readers, tablets computers, phones, emotional support and counselling, benefits advice and signposting to other services plus our Living with Sight Loss course.

Social Activities

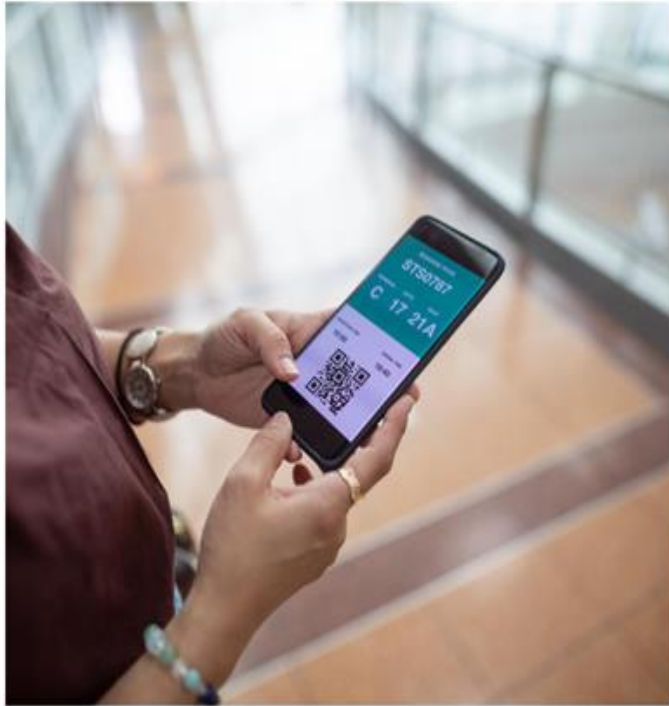
Peer Support , Clubs and social activities across the county encouraging community engagement and reduce isolation.

Client Connect

Telephone befriending service reaching over 200 people across the county,



Assistive Technology and Accessibility Measures



Screen Readers

Screen readers convert text to speech, enabling visually impaired users to access digital content independently.

Magnification Tools

Magnifiers enlarge text and images, improving accessibility for people with limited vision.

Accessible Applications

Accessible apps offer tailored features that support navigation and usability for users with sight loss.

Local Training Initiatives

Community programs help people learn to use assistive technologies effectively and increase adoption.

VISION NORTHUMBERLAND

**Is based in Morpeth
but delivers outreach services across the county,
and exceptionally will provide a home visit.**

**It offers a Volunteer Driver service
and access to community transport providers.**





Other Health and Social Care Provision

Collaborative Care Services

Healthcare and social care and the voluntary sector work together to provide integrated services

Northumberland County Council hold the register of people registered in the county and this information is passed to DOH.

Assessment and Rehabilitation (BID)

People who are registered are offered a needs assessment to find out what help is needed for then to live independently

Ongoing Support

Continuous support ensures care adapts to evolving individual needs over time.

**Raising
Awareness and
Promoting
Inclusion**



Public Awareness Campaigns in Northumberland

Educating About Sight Loss

Campaigns focus on raising public understanding of the challenges faced by people with sight loss.

Promoting Empathy

Campaigns encourage empathy and compassion towards individuals experiencing sight loss.

Encouraging Support Uptake

Efforts are made to boost the use of available support services for those affected by sight loss.

Volunteer Involvement

Campaigns motivate community members to volunteer and contribute to sight loss support initiatives.



Future Priorities for Supporting People with Sight Loss

Reaching many more people the sooner we reach people or people find us, the more likely it is that they will be able to live safely happily and independently with sight loss.

Bringing services much nearer to the people local services for local people – for many people accessing NHS eye care services in Newcastle is a tremendous barrier and explains low levels of registration,

Integrating health and social care - either with one service (contact) or bringing two services together

Raising awareness and understanding of sight loss

Sight loss is no one's priority except for visually impaired people.

People only look for support when they lose their sight – and then they can't see to find it. !

Sight loss has no part in health or social care training.... So staff in rest homes, care staff etc don't really appreciate the implications.

Improving Accessibility

Enhancing accessibility in public spaces and digital platforms to accommodate people with sight loss.

Strengthening Networks

Building stronger connections between organisations and communities to support people with sight loss effectively.

Genuinely offering people a choice rather than making decisions for people.

Conclusion

Challenges of Sight Loss

Sight loss creates complex challenges affecting individuals and communities in Northumberland.

Importance of Awareness

Raising awareness is essential to foster understanding and empathy around sight loss issues.

Towards Inclusivity

Enhancing support and accessibility promotes a more inclusive and supportive community for all.



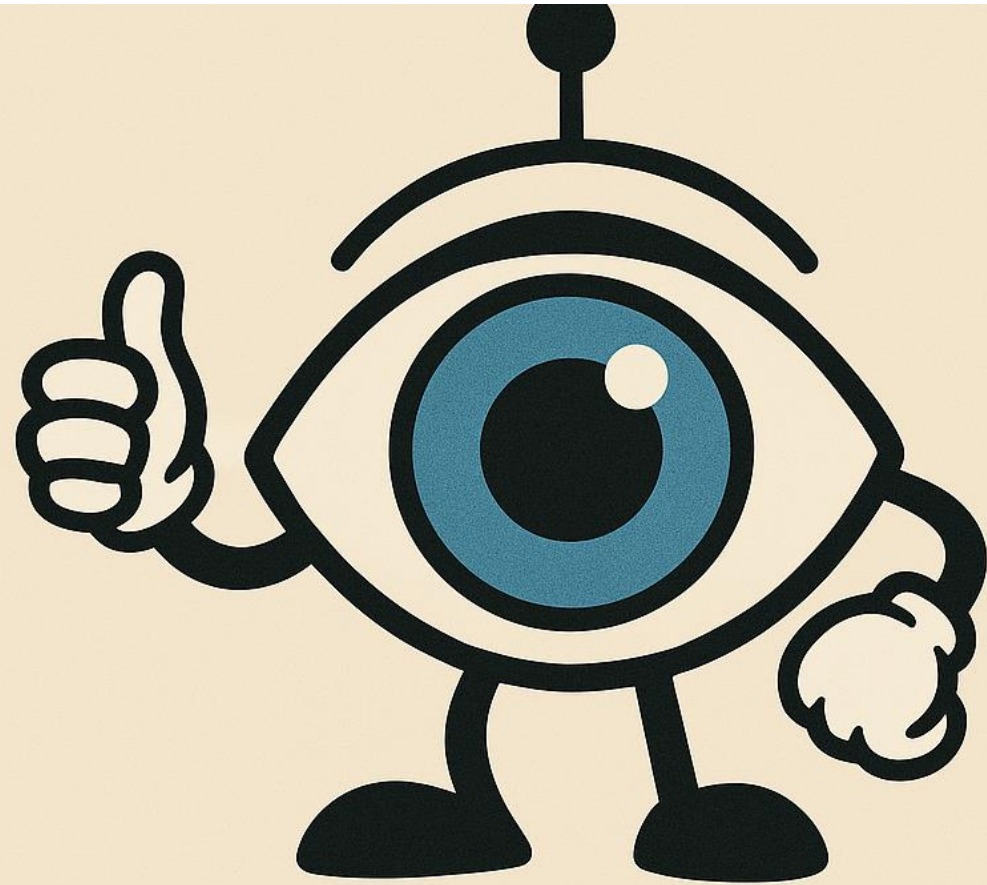
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