

Ophthalmic public health: the invisible public health time bomb

Key facts:

- **100 people start to lose their sight every day, approximately 50% of which is avoidable through early intervention and diagnosis.**
- **Unless progress is made, the numbers of people with sight loss in the UK will rise to four million by 2050.**
- **The costs of sight loss are anticipated to grow to £7.64 billion in 2013 if no action is taken.**
- **Sight loss is a major contributor to loss of independence, depression, social isolation and falls in old age and is identified by all age groups as the sense they fear losing the most.**

Recent developments

The Coalition Government has recognised eye health and the prevention of avoidable sight loss as a national public health priority in the form of a 'preventable sight loss' indicator in England.

The indicator will track progress in tackling avoidable sight loss and visual impairment for the three most common eye conditions, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and macular degeneration. Progress against the indicator will be published annually.

Optometrists and opticians in the community and the hospital eye care service have key roles to play in the prevention, early diagnosis, prompt referral and ongoing community management of these eye conditions.

The Government has committed to establishing a Local Eye Health Professional Network in every NHS Commissioning Board Area to support commissioners in delivering significant improvements against the indicator and eye health for all. These should be welcomed and supported.

For more information, please visit our website www.opticalconfederation.org.uk or contact Jenny Gowen at jennygowen@opticalconfederation.org.uk