**EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10**

**Century-old charity rebrands on World Sight Day to tackle unacceptable sight loss stats**

* **98-year-old sight loss charity relaunches for World Sight Day, Thursday 10 October**
* **Nearly 9 out of 10 (86%) people say a blind person could not do some or any of their job according to YouGov UK survey**
* **Vision Foundation poll of blind and partially sighted Londoners reveals stark picture of isolation, depression and deteriorating mental health**

After nearly 100 years, the Greater London Fund for the Blind (GLFB) has launched a new brand and name change to become the Vision Foundation.

This comes as the charity embarks on a bold five-year strategy to make London accessible for everyone with sight loss and reduce preventable blindness. The new name and brand, developed in collaboration with blind and partially sighted people, is in response to the growing problem of sight loss in London and the worsening life chances for people with vision loss.

“Sight loss costs London £2.7bn each year, which equates to £300 per Londoner[[1]](#endnote-1). Behind every single pound of economic cost there is a human story of isolation, poverty, discrimination and exclusion,” explains the Vision Foundation’s CEO, Olivia Curno. “This is the challenge facing the Vision Foundation in the 21st century”.

Many blind and partially sighted Londoners don’t feel like equal citizens in the capital according to recent research\* carried out by the Vision Foundation. When asked what would have the biggest impact on their quality of life, the majority said better education and awareness about sight loss for members of the public would make the greatest difference. Only a third of blind and partially sighted people polled believe that London is open to them in terms of employment. In addition, 80% reported having had some kind of mental health difficulties as a result of their sight loss with almost a third experiencing severe anxiety or depression.

Of the 52,000 blind and partially sighted people of working age in London, only a quarter are in work – a fall from 33 per cent in employment in 2006[[2]](#endnote-2). This compares to half of all disabled people in employment and 80 per cent of non-disabled people[[3]](#endnote-3).

A YouGov survey\*\* commissioned by the Vision Foundation found that most people do not believe a blind person could do some or any of their job. Of the more than 1,800 people polled, only 6 percent of working adults said someone who was blind could do all of their job, while 26 per cent said they could do some of it.

Anna Tylor, chair of trustees at the Vision Foundation, says: “Being visually impaired should not lock you out of the opportunities that London has to offer. As someone who has lived with limited and diminishing sight all my life, it is shocking that so many blind and partially sighted people are unemployed. I have faced challenges in acceptance in the workplace and know first-hand how hard it is to get a foot in the door. Many employers don’t understand how much people with sight loss have to offer and how easy it is to include them in the workplace.”

She continues, “It’s hugely disappointing that so many blind and partially sighted Londoners are not living their best lives and are not able to contribute in the way they could to the economic and cultural life of our great city. It’s an unacceptable position and as a charity we're changing the way we do business to try and address it. Step by step, we are proving that things can be different. But we are under no illusion that our task will be easy. It is only with the help of the rest of London can people who are blind and partially sighted be active, equal members of society and able to live life to the full.”

The Vision Foundation’s new logo is a bold blue and includes an icon of a partially visible eye, illustrating the issue of sight loss. It replaces a green and red geranium illustration. The strapline ‘London’s Sight Loss Charity’ explains the organisation’s purpose and ensures distinction from other sight loss organisations. The move has been taken to appeal to a wider audience and highlight the range of proactive eye-health and community outreach projects the Vision Foundation supports.

"Our new name was chosen after lengthy consultation with blind and partially sighted people who told us our old name was old-fashioned, unfriendly and bureaucratic,” explains Olivia Curno. “The Vision Foundation describes an optimistic future and presents what we do and who we help, ensuring our work is better recognised and understood”.

She continues, “The Vision Foundation is a long-established charity with gravitas and we know from our research that the heritage is hugely important to our supporters, beneficiaries and the public. The modern logo and visual brand captures the spirit of the visually impaired community and reflects our new values: courageous, collaborative, intelligent and empowering.

 “We are really proud to be launching our new brand identity. A lot has changed since we started in 1921 but sadly a lot hasn’t. People living with sight loss in the capital are facing significant and growing challenges, and ever worsening life chances. Meanwhile, a very high and growing number of people are needlessly going blind”.

**For more information or to arrange an interview contact:**

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***ENDS***

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

* The Vision Foundation was launched in 1921 as the Greater London Fund for the Blind to provide support to blind and partially sighted people across London. It has raised more than £30 million over that time supporting grassroots organisations working at the heart of their communities. It raises funds from the public and uses these to transform the lives of people facing or living with sight loss by funding projects across London which inform, empower and include.
* There are an estimated 201,000 people in London living with sight loss today, but a further 680,000 (1 in 12) adults are living with a sight threatening condition such as diabetes or heart disease. Without intervention, these figures are set to increase significantly by 2030 (an estimated 295,000 will be living with sight loss, 874,000 with a sight threatening

condition)[[4]](#endnote-4).

* An estimated 50% of sight loss is avoidable[[5]](#endnote-5).
* \*The research was conducted by an independent researcher among a sample of 111 adults between June and August 2019. The research was conducted online and over the phone for respondents unable to access the survey online. More findings are available.
* Further information, including images and approved photos, can be downloaded from: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/bgjv5tjwka52m2m/AAA267WS0lwGeRfePeVy7qM0a?dl=0>

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Yes  | No | Not stated |
| Do you feel like an equal citizen in London?  | 40% | 50% | 10% |
| Do you think London is open to visually impaired people in terms of employment? | 33% | 57% | 10% |

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| --- |
| What would be the number one change that would improve your quality of life?  |
| Better education and awareness for members of the public | 28% |
| Other / NA | 22% |
| Better support with employment | 13% |
| Better information on products and services for visually impaired people | 10% |
| Better support directly after diagnosis/sight loss | 9% |
| Changes that would make using transport easier | 8% |
| More opportunity for ongoing social/psychological support | 5% |
| Better access to technology (information/training) | 5% |

|  |
| --- |
| Have you ever experienced any of the following as a result of your sight impairment? |
| Mild anxiety or depression | 45% |
| Severe anxiety or depression | 26% |
| Suicidal thoughts | 9% |
| None of these | 20% |

* \*\*The research was conducted by YouGov. Total sample size was 2203 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 25th - 26th September 2019. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). More stats are available upon request.

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| --- |
| To what extent do you think someone who is blind or partially sighted would be able to do your job (i.e. the day to day activities required from your job)? By 'blind', we mean someone with complete or almost complete loss of vision.By 'partially sighted', we mean someone with a partial loss of vision which comes in varying degrees and has a major impact on everyday activities.  |
|  | blind | partially sighted |
| They would be able to do all of my job | 6% | 16% |
| They would be able to do some of my job | 26% | 48% |
| They wouldn't be able to do any of my job | 60% | 29% |
| Don't know | 8% | 7% |

1. Pezzullo L, Streatfeild J, Simkiss P, Shickle. D. 2018 The economic impact of sight loss and blindness in the UK adult population. BMC Health Serv Res. 18(1):63 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. My Voice 2015: The views and experiences of blind and partially sighted people in the UK. John Slade and Rose Edwards. RNIB [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/being-disabled-britain-journey-less-equal> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. RNIB Sight Loss Data Tool, Royal National Institute for Blind People, April 2017 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. London Assembly Health Committee <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sightlossfinalv2.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)