



# Sight for London

The Vision Foundation's strategy for 2019-2024



**Vision Foundation**

London's sight loss charity



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## Foreword by Olivia Curno, CEO and Anna Tylor, Chair of Trustees



We are proud to present the Vision Foundation's strategy for 2019-2024.

The Vision Foundation has been supporting and speaking out on behalf of blind and partially sighted people across London for close to 100 years. Formerly known as the Greater London Fund for the Blind, we support organisations that provide a necessary lifeline and essential resource for London's visually impaired community. That includes everything from making sure a child affected by sight loss can access education; to giving a young person a helping hand on the career ladder; or funding yoga, cookery and Zumba classes for an isolated older person.

But 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. We have identified that the Vision Foundation can play a critical and unique role in both saving sight and transforming lives by working in partnership with others to deliver projects which inform, empower, and include.

Our strategy gives us the opportunity to have more impact than ever before. We will work to improve the opportunities, wellbeing and inclusion for blind and partially sighted people. We will do more to ensure London is open and welcoming to the visually impaired community across employment, and social and cultural spaces. We will strive to reduce loneliness and isolation. And we will ensure that blind and partially sighted people further marginalised through homelessness, poverty or domestic violence are reached. Above all, we will emphasise what people can do, rather than what they can't.

But our work is more than just providing support. It's also about amplifying voices to ensure that blind and partially sighted people are heard. And it's about changing our society and the systems that structure it, by inspiring more people to advocate and take action. Being blind or partially sighted should not mean you are left out, isolated, or held back. The Vision Foundation believes we can all be equal citizens of this great city and have an opportunity to live life to the full.

Now, as we near our centenary year, is the moment to make a difference. This strategy is a call to action to everyone who shares our vision. Everyone connected to the Vision Foundation, be it our staff, volunteers or supporters, the families and individuals we support, or the partner organisations we work with, are urged to come together in pursuit of our shared vision.



**Olivia Curno**  
Chief Executive of the  
Vision Foundation



**Anna Tylor**  
Chair of the  
Vision Foundation

## About the Vision Foundation

In 1921 a collection of small charities were brought together by newspaper magnate Sir Arthur Pearson under the umbrella of the Greater London Fund for the Blind. He used his personal experience of sight loss and considerable wealth to raise awareness of the difficulties faced by blind and partially sighted people.

Since our founding the Vision Foundation has distributed more than £30m to sight loss organisations across London. We have sustained essential grassroots activities working at the heart of their communities, and been the first to support innovative new projects boosting the quality of life of the visually impaired community.

£30m

distributed to sight  
loss organisations



**It's optimistic,  
hopeful. It has  
gravitas. Vision  
and strong  
foundations.**



**John**  
62, registered blind\*

## Changing our name

The Greater London Fund for the Blind has stayed the same for many years. With our centenary approaching the Vision Foundation has identified a bold new approach to tackle the issues within London. We want to do more for more people. With this new strategy and plan for our future, it was time to rethink our name and refresh our brand to mirror our new values.

We are experts in what we do, building public awareness, channelling funds for maximum effect, amplifying voices, building capacity, and inspiring others to join us. We believe this new identity will help deliver our expertise more effectively.



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## Developing our strategy

The hopes, fears and lived experiences of the people our work supports drives everything we do and has informed the choices we have made in this strategy. We have consulted extensively with our staff, trustees, volunteers, and supporters as well as the wider sight loss sector, other funders and fundraisers. This has been underpinned by extensive research with blind and partially sighted people - through focus groups, surveys and interviews, and by ensuring that our blind and partially sighted colleagues and Trustees have been in the room at every stage of our planning process. It is this lived expertise that has helped us decide which areas to focus on.

This strategy is designed to be a framework for achieving our goals, and provide clarity about how and what is to be done, while allowing space to respond to change. It is intended to be ambitious and audacious, but also achievable and auditable. And it is built with the ability to be scalable – such that we can accelerate, or slow down activity based on funding and opportunity.



### Our Vision

is a future where people living with sight loss are equal citizens and preventable blindness is a thing of the past.

### Our Mission

is to make London a shining example of a sight loss aware city.

### Our Purpose

is to transform the lives of people facing or living with sight loss by funding projects which inform, empower and include.

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## Our values

Our values reinforce everything we do. They shape the way we work and the culture we endeavour to instil.



### We collaborate

The problems we seek to address are complex – no one organisation can do it alone. We wish to learn and share knowledge, combine skillsets and expertise, amplify impact and enable innovation.



### We empower

It is individuals with sight loss who have the insight, skills and experience to identify the most important issues, influence others, and bring about lasting change.



### We work intelligently

The issue of sight loss spans research, health, stigma, employment, culture, sport, transport, safety, economics, equality and more. Without an intelligent, evidence-based approach, our efforts will not be focussed to bring about the greatest impact.



### We are courageous

Sight loss is a growing, urgent problem. Every day, people needlessly lose their sight for life. Every day, people unfairly miss out on opportunities. Every day, people face abuse, disregard, isolation, poverty and depression. We must be brave today to bring about a brighter tomorrow.

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## Our three strategic aims

Sight loss costs London £2.7bn each year, which equates to £300 per Londoner. And behind every single pound of economic cost we can measure there is an immeasurable human story of isolation, poverty, discrimination and exclusion.

There is a financial and moral imperative to prevent sight loss where possible and support work which enables blind and partially sighted people to live confident, fulfilling lives and fully engage in all London has to offer.

As we approach our centenary year, the Vision Foundation is launching a new approach to tackle these issues head on. We are uniquely placed to do this as an independent and agile funder, exclusively focusing on sight loss in London. We are experts in what we do, building public awareness, channelling funds for maximum effect, amplifying voices, building capacity, and motivating more people to support us.



**£2.7bn**

per year is the cost of sight loss in London – which equates to £300 per Londoner

**We are committed to three strategic aims to help us move a step closer to achieving our vision, over the five-year period of our strategy:**



**Opening  
London up**

**Empowering  
those at-risk**

**Preventing  
avoidable  
blindness**



Together we'll change  
lives and save sight.





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## Opening London up

Everyone living, working or visiting London should have access to the rich cultural, economic and social opportunities of our city.

In reality only a quarter of blind and partially sighted working-age Londoners are working (compared to half of all disabled people, and 80% of non-disabled people). This means that people cannot be financially independent nor enjoy the wider benefits of employment.

Alongside poor employment, blind and partially sighted people face barriers in taking part in physical activity, navigating city streets and engaging in social activities – many things sighted people might take for granted.

**To ensure we have the biggest impact,  
we will make the following areas a priority:**

- Educating and influencing employers
- Empowering individuals by supporting the development of confidence, networks and skills
- Ensuring sports, arts, social and cultural spaces are accessible
- Improving public transport and public safety
- Showcasing and celebrating excellence



**The truth is, if  
you're not recruiting  
disabled people,  
your competitors  
probably are.**



**Paul Polman**  
Former CEO, Unilever

## Empowering those at-risk

Within the visually impaired community there are certain groups who can face a “double disadvantage”. When facing sight loss, those from the BAME community, older people, women, those living on a low income and those with other disabilities are at risk of experiencing poorer outcomes. In addition, there are some consequences of sight loss that are not supported well or at all, such as the heightened risk of domestic violence, poverty or poor mental health.



# 80%

of blind and partially sighted people are affected by mental health issues

**To ensure we have the biggest impact, we will make the following areas a priority:**

- Identifying and advocating with those particularly marginalised
- Identifying the moments when people face the greatest risk of spiralling outcomes, including the point of diagnosis or upon losing a job
- Funding sight loss organisations working with at risk communities
- Ensuring that specialist services for the general population are accessible to the sight loss community too

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## Preventing avoidable blindness

200,000 people are living with sight loss in the capital and just under 700,000 (1 in 12 adults) are living with a sight threatening condition. Unless there are bold interventions, these figures are set to increase significantly by 2030 (close to 300,000 will be living with sight loss, just under 900,000 with a sight threatening condition).

Public awareness and a stretched NHS are major contributors to these poor outcomes. The NHS recommends an eye test every two years, but over a third of people are put off eye tests due to concerns about cost and two in three parents have never taken their child for a test. This despite of the fact that more than three quarters of the public fear the loss of their sight more than any other sense.

**50%**

of sight loss is preventable, but not necessarily treatable

**240**

times a day someone is told that they are going blind - that's every 6 minutes

**To ensure we have the biggest impact, we will make the following areas a priority:**

- Raising public awareness about the importance of sight tests, particularly among at risk communities
- Improving access to sight tests including adapted tests and community-based testing
- Connecting with the NHS and private providers to improve outcomes
- Promoting the power of research









CC

When my eyes first went,  
I was depressed, I sat there  
for 6 months thinking what  
am I going to do? You need  
a buddy, someone to take  
you through that depressive  
period so you aren't stuck  
there for life.

DD

Carol

46, registered blind\*

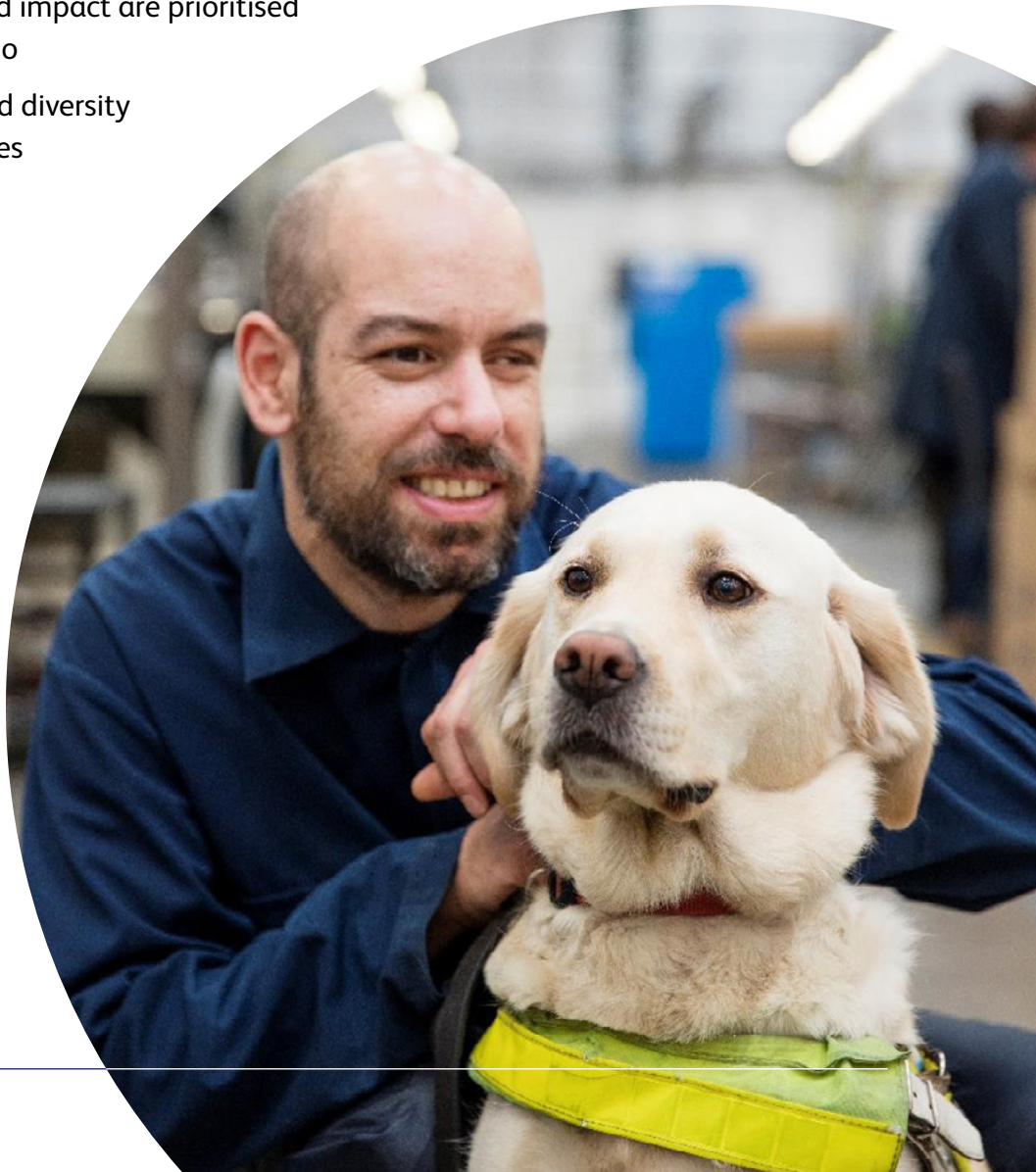


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## The way forward

**We will improve how we work as an organisation to give us the best possible chance of achieving our vision. To get us there we will:**

- Raise more income through our fundraising and trading operations
- Build a team of exceptional staff and volunteers who feel supported and empowered
- Develop our offering as a funder that gives more than just funds – building capacity, convening partners, influencing policy, and changing attitudes
- Invest in a compelling and relatable brand
- Modernise and streamline the way we work
- Ensure that quality and impact are prioritised across everything we do
- Champion equality and diversity through all our activities





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## Making it happen

Thank you for taking the time to read our new strategy and the exciting focus of our work. We really appreciate it.

It is only with your help that the Vision Foundation can ensure that people who are blind and partially sighted can be active, equal members of society and live life to the full.



**Join us and be part of a group of incredible people who want to make sure that everyone can live, work and enjoy London as equals. There are many ways you can help:**

- Become part of our expanding team of passionate volunteers
- Come and work for us and become part of a dedicated team working each day to make a difference
- Make a donation or take part in an event to raise money to fund our vital work
- Leave a gift to the Vision Foundation in your Will
- Donate your pre-loved clothes, books and toys – or shop with us - at your local Vision Foundation charity shop
- If you have experience of living with sight loss, share your story with us so we can change hearts, minds and attitudes

To find out more about how you can help us improve the lives of people facing and living with sight loss, now and in the future, visit **[visionfoundation.org.uk](https://visionfoundation.org.uk)**

# London's sight loss charity

Sight is the sense people fear losing the most. Yet 1 in 12 people living in London are at risk of losing their sight – and this figure is set to increase.

For those already living with sight loss, London is not accessible. Blind and partially sighted people face isolation, poverty, discrimination and exclusion.

It doesn't have to be this way.

We promote positive eye-health to ensure losing your sight is something you never have to face. And we support and connect London's best projects for blind and partially sighted people so everyone living with sight loss is fully included in our society.

Help us to improve the lives of people with sight loss, now and for the future.

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## Connect with us:

Call us: **020 7620 2066**

Email us: **[hello@visionfoundation.org.uk](mailto:hello@visionfoundation.org.uk)**

Website: **[www.visionfoundation.org.uk](http://www.visionfoundation.org.uk)**

Twitter: **@Vision\_Fdn**

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