



# Centenary Appeal

Changing lives through  
sight loss employment



Vision Foundation

100  
years

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**In 2021, the Vision Foundation celebrates its centenary anniversary. To mark this significant milestone, we have set ourselves the challenge of raising £1,000,000 to support blind and partially sighted people into work.**

Blind and partially sighted people do most of the jobs that sighted people do. They might do them a little differently – using specialist technology or administrative support – but they do them successfully. There are blind or partially sighted politicians, journalists, lawyers, presenters, teachers, fundraisers, professors, artists, authors, actors, bankers, CEOs, entrepreneurs and chefs.

But these success stories are far too few. In fact, if you're a blind adult of working age in the UK, there is only a 1 in 4 chance that you're working. That means that over 300,000 blind and partially sighted people are currently excluded from the workplace. Coming out of lockdown presents a unique opportunity to address this. As we have all adopted new ways of working and new values as a society, there is a real opportunity to rebuild new working practices that include everyone. Through funds raised by our Centenary Appeal we will provide a comprehensive program of work underpinned by recent research:

**Direct support** – Investing in the very best employment programmes for blind and partially sighted people based on the findings from our recently commissioned research.

**See My Skills behavioural change campaign** – changing the attitudes and behaviour of employers and the public, offering inspirational role models for young people, and providing simple useful information for businesses.

**Policy influence** – guiding policymakers on the barriers and solutions, offering a cost-saving to society.



We know that £1m cannot solve the employment problem through provision of direct support services alone. But by identifying barriers; evidencing best practice; influencing funders and policy makers; and changing attitudes and behaviour; we believe that we can begin a movement which significantly shifts the dial on sight loss employment.

We believe in a future where people living with sight loss are equal citizens. It is only through access to meaningful employment that we will achieve equality, inclusion, and independence. With your help, we can make London a global exemplar of a sight loss aware city.



# Foreword

“ Supporting the visually impaired community by raising awareness and affecting positive change is very close to my heart. I’ve been blind since I was seven and I’ve been able to pursue my dreams because of some people who had faith in my abilities and were willing to take the risks.

It deeply saddens me to know that 75 % of partially sighted people of working age in the UK are unemployed, which doesn’t only mean a lack of financial independence, but also lower confidence, more isolation and greater disparity in the community.

Can you believe that you can fill 500 buses to capacity with unemployed visually impaired people in London? To me, that’s a travesty of what we stand for as a society.

I know that we can give back a lot if given a chance. All it takes is the willingness to change the status quo and belief that disability is not the same as inability.

I had enormous struggles in my own life as people often associated a lack of sight with a lack of vision. Through determination, patience and the support of my loved ones, I graduated as an engineer and have built a full-time career in financial services.

I want to use my expertise and lived experience to make a positive difference to the sight loss community in London and beyond. I believe so much more is possible for blind and partially sighted people and hope you’ll join me on this journey. ”



**Naqi Rizvi**

**Chair of the Vision Foundation Centenary Appeal Board**



# The reality facing blind and partially sighted people in 2021

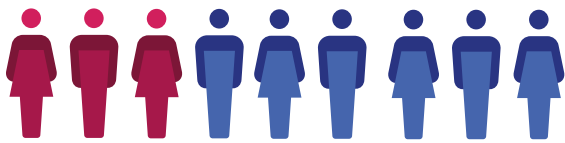


**94%** of the public don't think a blind person could do their job\*.

\*YouGov survey of 2,000 working adults



**90%** of employers say that it would be "very difficult" or "impossible" to employ a blind or partially sighted person.



**30%** of blind and partially sighted people, who are no longer in work, say that they could have continued in their job given the right support.

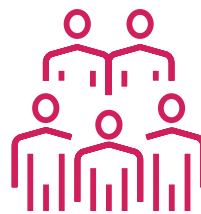


**Only a quarter** of blind and partially sighted working-age Londoners are in employment.

(Compared to half of all

disabled people, and three-quarters of the general population.)

That means there are approximately



**40,000**

unemployed blind and partially sighted people of working age in London.



That's enough to fill

**500 double decker buses**

of wasted potential.

“ As I embark on my first job search since losing my eyesight, there are a number of things that have really struck me, such as the number of large employers that have inaccessible application processes... With 15 years of recruitment experience, if I am finding this challenging, I can guarantee that others are. ”



Jurgen, 36,  
Supported by the Vision Foundation

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# Our frontline service partners

Each year, the Vision Foundation works with over 35 charity partners supporting over 12,000 blind and partially sighted people across London. Funds raised through our Centenary Appeal will be invested in charities delivering front line, tailored support which improves the employment prospects for blind and partially sighted people in the capital.

## In the past year, our partners have included:

### **Blind in Business** - London-wide

Blind in Business provides tailored support to visually impaired graduates and undergraduates seeking employment.

### **Disability Advice Service Lambeth**

DASL teaches working-age visually impaired adults in Lambeth how to present, interview, produce and promote weekly radio chat shows and podcasts.

### **Royal Society for Blind Children**

RSBC provides emotional support, and practical advice for blind and partially sighted children and young people through activities, and specialist further education to build confidence and skills.

### **Look UK** - London-wide

Look UK's mentoring programme works with blind and partially sighted young people at school and in college to help prepare them for their transition to the world of work. Look UK matches young people with mentors who have been through the journey of sight loss at school and are able to provide practical support – from accessible materials, to social groups, and next steps after school.

## 100 years of support

The Vision Foundation was created by Sir Arthur Pearson, founder of the Daily Express, in 1921 under the name the Greater London Fund for the Blind. As someone who had lost his own sight to glaucoma, his mission was very simple – to ensure the very best help was given to blind and partially sighted people in London.

With many soldiers returning from the First World War having been blinded in battle, and the poor health of the nation leading to a surge in sight threatening conditions, the Vision Foundation was founded to co-ordinate the resources needed to help blind and partially sighted people regain their independence and ensure quality of life.

**Today our purpose remains clear – to transform the lives of people facing or living with sight loss.**

Since 1921, we have invested more than **£31m** in grassroots communities, been early investors in pilot innovations that have been scaled to nationwide programmes and amplified the voices of the sight loss community.

Last year alone, we reached over **12,400** blind and partially sighted people through our work, in addition to supporting the education of **57,340** people about the importance of eye health.

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# The positive impact of COVID-19 for the employment of blind and partially sighted people

The coronavirus pandemic is an unparalleled situation that has both divided and united our communities. Lockdowns and ongoing social distancing rules have created physical divisions and considerable challenges for blind and partially sighted people. However, the charitable sector has united in its drive to overcome these challenges.

This period of remote working has shown that with the right technology and employer attitude, almost anyone can work from home.

Blind and partially sighted people have often been ahead of the curve, with their use of changing and adapted technology over many years. We've all had to get to grips with new ways of working and unfamiliar working arrangements – things the sight loss community have been dealing with for decades in order to find work and thrive.

Despite the dark days the pandemic has brought upon the globe, we believe there is light and hope for the sight loss community as we move to new ways of working in 2021 and beyond.



“ Lockdown has shown how a flexible approach to employment can increase productivity to the benefit of us all. This couldn't be truer for the sight loss community who can now benefit from the advances in digital technology and flexibility in working arrangements. The timing couldn't be better to benefit from this talent pool and get more visually impaired people into meaningful, sustainable employment. ”



Alan Pickering CBE  
Centenary Board Member



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# Why partner with the Vision Foundation?

The Vision Foundation has one hundred years of experience in grant funding and has raised and distributed in excess of £31 million.

This track record, combined with our expertise in investing in the most effective sight loss projects in the capital, means we are the perfect partner for individuals and organisations wanting to drive social change at the heart of some of London's most disadvantaged communities.

We work collaboratively across the sight loss sector with policy makers and community leaders to ensure our grant giving delivers more than just financial aid. We drive change, we unite the sector and we evolve as the sight loss community needs us to.

We know that, together, individuals can make an enormous impact.

Partnering with the Vision Foundation provides an unrivalled opportunity to unlock the talent and aspirations of blind and partially sighted people. In doing so, we can play our part in improving the social mobility of disadvantaged communities across the board.

## Your gift has the power to change lives



**£5,000**

could pay for a two day employment programme for 20 blind and partially sighted young people, combining adventure and team-building with networking, interviews and a mock assessment centre.



**£15,000**

could support 35 blind and partially sighted people who are furthest from the job market to get the help they need. The programme builds confidence, offers practical assistance and encourages connections, providing a route into both volunteering and paid employment.



**£33,000**

could pay for a London Employment Advisor for a full year to help employers gain a more informed understanding of the potential and capabilities of blind and partially sighted employees. This project boosts levels of employment and retention, ensuring greater social, cultural and economic inclusion for approximately 80 Londoners with sight loss.

## Recognising your support

The Vision Foundation feels strongly about paying tribute to our supporters, but we also recognise that everyone has a unique view on what this means to them. We will discuss personalised recognition options with you, putting your views and wishes at the heart of our plans and communications.

# Find out more about our Centenary Appeal

Please contact:



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## Centenary Appeal Board Members

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