



## Plain language highlights of research and evidence relating to adults with visual impairment and employment in the United Kingdom

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- There are an estimated 2 million people living with sight loss in the United Kingdom (UK), of which about 340,000 are registered as Sight impaired or Severely sight impaired. Of those registered, around 80,000 are of working age in the UK, which amounts to about a quarter of the total registered UK population. The number of people living with sight loss in need of work is forecast to grow as people are required to stay in work for longer (Department for Work and Pensions; RNIB).
- While they vary, all recent estimates of the employment rate for people with a visual impairment are considerably lower than for the wider population. Amongst people registered as Sight impaired or Severely sight impaired, just 27% are employed, rising to 54% for those with a self-reported seeing difficulty. This is compared to 76% reported by the Office for National Statistics for the wider population.
- Employment figures for people with visual impairment vary widely due to different samples (e.g., estimates based on national surveys, versus surveys of registered blind and partially sighted people) and definitions of visual impairment (e.g., self-reported difficulty seeing, versus registered blind and partially sighted).
- Employment is a key area in which individuals who are Sight impaired or Severely sight impaired experience challenges, with implications for their personal finances, social inclusion, independence, and emotional well-being. Barriers include negative attitudes of employers and the wider public; inaccessible job application processes; and difficulties accessing the right type of support to find, and remain in, work. For those who experience sight loss whilst working, decisions regarding whether to disclose their

impairment may be difficult, as well as decisions about whether to stay in work, and in what role or capacity.

- The most commonly reported barrier to employment reported by people with a Sight impairment or Severe sight impairment is the perceived attitudes of employers, who are often not aware of, or have misconceptions about, the needs, experiences and abilities of these employees and potential employees.
- Sources of support, such as Access to Work, benefit many, but access to support may be limited for those with visual impairment. This may reflect a lack of suitability (and a need for greater tailoring or support to the needs of people with visual impairment) and/or a lack of awareness of available support. There are also reports of long administrative processes and wait-times for support from Access to Work.
- Research carried out outside the UK has explored some topics which are currently unexplored in the UK. This includes the positive impacts of interventions aimed at increasing employers' understanding of visual impairment; the needs of people with visual impairment; the benefits of hiring people with disabilities for both employers and people with disabilities themselves.
- Whilst the majority of visual impairment in the UK is associated with older adults and age-related conditions, a greater understanding of the experiences of working-age adults with visual impairment and how they can be supported is essential, given that rates of employment amongst this population are lower than amongst sighted peers, and people with other types of disability.
- There are several topics which would benefit from greater research in the UK: young people with visual impairment transitioning from education into employment; the impact of interrelated factors such as additional disability and health conditions on employment prospects and experiences; the role of interventions targeted at employers; and a greater general awareness of the benefits and realities of increased inclusion of people with VI in the workplace.

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