



**Save Sight.
Change Lives.**

Making a splash

**A world where everyone has the best possible eye health and
the same opportunities, regardless of vision loss.**

Please find out how we'll do it in our Theory of Change.



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Foreword

When someone receives the devastating news that they, or someone they love, will lose their vision, they face two questions. Can this be stopped? How do I live my life?

We believe that optimistic answers exist to both questions. That's why Fight for Sight exists - to fund groundbreaking work to: Save Sight. Change Lives.

That's our vision, and it's the North Star that drives everything we do. Ultimately, we aim to create a world where: 'Everyone has the best possible eye health and the same opportunities, regardless of vision loss'.

It's a long-term aspiration, but we're well on our way. Mapping the milestones that will get us there is vital, and that's why we need this Theory of Change. It:

- **Defines the change we exist to make in the world,**
- **Maps a path to keep us on track,**
- **Holds us accountable to our supporters, the people who govern our charity and people impacted by vision loss,**
- **Steers a clear path to help us allocate resources and funds smartly.**

We have created a visual representation, along with some bullet points, that link the activities we undertake to the difference we expect to see.

Broadly speaking, these fit into four categories, which is how we've divided this document.

1. **Proactively engaging** with blind and vision impaired people, sector organisations and researchers to find out what matters most to them. We identify barriers to collaboration, innovation, and sustainability – and opportunities for growth.
2. **Funding, monitoring and evaluating high-quality projects across the patient pathway that:**
 - Enhance knowledge and data, test hypotheses and generate new ideas/proof of concept,
 - Build capacity and talent,
 - Connect people and ideas to maximise impact and accelerate change.
3. **Disseminating insights and evidence widely** in the service of new partnerships and collaborations, adoption of ideas that are proven to work and the policy and systems change needed to go further, faster.
4. **Making information and opportunities easily accessible and available to people impacted by vision loss**, ensuring that knowledge is shared widely and people have what they need to make informed decisions.

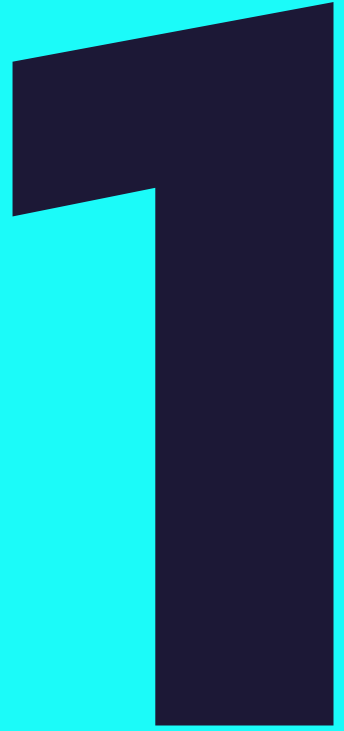
In delivering this roadmap, we've made some assumptions and identified some risks and some enablers, and you'll find those in section 5.

We believe this creates a clear pathway to change, and we're excited to welcome supporters, partners and allies to join us.



Eleanor Southwood
Director of Impact and External Affairs





Shifting gears

**How we'll accelerate
progress through our
Theory of Change.**

Theory of change

01 INFORM

We proactively engage with blind and vision impaired people, sector organisations, and researchers to find out what matters most to them. The insights we gather inform the design of our programmes.

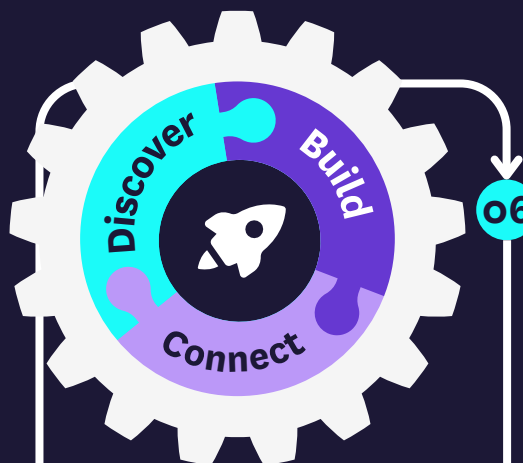
02 INVEST

- Income generation supports the long-term funding of scientific research and social change.
- The grants we award accelerate our vision to: Save Sight. Change Lives.

03 DISCOVER

OUR FUNDING

- Enables researchers and organisations to develop new and innovative solutions based on the latest data and evidence.
- Delivers proof of concept and unlocks future funding.



05 CONNECT

OUR FUNDING:

- Convenes the people and resources needed to accelerate scaling up and widespread adoption of best practice.
- Contributes to strengthening infrastructure that accelerates change.

04 BUILD

OUR FUNDING

- Attracts, retains and develops research talent.
- Supports service design that is insights-driven and promotes equitable access for anyone impacted by vision loss, wherever they live and whatever their circumstances.

06 INFLUENCE

- We disseminate insights and evidence widely in the service of new partnerships and collaborations, adoption of ideas that are proven to work and the policy and systems change needed to go further faster.
- By disseminating insights, convening experts and attracting onward investment and widespread adoption of impactful work, we multiply the impact of our funding.

07 INFORM

- Making information and opportunities easily accessible to people impacted by vision loss, means that knowledge is shared widely so that people can make informed choices.
- We make information widely available to encourage Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) and participation in clinical and other research projects.

A world where everyone has the best possible eye health and the same opportunities regardless of vision loss.

Theory of change

A world where everyone has the best possible eye health and the same opportunities regardless of vision loss.

01. Inform

We proactively engage with blind and vision impaired people, sector organisations, and researchers to find out what matters most to them. The insights we gather inform the design of our programmes.

02. Invest

- Income generation supports the long-term funding of scientific research and social change.
- The grants we award accelerate our vision to: Save Sight. Change Lives.

03. Discover, our funding:

- Enables researchers and organisations to develop new and innovative solutions based on the latest data and evidence.
- Delivers proof of concept and unlocks future funding.

04. Build, our funding:

- Attracts, retains and develops research talent.
- Supports service design that is insights-driven and promotes equitable access for anyone impacted by vision loss, wherever they live and whatever their circumstances.

05. Connect, our funding:

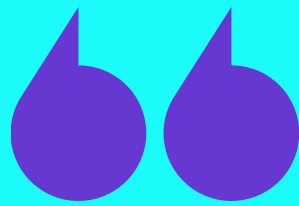
- Convenes the people and resources needed to accelerate scaling up and widespread adoption of best practice and impactful work.
- Contributes to strengthening infrastructure that accelerates change.

06. Influencing - The multiplier effect

We disseminate insights and evidence widely to foster new partnerships and collaborations, adopt proven ideas, and drive the policy and systems changes needed to move forward more quickly. By disseminating insights, convening experts and attracting onward investment and widespread adoption of impactful work, we multiply the impact of our funding.

07. Inform

- Making information and opportunities easily accessible to people impacted by vision loss means that knowledge is shared widely so that people can make informed choices.
- We make information widely available to encourage Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) and participation in clinical and other research projects.



“I've seen the same family for 20 years, and sadly, I've also seen people go from almost normal vision to being completely blind.”

**Clinician scientist,
Professor Marcela Vortuba,
Cardiff**

2

The challenge:
**Understanding the
scale of the
problem.**



Save Sight. Change Lives

Our vision is simple: Save Sight. Change Lives.

We exist to find and fund optimistic, evidence-based responses to the two questions people face when they are told that they, or someone they love, will lose sight:

- Can this be stopped?
- How do I live my life?

There are 2.5 million people in the UK living with vision loss, and some 90% of sight loss is preventable or treatable.

Scientific research can help us better understand, diagnose, prevent and treat vision loss.

Yet, there is a significant funding gap. Only 1.2% of the £2.56 billion currently targeted to health research is invested in eye research.

We also know that people who are blind and vision impaired are three times more likely to experience loneliness.

Only 1.2% of public funding for health research is invested in eye research.

Can this be stopped?

Without significant investment, new treatments will be slow to emerge.

For example, there is a lack of research into Inherited Retinal Disease because “clinical research includes the experimental, lengthy, and costly nature of clinical studies.”

A 2023 report found that:

“Gene-specific therapies have been revolutionary, [but] this approach is likely limited by the time, available participants, and funding needed to develop treatments for the relatively small numbers of individuals affected by each genetic subtype.”

Our funding supports scientific discoveries, develops talent, and connects people to accelerate change.

"The doctor checked my eyes and told me I needed to stop playing cricket because it's dangerous."

Javid Patel regained confidence after discovering blind cricket

How do I live my life?

We believe everyone should have the same opportunities, regardless of vision loss. Yet, that isn't the case for people who are blind and vision impaired.

Research we've commissioned reveals that people who are blind and vision impaired are three times more likely to feel lonely and isolated. Only 1 in four blind and vision impaired people of working age are in employment.

We believe everyone should thrive, not just survive, and therefore take a holistic view that encompasses everything that makes life worthwhile.

From our research, we know a diagnosis of vision loss can create internal barriers that prevent people from getting out and about.

So, the projects we fund engage – or re-engage – people in activities they love and in new physical and social opportunities that build confidence, skills and social connection.

Service provision is fragmented. We aim to encourage quality services, demonstrate what works, and then scale these solutions so that everyone can access them, wherever they live.





3

Informing our work
We're listening.

Informing our work

As a listening organisation, we proactively engage with blind and vision impaired people, sector organisations and researchers to identify what matters most to them.

We ask about the barriers to collaboration, innovation and sustainability – and the opportunities.

For example, we do this through Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE), our Early Career Research Network (ECRN, pictured below) and through regular communications with the people and organisations we fund.

We're active in the sectors we fund, participating in sector-wide initiatives, particularly in the pursuit of improved evaluation and understanding how the work we fund can make an even greater impact.



Discover more
about scientific
research funding.



Discover more
about social
change funding.



What does success look like?

We aim to develop a more effective funding landscape that delivers discoveries, equitable service, and better solutions for anyone impacted by vision loss.

In the short term, people with direct and indirect lived experience, sector organisations and researchers will be actively involved in shaping our research priorities and funding schemes.

By 2030, our funding portfolio will clearly respond to priorities and unmet needs: we will be a recognised convenor and initiator of impactful grant-making beyond the immediate sectors we fund.

Beyond 2030, the wider grant-making landscape will be demonstratively more responsive to the needs of people, researchers, and sector organisations, informed by the evidence that we and others have gathered.

What we'll measure

To monitor success, we will measure:

- The quality and diversity of engagement across all funding schemes.
- How our funding is responding to specific needs.
- The extent to which other funders are replicating our practices.

Funding tailored to specific needs

Each year, Fight for Sight and the Royal College of Ophthalmologists (RCOphth) award early-stage ophthalmologists the means to conduct research to further treatments for sight loss.

What are the Zakarian Awards?

These awards are for early-career ophthalmologists to gain experience and skills by undertaking ophthalmic and vision research, which could lead to further research or funding opportunities. A grant of up to £25,000 is available for up to one year for ophthalmologists to conduct research. The funding is specifically for members of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists.

It means doctors who specialise in eye health can use this time to take on research or innovative projects, some of which might have been inspired by work in a clinical setting.

Research by the Royal College of Ophthalmologists (RCOphth) found that retention levels are higher among ophthalmologists that conduct research, so there are other benefits too.



4

Invest
**Funding brilliant minds
and bright ideas.**

Investing in change

We fund the brilliant minds and bright ideas, putting change in sight for everyone impacted by vision loss.

Fight for Sight is an established funder of scientific research and social change.

We fund the brilliant minds and bright ideas, putting change in sight for everyone impacted by vision loss.

Brilliant minds

Clinical research holds the potential to bring improved diagnostics, sight-saving treatments, and more accessible services to people experiencing vision loss.

The charity is responding to the need for funding scientific research into vision loss. Of the £32.6 million invested in eye research in 2018, a third was provided through a mixture of eye research charities and larger charitable organisations.

Discover

The scientific research we fund builds evidence that unlocks future funding, moving research from the bench (in the lab) to the bedside (where it benefits people impacted by vision loss).

A panel of experts review the applications that come through, from small grants to PhD studentships, grants for clinician-scientists, project grants and more. So, while there aren't any guarantees, we de-risk our funding and fund projects with the greatest potential.

Build

Our approach is to fund good science and good scientists. Discovery science means hypotheses can be disproven as well as proven, but we learn something from every project we fund.

Connect

We are building a sustainable research ecosystem by investing in early-career researchers and connecting them to collaborate on shared challenges.



Funding social change



Blind and vision impaired people experience a range of systemic inequities and barriers, including environmental and attitudinal.

Our focus is on creating access to services which tackle internalised barriers such as a lack of confidence and self-advocacy.

The programmes we fund build confidence, independence and self-advocacy. Our approach is holistic, based on the belief that people should have the same opportunities regardless of vision loss. For example, funding access to sporting activities promotes physical and mental well-being and fosters confidence that can lead to increased employment opportunities.

Our funding is designed to enhance discoveries, build talent solutions and networks, and connect people, resources and ideas to accelerate change: this might be at an individual level, by affecting a system and infrastructure, or by influencing change at a societal level.

Discover

The research we fund helps us better understand the lived experiences of people who are blind or vision impaired.

- What we discover and learn informs our funding.

- People who are blind and vision impaired discover/rediscover greater independence, confidence and skills.

Build

- Our grants create a sustainable ecosystem and help reduce the postcode lottery of service provision.
- Sharing evidence of impact – what works and what doesn't – creates blueprints and a case for change.
- Insights gained from funded projects drive future funding calls and amplify impact, ensuring that resources are directed toward the most effective solutions.

Connect

- As a grant-making organisation, we act as a multiplier, enabling successful projects to scale up.
- Grants encourage organisations to work together and build capacity.

What does success look like?

In the short term, we will build a portfolio of high-quality projects that balances tried and tested funding schemes with new ones: high-quality evidence gathering (e.g., reports) and new networks that nurture talent (e.g., our Early Career Research Network).

By 2030, our portfolio will represent a more varied risk profile, including projects that are riskier or closer to translational outcomes.

Fight for Sight will play an increased role in larger projects, bringing more treatments closer to patients and delivering more consistent services for blind and vision impaired people.

In the longer term, there will be sufficient and appropriate funding and infrastructure available to make more treatments accessible to patients and to reduce the negative outcomes currently associated with vision loss.

Beyond 2030, the wider grant-making landscape will be more responsive to the needs of people, researchers, and sector organisations, informed by the evidence that we and others have gathered.

What we'll measure

To monitor success, we will measure:

- Citations, publications and evidence of attracting onward funding
- The extent to which we have a well-balanced, funded portfolio
- The amount of money invested in vision loss research and the consistency of access to support for people, regardless of where they live or their circumstances.

Nature walks restore confidence

With our funding, MyVision Oxfordshire masterminded its [Green Walks](#) programme in response to a report by [Natural England](#), which Fight for Sight contributed to.

The report highlighted that certain groups face significant barriers when it comes to experiencing the enjoyment and benefits of natural spaces. MyVision Oxfordshire launched a

programme that focuses on the impact of being outdoors and walking. The peer-led groups meet every two weeks.

“One group member hadn’t been on a bus for 15 years – since she had lost her sight – but as a group they travelled together to the location, and now she regularly takes the bus by herself,” said Mark Upton, CEO of MyVision Oxfordshire.

Spotlight on
UK Vision Research Network

Together, we're putting change in sight for everyone impacted by vision loss.



In 2025, we launched the UK Vision Research Network (UKVRN).

The UKVRN will bring brilliant minds together, connected by their determination to tackle the biggest challenges in vision research through innovation and collaboration.

The first step in building this network is an exciting doctoral training programme.

This programme is unique because students will have co-supervisors from different institutions, ideally from different disciplines.

The main supervisor will collaborate with the co-supervisor to produce the application. Research will focus on Retinal Degeneration.

Collective leadership

Unlike a traditional PhD, this program will allow students to learn from those outside their team. Having supervisors from different institutions and being connected to the UKVRN will encourage the importance of cross-institutional and cross-discipline collaboration.

Launching a programme for those at the beginning of their careers can pave the way for collaboration in vision research.

Eleanor Southwood, Director of Impact and External Affairs at Fight for Sight, said: "In speaking with leading experts in the field, we were surprised to learn that many believed there were not enough opportunities for them to connect with

“While competition is good, it shouldn’t be at the expense of being able to collaborate in an interdisciplinary manner and harness the greatness that we have in the UK.”

Professor Andrew Dick, Director of the Institute of Ophthalmology at UCL

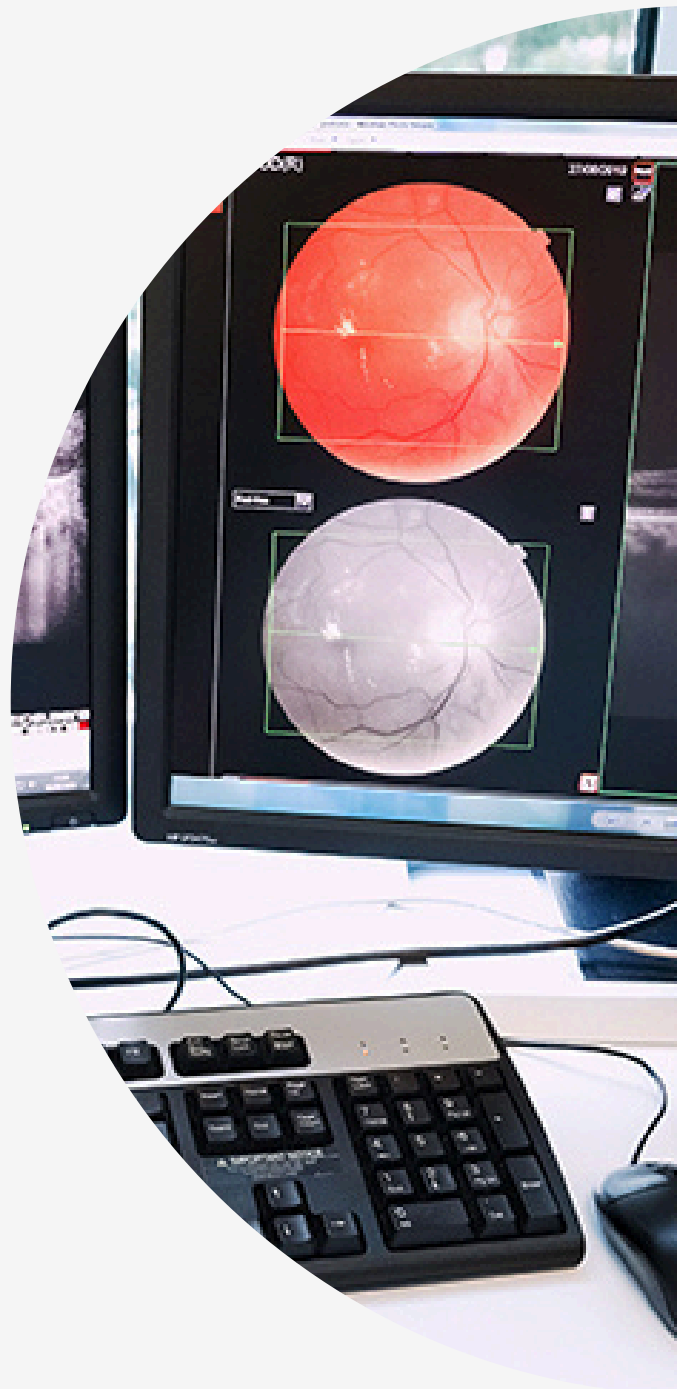
peers and establish research collaborations.”

"We aspire to change this by establishing the UK Vision Research Network, which will foster an environment which favours collaboration, bringing experts together to tackle some of the biggest challenges in vision research. In this first grant call, we will provide PhD students with opportunities to work across institutions and disciplines, equipping them with essential skills for collaborative research."

Why retinal degeneration?

Retinal degeneration is a broad term that includes a range of conditions, from age-related macular degeneration (the leading cause of blindness worldwide) to rarer conditions, including inherited retinal diseases.

Some research areas that fall under this umbrella have the potential for great progress in the next five years, and by enabling this collaboration, we will be able to work faster.



£25

Growing retinal cells in a dish

£25 could buy the nutrients to grow and sustain retinal cells in a dish so that researchers can test treatments for vision loss / to advance our understanding of vision loss.

£80

Tomorrow's researchers, today

£80 could fund a PhD student for a day, advancing our understanding of, and improving diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of vision loss. PhDs are a fantastic learning experience that can set people on a pathway to their own research laboratories.

£100

Gene therapies for vision loss

£100 could help fund the development and understanding of genes to explore gene editing and therapies as potential treatments for vision loss.

“That initial funding that I had from Fight for Sight was an instrumental stepping stone, and it is true to say that if I hadn't had that, I may not be here today.

Professor Alice Davidson.

**Could you
help us
deliver
world-class
scientific
research?**



Spotlight on
**Treatments: age-related
macular degeneration**
The trial that can't fail

We're supporting a clinical trial exploring treatments for a complication of wet age-related macular degeneration.

Led by Professor Timothy Jackson, the clinical trial is exploring a surgical treatment and medical treatment for macular haemorrhage, or bleeding.

The trial will help us understand which works best and which could lead to better outcomes with the best interest of the patients in mind.

"If you show that surgery isn't helpful, then good. We don't need to put people through surgery, or if we show that surgery is beneficial, we know that everybody should be offered it. So, either way, the result will be of value," says Professor Jackson.

Specifically, the trial will explore two interventions for sub-macular haemorrhage:



- Injecting only medication called “anti-VEGF” into a patient’s eye is a standard treatment for wet-AMD, which relies on the cells in the eye clearing the blood away.
- **Surgical intervention:** an operation to inject the clot-busting drug into the bleed, which fills the eye with gas, followed by regular anti-VEGF injections.

Professor Jackson and his team have experience researching AMD and a keen interest in surgical interventions. So, when the opportunity arose to apply and run such

a trial, Professor Jackson eagerly submitted a proposal.

“Some patients may not even be eligible for anti-VEGF injections [due to NICE guidelines]. Their vision often goes down very suddenly, so if you can do something to help, we would all want to.”

Trials and tribulations

Professor Jackson and the team have faced challenges along the way. A perfect storm of Brexit, COVID-19, global drug shortages, and changes to the EU regulatory framework added extra challenges to recruiting participants for the trial.

Professor Jackson said: “Any of those things on its own would be a significant challenge, but having all happen within one trial was exhausting – it is always at the back of your mind how many patients you have recruited in any week.”

But recruitment has picked up.

“We’ve got 30 sites, [and] 120 participants out of 210. So, we’re past the halfway mark.

The team is launching sites in Poland, Switzerland, Ireland, and Germany, and a Spanish site may follow.

Given the rare nature of the condition, recruitment may take several months.

However, the hope is that when complete, the statistics will show the best standard of care for people experiencing haemorrhage because of wet AMD.

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Trust

The team at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Trust treats over 1,000 patients per month.

The team credits its success to a collaborative approach. It has engaged with community optometrists to let them know the importance of rapid referral, as well as explaining how to ensure patients are seen quickly through their fast-track wet AMD pathway.

This pathway is reviewed daily by a retinal specialist, and their research team is flexible and able to arrange assessments rapidly.

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Trust management recognises the importance of research and speedy treatment.

Having this recognition and the support of several expert retinal surgeons means they are often able to perform the surgery within a few days. This multi-disciplinary team effort is crucial in clinical trial recruitment.

5

Influence

**The multiplier effect;
scaling impact,
and driving change**

Influence: the multiplier effect

We disseminate insights, which multiply the impact of our funded projects.

We'll share insights and evidence widely, particularly in the service of developing new partnerships and wider adoption of ideas that work, including through conferences, cross-sector partnerships and our policy and influencing work.

Through the adoption of research and sharing insights, we believe it is possible to reduce the health and economic burden of vision loss.

What does success look like?

In the short term, we'll gain recognition for the impact of the work we fund, leading to greater joint funding efforts with sector organisations and a higher profile for the work of our grantees.

By 2030, the work that we fund will be increasingly built on by others in our sector, and we will have a reputation as a trusted expert because of our evidence and insights.

Beyond 2030, we expect to see better research capacity, capabilities and knowledge in the sectors we work in, leading to systems change.

We'll work in partnership and bring people together to work towards better consistency and quality of services. We'll focus on initiatives that smooth the path from discovery to available treatments.

To monitor success, we will measure:

- Numbers of people accessing our evidence of impact digitally and through events and other engagement opportunities.
- Others taking up our work and scaling and adopting it.
- Indicators of a better-connected sector that is having more influence, including on the policy landscape.



Informing people living with vision loss

We provide information and support for people living with vision loss, including details of clinical trials.

We will make information easily accessible and available to people with vision loss, increasing their understanding of research progress and opportunities.

This will also include information on clinical trials.

Already, our website contains a wealth of information in our A-to-Z pages. Still, we want to build on this and deliver tailored information about vision loss conditions, raise awareness of clinical trials and other research-related activities, and explain or signpost people to how and where they can participate.

We'll also share information from the social change work we fund, which evaluates ways that people can rediscover confidence, independence and agency following a vision loss diagnosis or as their life circumstances change.

What does success look like?

In the short term, people will be able to access a 'hub' of information about the work we fund and how to get involved in our grant-making process.

By 2030, we will be recognised as a trusted and credible source of information, with people accessing our information through many routes, including other people's websites.

In the longer term, we will be the first and preferred destination for people looking for the latest in vision research and evidence of what works (and what doesn't).

To monitor success, we will measure:

- Web analytics, visits to our online information.
- Referrals to our information by others.

Assumptions, risks, enablers

The environment we work in has an impact on what we do and our ability to deliver our objectives.

Assumptions

The theory of change is framed around several assumptions, including:

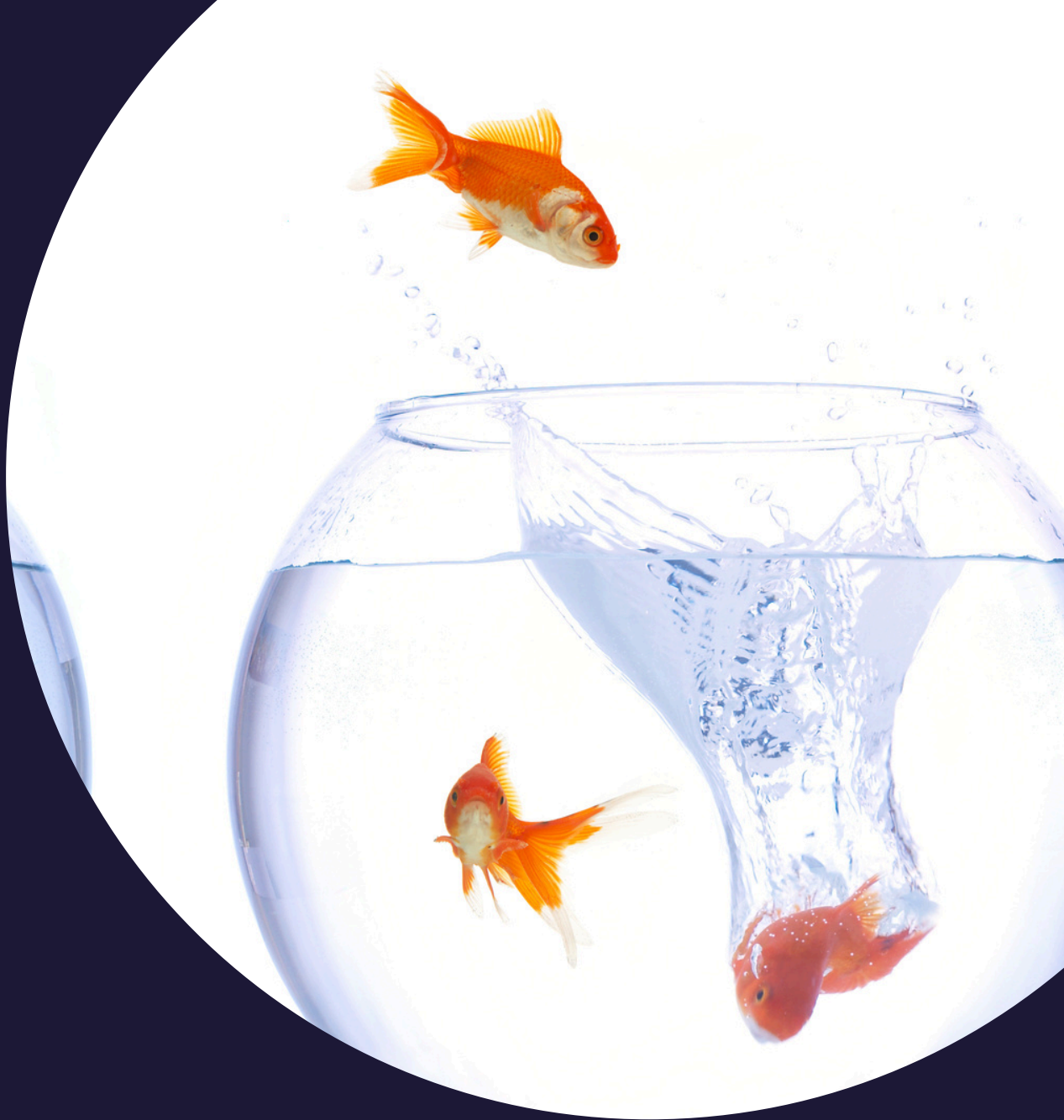
- We will receive high-quality applications that meet our funding requirements.
- We are able to reach a diverse set of people who are blind and vision impaired for research and to access our projects.
- By encouraging a holistic approach, people build skills and confidence in all aspects of their lives.
- The individuals and organisations we fund have the resources to monitor and measure outcomes and impact.
- Increased investment in eye research attracts further funding, leading to a sustainable cycle of support.
- Increasing funding across the sector attracts and retains talent.
- Collaboration between researchers and people affected by eye diseases ensures that research is relevant to patient needs.

Risks

- An unstable fundraising environment could impact the availability of resources.
- Lack of capacity within the sector could hinder the effective delivery of the Theory of Change.
- Changes in the strategies of major players in the sector could lead to duplication of effort.
- Recurrent funding that doesn't reach people most at need.
- High volume of applications or lack of capacity to respond could lead to delays or challenges to our processes.
- Negative publicity or project failures could damage the organisation's reputation.
- If there are misunderstandings around the importance of non-restricted funding, we may have money but no available projects.
- The sector may not know how to respond to evidence, hindering knowledge transfer.

Enablers

- Support systems within universities and research institutions to retain researchers and foster a thriving research environment.
- Effective collaboration between researchers, clinicians, and people with lived experience.
- A vision loss sector that has the capacity and capability to respond to existing and unmet needs.
- A blind and vision impaired population willing to engage with research, in projects and their evaluation and to be actively engaged in coproduction and leadership of services, organisations and partnerships.
- Supporters and donors who recognise the impact and potential of the work we fund and are willing to invest in future growth that will accelerate the transformation for people impacted by vision loss.



Get in touch

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