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# The impact of COVID-19 on individuals with visual impairment, their care and support services: evidence to support future planning.

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## Entry details

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## Main contact short bio

A former optometrist and NHS optometric advisor (OA), Liz is now a research student. As an OA, she initiated 3 innovative integrated low vision (LV) services (London ~ 2003), and joined a multi-disciplinary group reviewing London LV services (2018-2019). She provided domiciliary optometric services (2006-2019)

Area (Health Board or CCG areas and country in which this research was conducted) | United Kingdom

## Key words:

Visual impairment; COVID-19; Caregivers; Support

## Funding & commercial relationships

None

## Collaborators

Prof Chris Dickinson, Division of Pharmacy and Optometry, University of Manchester  
Dr Louise Gow, RNIB

I am happy for our presentation at the symposium to be recorded and made available for attendees and others to view | ✓

I am happy for this abstract to be published | ✓

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## Submission questions

Title of presentation

| The impact of COVID-19 on individuals with visual impairment, and their care and support services.

Abstract, must include the following four headings: Purpose, Methods, Results, Conclusions

Purpose, - Low vision (LV) support services were suspended at the start of COVID-19. As restrictions eased many providers initially offered remote services and subsequently a combination of remote and face-to-face services. There is currently little knowledge about the effectiveness of remote services or COVID-19's impact on UK people with a visual impairment (VI) and their caregivers. This qualitative research investigates the impact of COVID-19, focussing on support services and wellbeing, seeking evidence for planning future LV services.

Methods, - Three populations are surveyed; those who provide LV services; those with a VI; and carers of those with VI. Each population's views will be obtained using questionnaires and semi-structured one-to-one interviews. Preliminary results are presented for LV service providers.

Results, - Service providers have taken part in questionnaires (83 have provided data) and 10 telephone interviews. Questionnaire responders were predominantly optometrists (23), ECLOs (18) or ROVIs (13) and provided services from hospitals (41), local authority or community charity sites (36) or optical practices (11). Service providers most frequently indicated no risk of spreading infections and clients being less stressed due to travel issues as perceived benefits of remote services, and the difficulty in engaging with some clients because of hearing difficulties and inability to pick up on non-verbal clues as perceived disadvantages.

Those with VI have been invited to take part in questionnaires and interviews.

Conclusions. - Early findings identify both advantages and disadvantages to remote service provision from providers' perspective. Results from those with VI and caregivers should provide further insights.

## Authors & affiliations

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