

Key to maintaining good physical, mental and social health is maintaining good eye health, with sight loss linked to a reduction in mobility, independence, educational attainment, employment, mental health and general quality of life ([Office for Health Improvement and Disparities \(OHID\)](#)). Prevention of sight loss where it is avoidable is therefore an important public health issue.

Good overall health is linked to preventing sight loss, and public health programmes for smoking cessation, healthy weight and exercise may prevent or delay the onset of eye disease ([OHID](#)). Attending routine sight tests can detect problems early and enable intervention to prevent sight loss.

Why is this important?



Health inequalities affect the risk of sight loss. Loss of sight can increase the risk of falls, depression, and living in poverty. ([OHID](#))

What is the local context?



Torbay has higher levels of sight loss certifications than England. There are higher rates than England of 18 to 74 year olds on the local authority register (Fig 5) in 2022/23.

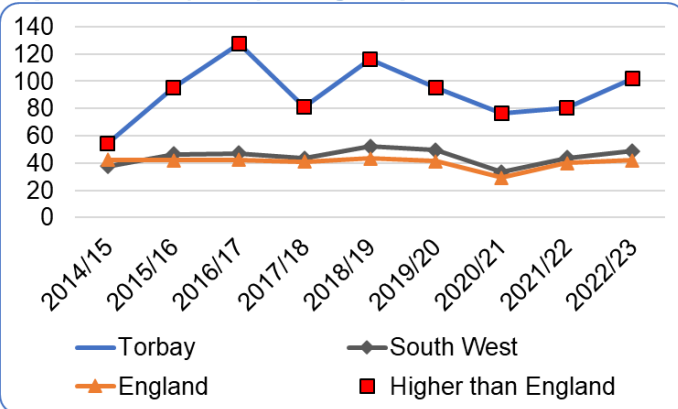
What should we do?



Encourage and enable people to attend routine sight tests and to maintain good general health. Raise awareness of support services available for visual impairment.

Sight loss certifications: A Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI) is completed by an ophthalmologist for people assessed to be sight impaired (previously 'partially sighted') or severely sight impaired (previously 'blind'). This is voluntary and leads, if the patient wishes, to registration with the local authority which can help them access services and a range of benefits.

Fig 1: Rate of new Certifications of Vision Impairments (CVIs) all ages, per 100,000



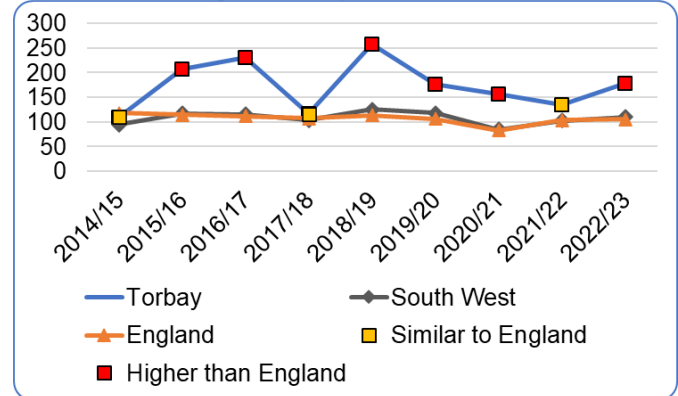
Source: OHID- [Public health profiles](#)

Torbay's rate of new CVIs has been significantly higher than England for the nine years shown (Fig 1). Certification is voluntary so the need is most likely greater than the rates show. Lower levels can mean that fewer people with the need are having certification rather than that needs are low. In some areas completion of the examinations to

assess for certification may be incentivised which may lead to higher rates.

Below looks at rates of new CVIs for age related macular degeneration, glaucoma and diabetic eye disease per 100,000 population. This is where the condition is the main cause of the sight loss, or if no main cause, then it is a contributory cause.

Fig 2: Age related macular degeneration- rates of new CVIs, aged 65+, per 100,000



Source: OHID- [Public health profiles](#)

Age related macular degeneration (AMD): This condition normally first affects people when they are aged in their 50s and 60s. It affects the middle part of vision and can impact everyday activities. The exact cause of AMD is not known. It has been linked to smoking, being overweight, high blood pressure and a family history of the condition. ([NHS](#))

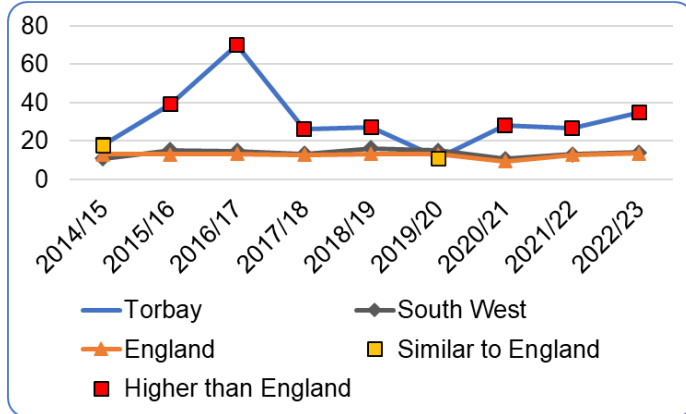
Torbay's rate of new AMD certifications in people aged 65+ is significantly higher than England for most of the years shown (Fig 2). In 2022/23 this equated to 67 certifications. As CVIs are voluntary true rates of need could be higher.

Diabetic eye disease: People with diabetes may be at risk of developing diabetic retinopathy- eye problems caused by diabetes. If not treated it can cause sight loss. Diabetic eye screening is offered every one or two years to those with diabetes aged 12 or over. ([NHS](#))

There are very low numbers of new CVIs for diabetic eye disease. In 2022/23 Torbay had 12 new CVIs with the previous six years ranging from five to nine with one year suppressed for being one to four ([OHID](#)). In 2022/23 the rate was

significantly higher than England as it has been three times in the last decade. England rates are very low. As CVIs are voluntary then actual rates of need could be higher.

Fig 3: Glaucoma- rates of new CVIs, aged 40+, per 100,000



Source: OHID- [Public health profiles](#)

Glaucoma: This is a common eye condition where the optic nerve becomes damaged, which can lead to loss of vision if not diagnosed and treated early. It can eventually result in blindness if untreated. It is usually asymptomatic to begin with and is often only identified during a routine sight test. Age increases risk- glaucoma becomes more common as people get older. ([NHS](#))

Torbay has had significantly higher rates of new CVIs for glaucoma (aged 40+) for seven of the nine years in Fig 3. This equates to 29 new certifications in 2022/23. Low numbers will cause rates to fluctuate. As stated previously, CVIs are voluntary so true rates of need could be higher.

Local authority (LA) register: LAs keep a register of blind/severely sight impaired and partially sighted/sight impaired people. Registration is offered when a CVI has been completed and the person assessed as meeting the sight loss criteria for the register. If they wish they are added to the register which can help them access services and a range of benefits.

Fig 4: Number registered with the LA as blind/severely sight impaired or partial sight/sight impaired, Torbay, on 31 March 2023

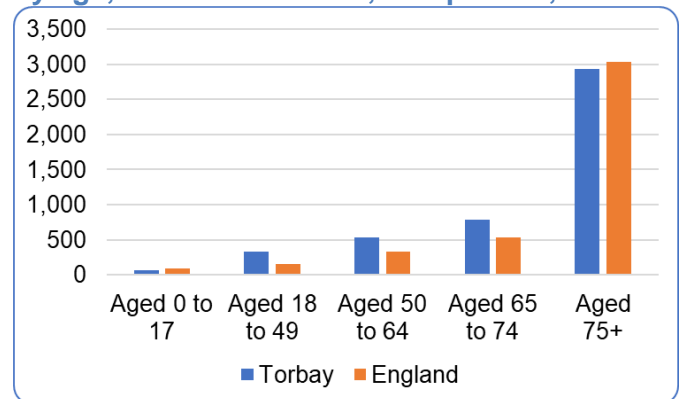
	Blind/severely sight impaired	Partial sight/sight impaired
On register at the end of March 2023	515	510
Joined the register during 2022/23	60	65

Source: NHS England- [Registered Blind and Partially Sighted People 2022/23](#) (rounded to nearest 5)

Fig 4 shows that on 31 March 2023 there were over a thousand people on Torbay’s register, equally split between those who are blind/severely sight impaired and those who are partially sighted/sight impaired. During the year around 60 people joined the register in each category. As registration is voluntary it cannot be seen as the definitive number of sight impaired and severely sight impaired people. Every three years NHS England publishes the numbers registered. On 31 March 2020 there were around 75 fewer people on the Torbay register.

Torbay’s rate registered per 100,000 population of 18 to 74 year olds is significantly higher than England (Fig 5) while rates of 0 to 17 year olds and people aged 75+ are similar compared with England. Over half of those on the Torbay register are aged 75+ but 18 to 74 year olds are at higher levels when compared with England.

Fig 5: Registered with the LA as blind/severely sight impaired or partial sight/sight impaired, by age, on 31 March 2023, rate per 100,000



Source: NHS England- [Registered Blind and Partially Sighted People 2022/23](#) (Torbay aged 0 to 4 suppressed) Office for National Statistics- mid-year population estimates

The register records if people have additional disabilities. In Torbay the percentage is significantly higher than England for both blind/severely sight impaired and partially sighted/sight impaired people. This of course relies on disability data being well recorded.

Information and support: There is information and support as well as sight loss research and statistics available on the website of the [RNIB](#) (Royal National Institute of Blind People).

References:

NHS: [Age-related macular degeneration](#), Apr 2021; [Diabetic eye screening](#), Sept 2022; [Glaucoma](#), Feb 2021. Accessed 21 Oct 2024

OHID: [Public health profiles-](#) Vision, Accessed within Oct 2024

References/links to data used are throughout the profile.