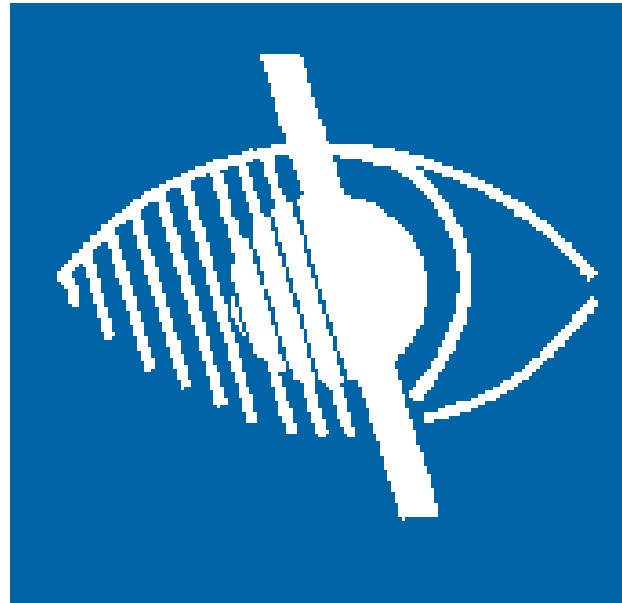


# Living with Sight Loss



# Low vision definition

“A person with low vision is one who has an impairment of visual function for whom full remediation is not possible by conventional spectacles, contact lenses or medical intervention and which causes restriction in that person’s everyday life.”

# The reality of sight loss

- 96% see light through a window
- 91% see shape of furniture
- 75% can read newspaper headlines
- 27% can read newspapers
- 19% can recognise faces across street
- 4% of people on blind register report being 'totally blind'

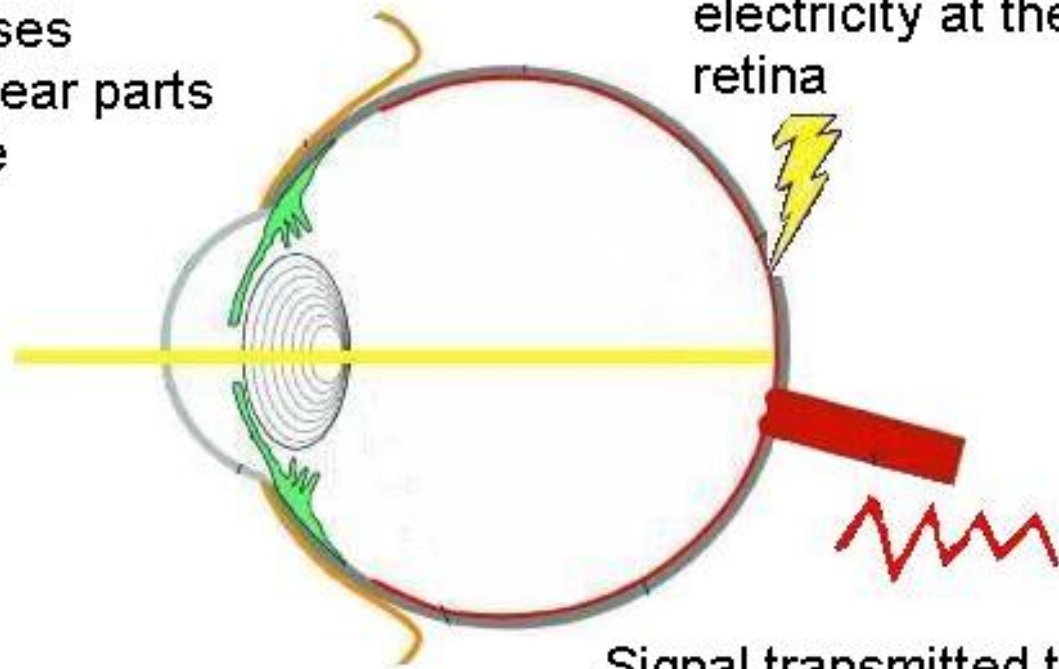
# So what do people with low vision actually see?

- Sight might be described as: blurry, patchy, misty, blotchy, glary, dark or shadowy
- Various types of low vision give different ‘functional’ pictures
- Main effects of low vision include: tunnel vision, central vision loss, ‘patchy’ vision

# What Goes Wrong with Sight?

- Light transmission is blocked or disrupted
- Light energy entering the eye is not properly converted to electrical energy
- Transmission of electrical signal to the brain is blocked or disrupted, or brain does not process the information.

Light passes through clear parts of the eye



Converted to electricity at the retina

Signal transmitted to the brain via optic nerve



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# The Big Four Causes of Sight Loss

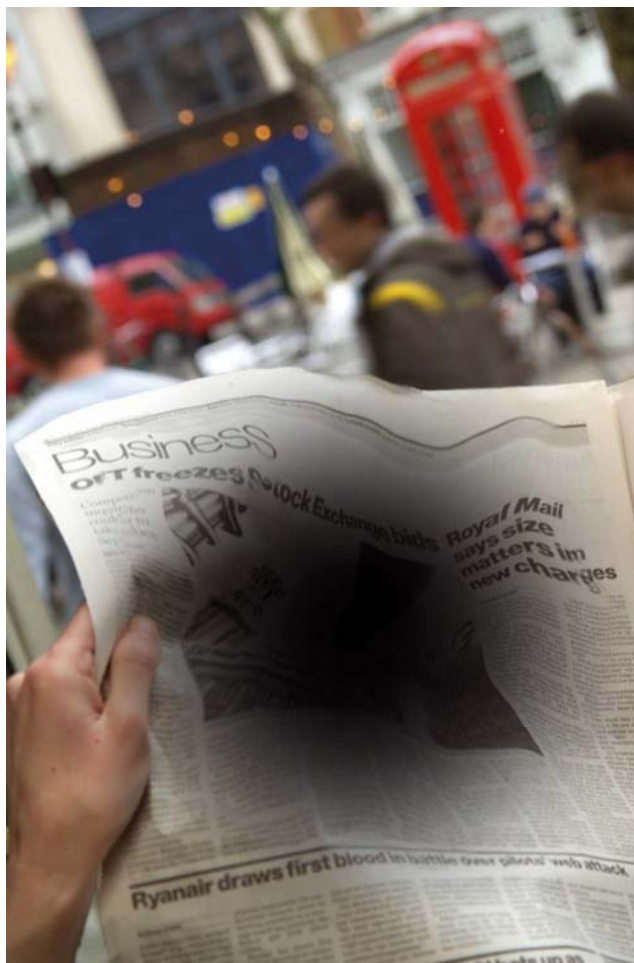
- Age Related Macular Degeneration
- Cataract
- Glaucoma
- Diabetic Eye Disease

# Age Related Macular Degeneration

- Most common cause of sight loss in the UK
- Affects central vision leading to difficulties with reading seeing faces etc
- Two forms of the disease, dry that cannot be treated, wet type which can sometimes be treated



Image created by Zak Waters  
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# Cataract

- Cloudiness that develops in the lens of the eye
- Causes distorted, blurred or severely reduced vision
- Can usually be treated by removal of the affected lens

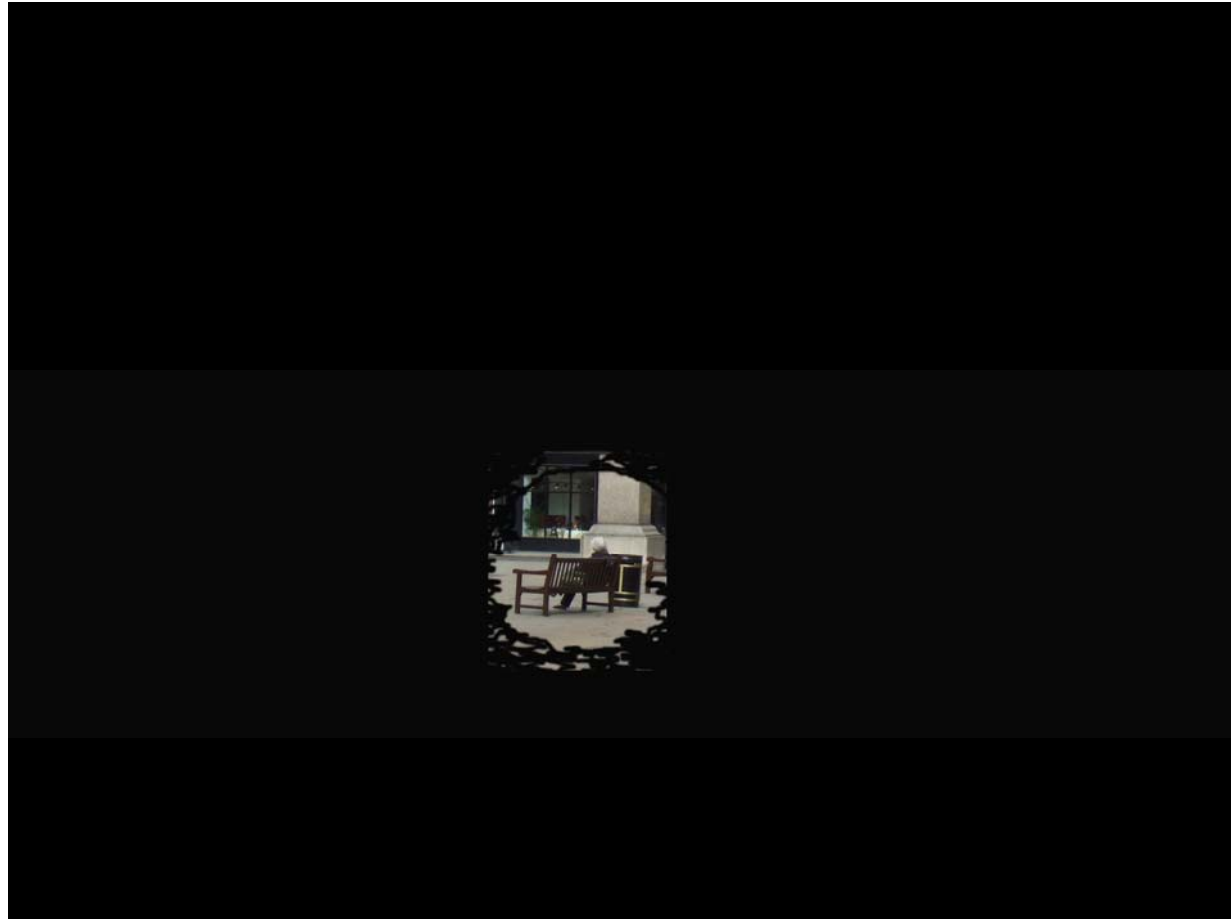


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# Glaucoma

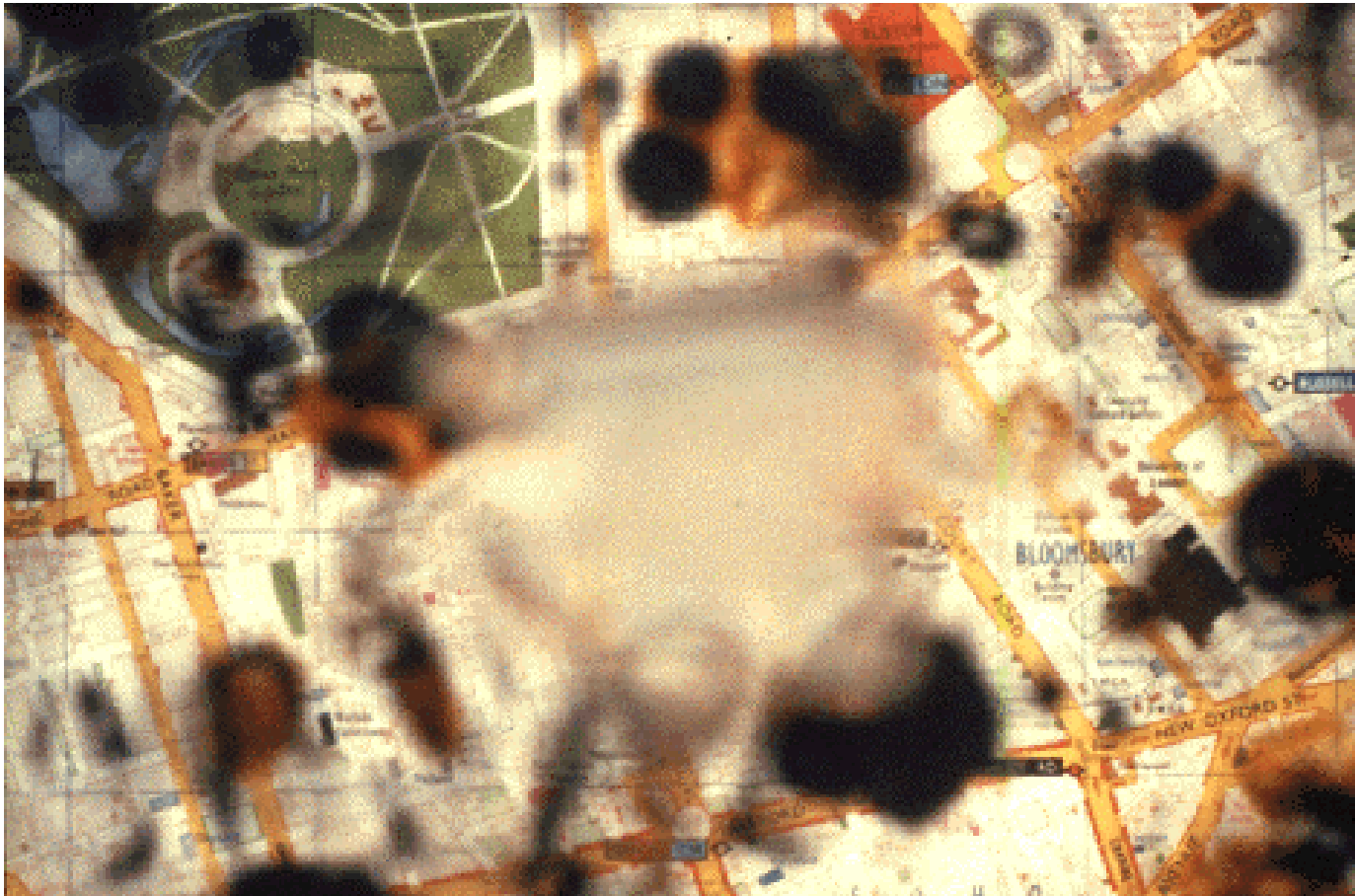
- Caused by raised pressure of fluid inside the eye
- Causes loss of visual field which can lead to tunnel vision
- Treatable form of sight loss, very important to maintain medication



# Diabetic Eye Disease

- Diabetes can give rise to several conditions affecting eyesight
- Most significant is diabetic retinopathy which causes patchy losses of visual field possibly leading to total blindness
- Can be treated with laser therapy





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# Why is low vision important?

- Many older people have low vision due to age related eye conditions. In fact about 90% of people with visual impairment are over 60 years of age
- The older population of the UK is increasing because people are living longer. By 2031 40% of population will be 60+ yrs

# Why is low vision important?

- Many of these people live alone
- This group have restricted daily living potential due to other difficulties e.g. hearing and mobility problems
- Greater emphasis on sight enhancement
- Low vision is used in vision rehabilitation for daily living, communications and mobility

# How many people have a visual impairment?

- Approximately 378,000 people registered blind/partially sighted.
- 2 million people with sight loss
- 1.7 million over the age of 65 who have significant vision loss
- This number is due to double in the next 25 years due to age of population and the increase of diabetes.

RNIB Open your eyes campaign report 2006

# Encouraging people to use sight and getting the most from vision is very important

- Between 75-80% of the information processed by the brain comes via our eyes (if fully sighted)
- 13% is received by our hearing
- 12% all other senses (touch etc)

# What can cause difficulties for people who have low vision?

- Adjustment to light and dark
- Poor lighting levels
- Glare problems
- Visual crowding
- Not enough contrast
- Things that are too small

# Making things easier to see

## The 3 Bs

Making things Bigger

Making things Brighter

Making things Bolder

# Communication

- Simple alterations and additions in use around the home to enable independence and mobility.
- Contrasting and tactile signage
  - Eye level signs
  - Matt finish
  - High visibility
  - Easily accessed
  - Sensory orientation aids

# Talking notice board



# Making things bigger

- Try large print
- Try adapted equipment e.g.. large faced clocks and watches
- Try larger TV screens (be careful)
- Try large labels and notes

# Tactile numbers



# Time and date



# Making things brighter

- Older people with low vision need three times more light than a younger adult without sight loss
- Two types of lighting: Task and environmental/domestic lighting
- Try using task lighting e.g. an adjustable task lamp for reading and other close tasks

# Making things brighter

- Try bright and even lighting throughout the home/office
- Have good distribution avoid 'pools' of light
- Try strip lights, dimmer switches and different types of light shades

# Internal Environment

- Resident lighting requirements taken into account
  - Care plans
  - Review system
  - Task lighting if requested
  - Reducing glare – controlling daylight
  - Floor coverings – matt or carpet
  - Adequate and consistent lighting in communal areas

# Task Lighting





# Internal Environment

- Colour contrasting
  - Communal areas
  - Handrails
  - Doors and door frames
  - Door furniture
- Staircases and their presence are adequately indicated
  - Hazard warning, treads and handrails

# Staircase, rails and nosing



# Making things bolder

- Use colour and tone contrast
- Try a bold font when using a PC
- Try white crockery on a dark tablecloth
- Try white cups for tea and coffee
- Try white edges on dark steps and dark edges on white steps









# Contrasting tablecloth



# Contrasting carpets - corridors



# More information needed?

Please contact Julia Barrand at

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[Julia.barrand@rnib.org.uk](mailto:Julia.barrand@rnib.org.uk)

# Training from RNIB Health and Social care Team

- Living with Sight Loss
- Dementia and Sight Loss
- Stroke and Sight Loss

£600 per day for up to 16 participants.

Please email [chris.smith@rnib.org.uk](mailto:chris.smith@rnib.org.uk) or ring 0121 665 4243 and let us train your staff in visual awareness.