



## **A new ambition for stroke - a consultation on a national strategy**

**Joint response from the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO), the Association of Optometrists (AOP) and the Federation of Ophthalmic & Dispensing Opticians (FODO).**

### Introduction

Our comments relate to Chapter 2 – ‘Life after stroke’ of the consultation document.

The Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO), the Association of Optometrists (AOP) and the Federation of Ophthalmic & Dispensing Opticians (FODO) together represent the 10,000 optometrists and over 5,000 dispensing opticians who provide high quality and accessible eye care services to the whole population across the UK. They include providers of domiciliary eye care services for patients who are confined to their home due to a physical or mental disability.

### Our response

We welcome this strategy for stroke services which will have a significant impact on improving the health outcomes of patients, many of whom currently experience services which are well below international standards.

Sight, like speech and mobility, is a vital element of living and social functioning. Currently this is usually overlooked during stroke care and non-eye health professionals are often unaware of the impact a stroke may have had on a patient’s vision or of any pre-existing visual condition.

It is for these reasons that we would advocate that people who have had a stroke have access to eye care throughout their rehabilitation. Patients’ eye sight is often overlooked when treating other health conditions.

We propose that an eye examination during the hospital phase of a patient’s care should form an important part of rehabilitation. At present, the vast majority of stroke patients do not have an eye examination at this stage and only a minority have one after they have returned home. However, undetected problems with vision can have a significant impact on the health and social outcomes of patients recovering from stroke. This includes visual problems which have been caused by the stroke and pre-existing conditions such as macular degeneration and uncorrected refractive error (wearing no spectacles or spectacles of the wrong prescription). A patient who is unable to see the food in front of them is less likely to eat. A patient with uncorrected vision is more likely to fall or have an accident and a patient who is unable to see the people around them properly (or the television) is more likely to experience isolation, anxiety and depression.

An eye examination would be of great benefit to both the patient and the rehabilitation team (who would be able to tailor their care of the patient based on the information this would give them about their vision). Ensuring that a patient's vision is assessed and, where possible, corrected would have a significant effect on their successful rehabilitation.

We strongly recommend that the review and the annual health and social care check, mentioned in chapter 2, page 37, should include eye health services. All stroke patients should have an eye examination. They, and other health professionals and carers, should also be informed of the importance of a regular eye test to check their vision and to look for the early signs of eye disease, which if left untreated could lead to permanent sight loss.

Many patients, carers and health professionals are unaware that there is a national NHS domiciliary eye care service. Domiciliary eye care providers offer a crucial service for stroke patients living in their own home or a care home and who are unable to attend a community practice unaided. Anyone who cannot attend an optical practice unaccompanied, which includes people of all ages with mobility problems, people living in care or residential homes, and those with disabilities or a long term condition such as a stroke, is entitled to a domiciliary NHS sight test and financial help with corrective eyewear, where appropriate. Information on this service should also be given to patients, their carers and health professionals.

Optimising a stroke patient's vision can improve their rehabilitation, their quality of life and their independence as well as reducing the likelihood of accidents such as falls.

We hope this advice is helpful and will be reflected in the final strategy.

If you would like further information or would like to discuss this further please contact Heather Marshall (see details below).

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