

Vision Research News



Vision Research News

Summer 2011

Welcome to the Summer 2011 issue of Vision Research News.

Vision Research News brings together social research projects in the field of vision. This collaborative publication provides summaries of the key findings from recent research, information about new projects and other relevant news for those interested in vision research.

The projects described here are relevant to the Vision 2020 UK Vision Strategy and our aim is to share this work with those who may find it of interest. Studies reported have not been endorsed by Vision 2020 UK, are of various sizes and may or may not have been peer reviewed.

This issue brings together some very interesting and useful research. Developments in Wet and Dry ARMD, support needs for blind babies and the parents of blind and partially sighted children, the impact of government cuts on visual impairment service provision, the barriers and enablers facing people accessing eye care services and issues affecting the educational and employment possibilities for the visually impaired are all discussed here.

If you have seen Vision Research News before you might notice a few changes. We have arranged the projects gathered together here under the outcomes of the Vision 2020 UK Vision Strategy, so that you can head straight to the area of most interest to you. You will also hopefully find some resources and events of interest in our expanded Other Research News section.

Vision Research News is put together by members of the VISION 2020 UK Social Research Group and includes representatives from The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, The College of Optometrists, RNIB and Thomas Pocklington Trust, and we would like to invite other organisations to become involved. If you have a completed project, a recently commissioned piece of work of interest to the community or just a piece of relevant news, be that a funding opportunity, a success story worth sharing or an under used resource worth talking about, then why not let us help you to share it.

If you would like us to include your research or if you have any comments or feedback for us about the new format or about what you would like to see in Vision Research News then get in touch at martin.cordiner@college-optometrists.org.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Vision Research News and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Vision Research News Editorial Team

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Completed research

Outcome 2 - Eliminating avoidable sight loss and delivering excellent support for people with sight loss

Project:	Understanding the support and information needs of parents of blind and partially sighted children at the time of diagnosis
Project Lead:	Gareth Thistleton, Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
Research undertaken by:	Research Works
Collaborators:	National Blind Children's Society, Action for Blind People, Guide Dogs, Great Ormond Street and Sense
Published:	Summer 2011
Funded by:	RNIB
Further information:	gareth.thisleton@rnib.org.uk

Purpose:

Parents of the 1500 children born each year with a vision impairment currently have very little support material available to them that is directly relevant to their needs. This project sought to produce a 'paper and online guide' specifically designed for parents.

In order to develop an appropriate content, tone, style and format for this guide, 12 hour-long individual depth interviews with parents of children with a vision impairment were conducted in February 2011. The findings have been used to develop the content, tone, style and format of the new leaflet "Starting Point: A guide for parents whose child has a vision impairment".

Findings:

- Parents felt that there is an urgent need for a **parent-focussed support communication**:
 - They currently feel unsupported at the point when they were informed that their child had a sight impairment.
 - This was described as a very lonely, challenging time and there was a tendency for parents to criticise health professionals for the perceived lack of support available.
- There was a strong consensus that the resource should be written from a parents' perspective i.e. a resource that focuses on parenting and child development issues:
 - At the point of diagnosis, parents wanted access to both long and short-term information. Parents wanted to know what immediate steps they should take.
 - Most parents currently use the internet to find information, but they often struggle to distinguish between information that is credible and information that is not.
 - Parents stressed the importance of talking to other parents in the same situation, but frequently found it difficult to find and contact them.
- The language of both the paper and web resource needs to be straightforward, approachable, empathetic and not full of clinical jargon.
- Parents wanted the design of the resources to be bright, cheerful and colourful, reflecting the upbeat tone.

Project: The needs of frail older people with sight loss
Researchers: Professor Mima Cattan, Dr Skye Hughes and Dr Fiona Fylan
Organisation: Northumbria University
Collaborators: Dr Nicola Kimes and Gianfranco Giuntoli (Research Associates, Leeds Metropolitan University)
Published: October 2010
Funded by: Thomas Pocklington Trust
Report available at: www.pocklington-trust.org.uk or research@pocklington-trust.org.uk

Purpose:

People today are living longer and the fastest growing section of the population is the 'oldest old'; sight loss increases among older people and significantly so among the oldest old. Despite this, there has been a lack of information about frail visually impaired older people's experiences and expectations of ageing or about what addresses their needs in care home settings.

This project undertook a literature review, in-depth interviews with 24 frail older people living in care homes and sheltered housing schemes, and with a manager and two wardens.

Summary findings:

Frail older people need help and support when coming to terms with their sight loss. They need help to overcome feelings of isolation and to deal with functional/mobility problems, as well as support for their emotional and physical health and wellbeing.

Conclusion:

Frail older people frequently lacked information, help and support after diagnosis of eye problems and existing services lacked a systematic approach. Appropriate support is needed to enable frail older people to enhance their quality of life and maintain independence as fully as possible.

Project: The estimated prevalence of visual impairment among people with learning disabilities in the UK
Researchers: Eric Emerson and Janet Robertson
Organisation: Centre for Disability Research, University of Lancaster
Publication due: June 2011
Funded by: RNIB and SeeAbility
Further information: sue.keil@rnib.org.uk

Purpose:

This project has produced, for the first time, estimates of the population of people with learning disabilities and seeing difficulties (blindness, partial sight and refractive error) in each of the four countries of the UK.

In their analysis for E&SI, Emerson and Robertson applied prevalence rates taken from two major studies in the Netherlands and Denmark to combined data taken from administrative sources and epidemiological research relating to people with learning disabilities in the UK.

Background:

Although there is considerable research evidence of a high prevalence of visual impairment in the learning disabilities population, prevalence rates vary considerably between studies

due to variations in sample size and characteristics of the populations. None of the studies that have been carried out in the UK have produced prevalence rates that can be generalised to the whole of the UK learning disabilities population.

Outcome 3 - Inclusion, participation and independence for people with sight loss

Project: RNIB survey on changes to VI service staffing and provision for blind and partially sighted children and young people in England and Wales

Project Authors: Sue Keil and Rory Cobb, RNIB

Published: November 2010

Funded by: RNIB

Report available at: [RNIB website](#)

Purpose:

In late summer 2010, RNIB Children, Young People and Families team became aware that several local authority (LA) advisory services for children and young people with visual impairment (VI) were under threat of staff cuts and/or re-organisation that would put the educational support for blind and partially sighted pupils at risk.

In order to ascertain whether the potential threat to VI services was isolated to a few services in a minority of LAs or was more widespread, this survey of VI services in England and Wales was undertaken. Fifty-seven questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 33% of LAs in England and Wales. They demonstrated that many VI services are already being affected by public sector cuts.

Findings:

- Thirty-six per cent of the VI services that responded have lost posts or had them frozen, or have experienced a reduction in staff hours since the beginning of the year:
 - a total of 15 QTVI posts across England and Wales have already been lost or frozen, with a further six posts considered to be at risk in the future.
- Other specialist staff posts that have been (or are likely to be affected) include mobility officers, TAs and resource technicians.
- While VI services have done their best to maintain a high standard of support for children, the cuts are already having an effect on provision for some groups of children:
 - 21% said that service provision to children whose sight difficulty was below a certain threshold had had their support withdrawn or reduced since the beginning of the year
 - 11% had reduced their support to pupils without statements
 - 12% had been unable to provide their previous level of support to children with complex needs.
- There were also concerns about future re-organisation and funding of VI services, with some apparently moving to a 'traded services' model.
- It is unclear why some VI services are being affected more than others. However, it is clear that where services have managed to avoid drastic cuts to their provision, it has been necessary for them to put forward a strong case to their LA with supporting evidence.

Follow up research:

An additional questionnaire survey of local authority education visual impairment (VI) advisory services is currently being carried out. The aim of this survey is to find out the effects of public sector cuts on educational provision for blind and partially sighted pupils following the start of the new financial year. This stage is due for completion in June 2011.

Project: Educational attainment and progress of young blind and partially sighted pupils in England
Project Author: Paul Bassett, Statsconsultancy
Published: November 2010
Funded by: RNIB
Report available at: [RNIB website](#)

Purpose:

Previous research for RNIB into the educational attainment of pupils aged 14 and 16 had found that the attainment gap between blind and partially sighted pupils and those with no special educational needs (SEN) appeared to be present from an early stage in their education, before they started secondary school (Chanfreau and Cebulla, 2010).

This study was therefore carried out to find out:

- whether the attainment gap is present when children first start school
- whether it then remains the same, increases or decreases with age
- the effect of other factors such as having another SEN, gender, ethnicity and social disadvantage

Findings:

- Primary aged pupils with a visual impairment are more likely than pupils with no recorded special educational needs (including those who are supported at School Action) to experience social disadvantage.
- While pupils with a visual impairment have higher attainment and make better progress than other SEN groups, they have lower attainment scores at the end of Reception when compared with pupils with no recorded SEN/at School Action and this gap appears to increase with each Key Stage.
- As had been found with older pupils, for pupils with visual impairment the most important factor is whether or not a pupil has another SEN in addition to a visual impairment. Pupils with a visual impairment as their single SEN do much better than pupils with a second SEN.
- Having another SEN has an even greater negative effect on pupils with visual impairment than pupils with other types of SEN.

Project: Review of the literature into effective practice in teaching literacy through braille
Project Authors: Graeme Douglas, Steve McCall and Mike McLinden
Organisation: University of Birmingham Visual Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR)
Publication: June 2011
Funded by: RNIB
Report available at: [RNIB website](#)

Purpose:

This project aimed to bring together the available evidence on what is known to be effective/good practice in teaching literacy through braille.

It has collated a list of current braille teaching schemes used with children and identified which (if any) of these have been evaluated in terms of outcomes for children. It also applied

the evidence from international sources to the UK context, with particular consideration given to the fact that most young children learning Braille are taught in mainstream schools where they are likely to be learning to read alongside their sighted peers who will be following a reading scheme designed for print readers.

The evidence will be made available to teachers to inform their own practice in teaching braille to young children, and to teacher trainers to incorporate into training programmes for specialist teachers of pupils with visual impairment.

Project: Improving Vision and Eye Health Care to People with Dementia
Project Authors: Dr Declan McKeefry (School of Optometry & Vision Science) and Dr Ruth Bartlett (Division of Dementia Studies)
Organisation: University of Bradford
Published: December 2011
Funded by: Thomas Pocklington Trust
Report available at: www.pocklington-trust.org.uk or research@pocklington-trust.org.uk

Purpose:
Pocklington's research about dementia and sight loss and experiences in sight loss and dementia services suggested that: dementia and visual impairment are prevalent in the ageing population; services need to prepare to assess / treat increasing numbers of people with both conditions, and it appears that few people with dementia have regular eye examinations.

This small study looked at ways of meeting the vision and eye health care needs of people with both of these conditions in a thorough and tailored manner.

Method:
This study examined guidelines for health care professionals relating to people with dementia and reviewed assessments, tests and techniques that are used for sight testing in people with dementia.

Summary findings:
There is a need for further research to develop and evaluate assessment procedures, tools and techniques for the eye examination of people with dementia. More research is needed into the support required and appropriate tests for people with both sight loss and dementia and how practitioners can benefit from improved related guidelines and training.

Conclusion:
Seven recommendations are made to improve vision services to people with dementia, including commence research into clinical testing methods appropriate for people with dementia.

Ongoing and recently commissioned research

Outcome 1 - Improving the eye health of people in the UK

Project:	Investigation of complement receptor genes as risk factors for development of neovascular AMD
Lead researcher:	Professor Anne Hughes, Queen's University Belfast
Collaborators:	University College London, Leibniz Institute (Germany)
Timescale:	Three years
Funded by:	Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
Contact details:	kate.neal@guidedogs.org.uk

Summary:

This project will investigate the genetic coding that could help identify people at risk of AMD and help to develop a treatment. It aims to pinpoint the genetic risk factors for AMD and further develop the risk model for the condition to include all known factors and smoking history.

Several genetic mutations have already been identified as potentially important risk factors in AMD and a recent study showed a "complement receptor gene" could be a key risk factor. The new study will investigate whether variations in this gene alter an individual's risk of developing AMD when they grow old.

These important genetic risk factors will in future simplify the search for any environmental trigger for AMD in people who are genetically susceptible but the long term goal is to prevent the onset or progression of AMD and initiate treatment before the end-stage of serious visual disability is reached.

Background:

Around 250,000 people in the UK are registered as visually impaired because of macular degeneration, but at the moment there is not enough information available to predict, with sufficient accuracy and before symptoms develop, whether someone is at risk of developing AMD.

Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) causes a loss of vision in the center of the visual field as a result of damage to the retina and can make it difficult or impossible to read or recognize faces, though some peripheral vision usually remains.

AMD can take a "wet" form, where the blood vessels behind the retina expand, causing leakage, or a more common "dry" form which results from a degeneration of the pigment epithelial layer below the retina. Someone in the early stages of AMD may still have good vision but will notice a distortion of straight lines, which appear wavy. There may be a gradual loss of central vision, but some types of AMD can cause this to happen rapidly.

Project: The Northern Ireland Childhood Errors of Refraction (NICER) Study Phase 3: Refractive development in childhood and early adulthood

Project authors: Dr Kathryn Saunders, Dr Lisa O'Donoghue, Dr Julie McClelland

Organisation: University of Ulster

Timescale: Three years (2012 – 2015)

Funded by: The College of Optometrists

Contact details: martin.cordiner@college-optometrists.org

Summary:

The NICER study has gathered data on ametropia, ocular biometry, fundus appearance, body mass index, lifestyle, environment, family ocular history and diet from over 1,000 children in Northern Ireland

This project, the third phase of the NICER Study, will build on Phases 1 and 2 by reviewing the participants six years from their initial participation. This will provide prospective refractive error data for one cohort of children from 6-7 years to 12-13 years of age and another from 12-13 to 18-19 years of age. The static nature of the NI population offers this valuable opportunity to re-sample the cohorts with minimal loss of participants.

The aims of the project are to:

- review the participants in the NICER study three years after they participated in NICER 2 and/or six years after they participated in the NICER 1
- investigate the prospective development of ametropia in childhood, adolescence and early adulthood
- evaluate the predictive value of eye shape, lifestyle, environment, and ocular family history on refractive development in a white UK population
- explore reasons why children fail to wear a prescribed spectacle prescription
- compare educational attainment in children with and without uncorrected refractive error
- explore the utility of incorporating a plus lens into school vision screening protocols

Background:

The NICER study has highlighted that almost one in four children with a refractive correction fail to bring their spectacles to school and although this is a significant challenge to providers of vision screening programs that are designed to reduce visual impairment, little research has been done to explore reasons for, and outcomes associated with, non-compliance of spectacle wear. The proposed study would probe these issues and the outcomes would help inform health promotion activities targeted at children, parents, teachers, and health care professionals.

Project: Systematic review of the effectiveness of environmental / behavioural interventions in reducing falls in older people with visual impairment
Organisation: Glasgow Caledonian University
Collaborators: Age UK
Estimated end date: December 2011
Funded by: Thomas Pocklington Trust
Further information: www.pocklington-trust.org.uk or research@pocklington-trust.org.uk

Summary:

This review by Glasgow Caledonian University is in two stages. The first looks at the views and experiences of older people with visual impairment about interventions to reduce falls: a qualitative synthesis. The second stage is a quantitative review of the effectiveness of interventions. The project has been developed and delivered with Age UK and is expected to lead to a Cochrane Review.

Project: Detection of sight loss in care homes
Organisation: City University, London
Collaborators: International Longevity Centre UK (ILC – UK)
Estimated end date: December 2012
Funded by: Thomas Pocklington Trust
Further information: www.pocklington-trust.org.uk or research@pocklington-trust.org.uk

Summary:

This project consists of two linked pieces of work, which are considering the experiences of vision checks among care home residents. It involves the application of the 'Eyes Right' detection tools developed by City University, the Institute of Optometry, RNIB and Pocklington. An initial contextual study by ILC-UK will be followed by a pilot study and a longer study using the Eyes Right tools in care homes.

Outcome 2 - Eliminating avoidable sight loss and delivering excellent support for people with sight loss

Project: Sight Loss Prevention Community Engagement Projects
Lead researcher: Helen Lee & Shaun Leamon, RNIB
Partners: RNIB NI, RNIB Cymru, RNIB Scotland & Action for Blind People
Timescale: Three years
Funded by: RNIB
Contact details: helen.lee@rnib.org.uk, shaun.leamon@rnib.org.uk

Summary:

RNIB and Action for Blind People, in collaboration with local stakeholders, are engaged in a programme of work to establish a series of community engagement projects (CEPs) at five sites across the UK.

The aim of the project is to trial a range of intervention strategies to develop an evidence base of what works to enable people most at risk of developing avoidable sight loss to attend for eye examinations, and, if referred, attend secondary eye care services and comply with treatment.

Each CEP site has identified a specific target population and eye condition on which to focus:

Site	Target Population	Eye condition
Cwm Taf	Rhondda Valley, white population, aged 40 to 65	Glaucoma
West Belfast	White, working class, aged 40 to 65	Glaucoma
Hackney	Caribbean, aged 40 to 65, in deprived areas	Glaucoma
Glasgow	Pakistani, aged 40 to 65, in deprived and affluent areas	Diabetic Retinopathy
Bradford	Pakistani, aged 40 to 65, in deprived areas	Diabetic Retinopathy

The choice of target population and eye condition in each site has been informed by eye health equity profiles conducted by local public health specialists. The research organisation Shared Intelligence is conducting qualitative insight research with the target population, secondary care service users and service providers to inform the development of the interventions.

To inform the intervention design further, the Mary Seacole Research Centre has undertaken a review of the evidence and literature examining previous intervention strategies to increase access to and uptake of primary and secondary eye health care services among those most at risk of developing avoidable sight loss.

The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) will be conducting a process, outcome and economic evaluation of the interventions implemented at each site.

Timescale:

Insight research began in February 2011. Interventions will be implemented from autumn 2011 for a two-year period. Final evaluation findings are expected in summer 2014. Interim findings will be published throughout the project.

Project: Identification of anti-angiogenic fragments of opticin
Lead researcher: Professor Paul Bishop, University of Manchester
Collaborators: Professor Richard Farndale, University of Cambridge
Timescale: Two years
Funded by: Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
Contact details: kate.neal@guidedogs.org.uk

Summary:

This project will investigate a drug based on a naturally occurring substance in the eye which could help prevent Wet Age-Related Macular Degeneration, a major cause of blindness.

Opticin is a known inhibitor of blood vessel formation. The project will look at its possible use to counteract the abnormal blood vessel growth that causes Wet AMD.

Tests will be carried out on smaller and smaller fragments of the Opticin molecule. The aim is to produce the minimum-sized fragment of Opticin that still inhibits blood vessel formation. This would be a strong basis from which to develop a drug which could pass through the coating of the eye, which would be more cost effective to manufacture and less painful than current treatment (direct injection into the eye).

This could have significant implications for a the large numbers of people who are at risk of losing their sight through Wet AMD and other conditions such as proliferative diabetic retinopathy.

Background:

Wet AMD accounts for around half of blindness in the Western world. At present, the only available treatment involves a direct injection into the eye. These have to be given regularly over prolonged periods of time and their main function is to prevent leakage.

Project: Prevalence estimates of visual impairment in children and young people in special schools in Wales
Researchers: Maggie Woodhouse, Barbara Ryan, Nathan Davies
Organisation: School of Optometry and Vision Science, University of Cardiff
Timescale: Final Report due by end of 2011
Funded by: RNIB
Contact details: sue.keil@rnib.org.uk

Summary:

This forms part of a larger Cardiff university project to develop a screening tool to identify visual impairment and refractive error in children in special schools in Wales.

Within that overall project a separate project has been funded by RNIB, which is to use data from the screening to calculate prevalence estimates of visual impairment in children in special schools in Wales, which will be generalisable to the learning disabilities child population.

Project: Optimum VI: early development and support of babies with a visual impairment
Researchers: Naomi Dale, Alison Salt, Elena Sakkalou, Michelle O'Reilly
Organisation: Developmental Vision team, Great Ormond Street Hospital / UCL / Institute of Child Health
Timescale: Three years (2011 – 2014)
Funded by: RNIB, Fight for Sight and Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity
Contact details: sue.keil@rnib.org.uk

Summary:

This is the first major national research study of its kind into the early development and support of blind babies. The findings are likely to have significant implications for our understanding of the best ways to support babies with a visual impairment and will be of interest to professionals and parents in both the UK and internationally.

A key focus of the research will be early interaction between babies and their parents/carers and in particular what interventions might be possible to reduce the risk for those blind babies at risk of following an autistic spectrum developmental pathway.

Project: An assessment of the quality of UK high street ready-made spectacles
Researchers: Alison Green, Professor David Elliott
Organisation: University of Bradford
Timescale: May – July 2011
Funded by: The College of Optometrists
Contact details: martin.cordiner@college-optometrists.org

Summary:

This project will assess UK high street ready-made spectacles to determine what percentage of 100 spectacles each of +2.50, +3.00 and +4.00DS reach an acceptable standard for each aspect of our evaluation.

The project will evaluate the spectacles based on the following criteria:

- lenses (material, thickness, surface quality and bevel)
- frames (material, construction and finish)
- mechanical requirements (lens mounting, strain and fixation but not impact resistance)
- optical tolerances
- fitting and cosmetic requirements (head width, bridge size)
- durability and storage case

Background:

A report in the November 2010 issue of *Which?* provided an evaluation of 14 “ready readers” from seven UK high street stores and found problems in half of them. It was reported that five of the 14 pairs of ready readers had the wrong horizontal distance between the lens centres, three pairs had the lens centres at different heights and one pair had both, plus the wrong prescription. The research literature contains a small number of papers that have evaluated the quality of ready readers to determine their potential usefulness in low-resource

countries. They reported similar problems to those found in the UK tests, with 65% failing at least one of their assessments, with the higher powered lenses particularly a problem.

Project: Assistive Technology: experiences and guidance
Organisation: Thomas Pocklington Trust
Publication due: End summer 2011
Funded by: Thomas Pocklington Trust
Further information: www.pocklington-trust.org.uk or research@pocklington-trust.org.uk

Summary:

Ongoing projects in Pocklington Centres, supported by external occupational therapists and evaluations, are informing service development and understanding of technology. A guidance publication on Assistive Technology will pull together findings and good practice points from these projects.

Project: Design and trial of lit handrails
Organisation: Thomas Pocklington Trust
Publication due: Late 2011
Funded by: Thomas Pocklington Trust
Further information: www.pocklington-trust.org.uk or research@pocklington-trust.org.uk

Summary:

Handrails with integral lighting have been installed as part of the final phase of redevelopment of one of Pocklington's Centres and are being evaluated by Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU), University of Kent. This work is integrated with the evaluation of Pocklington's extra care housing (Plymouth and Birmingham) by PSSRU.

Project: Improving questions about visual impairment in national surveys (2011)
Organisation: National Centre for Social Research
Publication due: End of 2011
Funded by: Thomas Pocklington Trust
Further information: www.pocklington-trust.org.uk or research@pocklington-trust.org.uk

Summary:

This scoping study will review visual impairment measurement in national surveys.

Outcome 3 - Inclusion, participation and independence for people with sight loss

Project:	The ENABLER Project - experimental new action-based beneficiary led employment research
Project Manager:	Alex Saunders, Evidence and Service Impact, RNIB
Collaborators:	Action for Blind People and University of Birmingham Visual Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR)
Timescale:	Three years (June 2010 – May 2013)
Funded by:	Big Lottery Fund
Contact details:	alex.saunders@rnib.org.uk

Summary:

This project will work to refine knowledge of key employment needs amongst blind and partially sighted job seekers. The project will work with blind and partially sighted individuals to develop a standard assessment model and best practice guide, to ensure all blind and partially sighted job seekers receive the right services.

The project addresses concerns that current employment services may not recognise the additional barriers facing many blind and partially sighted people including;

- access to job seeking information
- accessibility of online resources
- mobility training
- the functional impact of different sight conditions
- the cost and availability of access technology equipment and software.

These barriers can be further compounded by other factors such as low educational attainment, a lengthy unemployment history, additional disabilities and mental health problems.

The project will develop a means of classifying our blind and partially sighted job seekers according to their distance from the labour market. Successful identification and classification of our client base will ensure we provide appropriate support to a broad range of job seekers. It will also create a mechanism by which clients' progress towards employability can be effectively monitored.

It will also utilise the experience of blind and partially sighted job seekers to inform the research design of new service interventions that move people closer to being 'job ready'. In particular it will focus on the employment needs of those furthest from the labour market. The research findings will be used to influence European Union and Government policy as well as other major service providers.

Project: Post-14 transitions support - questionnaire survey and follow up interviews with blind and partially sighted students
Project Manager: Rachel Hewett and Graeme Douglas
Organisation: University of Birmingham Visual Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR)
Timescale: Initial findings launched July 2011, research to continue until 2014
Funded by: RNIB
Contact details: sue.keil@rnib.org.uk

Summary

This will be the first report of a questionnaire survey and follow up interviews with 2 cohorts of blind and partially sighted young people, following their experiences as they move from school into further and higher education, training and employment.

Project: Stairs, lighting and falls
Organisation: University of Surrey
Publication due: 2012
Funded by: Thomas Pocklington Trust
Contact details: www.pocklington-trust.org.uk or research@pocklington-trust.org.uk

Summary:

This study investigates lighting on domestic stairs related to the risk of falling.

Other research news

My Home Life - Sight loss edition

Thomas Pocklington Trust, Age UK & City University are producing a special sight loss issue of the My Home Life bulletin which will be circulated to care homes from June 2011.

For Further information go to: www.pocklington-trust.org.uk or email research@pocklington-trust.org.uk

Lighting - resources and training

As part of its Light for Sight Good Practice Framework Thomas Pocklington Trust, working with the Light for Sight Strategy Group, has developed some ways to help encourage good practice in the use of lighting.

The 'Improve the Lighting in Your Home' booklet, produced in collaboration with RNIB is aimed at people with sight loss and all those who could benefit from better lighting. It seeks to demonstrate good lighting practice by giving ideas, hints and tips on how to light your home more effectively with the different types of household and task lighting available.

Pocklington has also developed a specialist training course on lighting the homes of people with sight loss. The training has been designed for different professional groups (rehabilitation officers, occupational therapists, housing staff) and is available for independent organisations / groups of organisations. Pocklington is also working with the the College of Occupational Therapists (COT) to develop a short educational module on lighting for OTs (expected to be complete by late 2011).

For more information on any of the above email research@pocklington-trust.org.uk or go to the [RNIB website](http://www.rnib.org.uk) for a copy of the lighting booklet.

Dementia update

In December 2010 the Vision 2020 UK Dementia and Sight Loss Interest Group held the first UK national event about concurrent dementia and sight loss. Over 80 people considered the experiences of people with both dementia and sight loss and the responses of services. A summary report is available from Vision 2020 UK.

At the December conference the findings of a small study of the connections (and conflicts) between good practice in design for dementia and design for sight loss (undertaken for Pocklington by Habinteg) were launched. A research publication (Research Findings number 35) is available from Pocklington: www.pocklington-trust.org.uk or research@pocklington-trust.org.uk. In March 2011, the College of Optometrists also published revised guidance for practitioners examining patients with dementia or other acquired cognitive impairment. It is available at the following link:

<http://www.college-optometrists.org/en/utilities/document-summary.cfm/docid/EBD5B4DA-FF52-4339-B23A9DE2D8509DBE>

In addition to this, 45 organisations from the charity, public and private sectors have joined forces in the new Dementia Action Alliance, including Thomas Pocklington Trust. The Alliance forms the largest ever united front against dementia, called today "the health and

social crisis of this generation". For further information see:
<http://www.dementiaaction.org.uk/>

Events

Festschrift for Professor Bernard Gilmartin 14th-15th September 2011

Professor Bernard Gilmartin will retire from Aston University in July 2011, after an academic career at the institution spanning 37 years. Over this time, Bernard has published over 120 papers principally on the topics of accommodation, autonomic nervous system function, and myopia.

To celebrate Bernard's many contributions to optometry and ophthalmic research, the Ophthalmic Research Group at Aston University is organising a conference featuring international researchers and an evening meal. For more information please visit:
<http://www1.aston.ac.uk/lhs/research/health/org/bernfest/>.