

Light for Sight framework

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In a new initiative to be launched on 23rd March, Thomas Pocklington Trust (1) is joined by architects, electricians and builders as well as specialists in housing, health and social care to highlight a simple fact: good lighting in the home maximises people's sight. In a new [Light for Sight Framework](#) (2) Pocklington and eleven professional bodies call for lighting to be acknowledged as a vital aid for sight and to be a routine consideration in health and social care and housing.

"Today we call on everyone who can influence lighting in the home to think about people's sight when they plan their lighting," said Ron Bramley, Chief Executive, Thomas Pocklington Trust. "It sounds simple but research shows that better lighting improves lives. It reduces risk in the home, makes daily tasks easier and enables independence so that people can enjoy life to the full."

It is estimated that some two million people in the UK have sight loss that affects their everyday life and, since much sight loss is age-related, this figure is set to rise as the population ages. In addition to this, there are some 13 million people in the UK aged over 60 – many, if not all, of whom would benefit from better lighting at home. An average 60 year old needs three times as much light as a 20 year old to carry out basic tasks.

In previous research (3) Pocklington showed that better lighting substantially improved the effectiveness of low levels of vision. Nine out of ten people were struggling to carry out daily tasks in seriously low levels of light, yet most of them had never considered changing their lighting, and had no idea of the improvements it could bring. Installing the right lighting (4) improved their quality and enjoyment of life. It made them feel safer, (e.g. reducing risks of falls), more independent and more able to entertain or enjoy other leisure activities.

Now the Light for Sight Framework takes that research further. It sets out eight key goals (see below) for establishing Light for Sight as a routine principle in housing and health and social care.

All those signing up to the framework have committed to work towards these goals. Specialist lighting training is being developed for professionals from occupational therapists to electricians. Information materials and advice are to be targeted at older people and their families, as well as professionals such as housing providers, home improvement agencies and handypersons. Health workers such as GPs and optometrists, and social services will be urged to ensure that lighting is made part of routine assessments for health and social care. Decision-makers will also be lobbied to include lighting in current and future policies.

It is a wide-ranging plan of action designed to provide good lighting for all.

"This initiative is aimed at everyone who ever found themselves straining to read small print or find their way safely down their stairs. Anyone over sixty should review the lighting in their home and the Light for Sight Framework aims to make it easy and routine for everyone to do so," said Ron Bramley.

Key goals of the Light for Sight Framework:

1. All new houses to be designed and built with light for sight in mind.
2. Sight loss issues to be addressed more explicitly in health and social care assessments.
3. Lighting information to be widely available to social care and housing professionals.
4. Lighting information to be routinely provided to older people, those with sight loss and their families.
5. Skilled advisors to be available to assess lighting needs and identify solutions.
6. Electricians to be able to provide appropriate lighting for people with sight loss.
7. Lighting training to be given to health and social care professionals so that they can assess people's needs and advise on solutions.
8. Policy makers to be urged to add Light for Sight to policies on health, social care and housing.

The Light for Sight Framework is endorsed by:

- Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
- Chartered Institute of Housing
- College of Occupational Therapists
- College of Optometrists
- Foundations (umbrella body for Home Improvement Agencies)
- National Housing Federation
- Royal Institute of British Architects
- Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
- Social Care Association
- Society of Light and Lighting
- VISION 2020UK

Editor's notes:

1. Thomas Pocklington Trust is a charity which aims to improve the quality of life of people with sight loss. It is a leading provider of housing, care and support services for people with sight loss in the UK, and is a major research and development body.

2. The Light for Sight Framework will be launched at a seminar at the Royal Institute of British Architects, London on 23rd March. The seminar will be chaired by Baroness Sally Greengross, Chief Executive of the International Longevity Centre UK and Commissioner for the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

3. Thomas Pocklington Trust Occasional Paper 13, "Lighting the homes of people with sight loss: an overview of recent research" by Dr. John Percival.

4. Lighting, said the research, needs to be flexible, adjustable and sited in the right places.

Some modern lights, particularly spotlights, can make vision problems worse. They create pools of light surrounded by shadow and many older people find it difficult to adapt quickly to changes in brightness.



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