



## SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND SIGHT LOSS



 ROYAL BLIND



SCOTTISH WAR BLINDED

Twitter

@RoyalBlind

@ScotWarBlinded

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# Royal Blind

- **Royal Blind School – day and residential provision**
- **Educational outreach to mainstream settings**
- **After school and holiday club – ‘reverse integration’**
- **Residential care for young adults**
- **Scotland’s only specialist sight loss nursing homes**
- **Scottish Braille Press – braille, large print and audio formats**

# Scottish War Blinded

- **1300 veterans with sight loss (regardless of cause)**
- **Outreach and rehabilitation with national coverage**
- **Two specialist activity centres**

# In Scotland...

- 1 million** currently alive do or will live with sight loss at some point
- 171,000** are living with sight loss  
(and 20-25 more a day will begin to lose their sight)
- 90,000** over 75 are living with sight loss
- 50,000** are living with age-related macular degeneration





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# 90%

The vast majority of respondents had **some experience of loneliness.**

Question 1:

Has your vision impairment ever contributed to feelings of loneliness?

YES 60.1% (169)

NO 39.9% (112)



Respondents indicating vision impairment has contributed to feelings of loneliness: 169 (60.1%)



Respondents indicating vision impairment has not contributed to feelings of loneliness and they have not accessed services to overcome feelings of loneliness: 27 (9.6%)



Respondents indicating vision impairment has not contributed to feelings of loneliness but they have accessed services to overcome feelings of loneliness: 85 (30.2%)



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Question 2:

If you have ever experienced loneliness, what has contributed to that?

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01 Unable to get out and about/access to transport:

**53.7% (151)**

02 Other problems including health problems:

**42.7% (120)**

03 Vision impairment makes it hard to make friends:

**33% (93)**

04 Bereavement:

**30.2% (85)**

05 Lack of community facilities and places to meet:

**27.7% (78)**

06 Family moving away:

**13.5% (38)**

07 Financial problems:

**7.1% (20)**

08 Stigma or bullying because of your vision impairment:

**4.2% (12)**

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Question 3:

Which, if any, of the following has helped you overcome feelings of loneliness?

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01 Support from Royal Blind/Scottish War Blinded services:

**64% (180)**

02 Equipment to help with vision impairment:

**59.4% (167)**

03 Talking with friends and family over the phone:

**55.1% (155)**

04 Local community groups and activities:

**37% (104)**

05 Support to use technology like smartphones and tablets:

**27.8% (78)**

06 Video or audio calling online friends and family ie Skype/Facetime:

**8.5% (24)**

07 Spending time on social media – Twitter, Facebook, online forums:

**7.8% (22)**

**“I found it very difficult when my sight got worse and I was unable to do my job which I had done for over 30 years. There was no-one to turn to so I could talk over what was happening to me.”**

**“Some children were nasty at my old school.”**

**“At the bowling club I can attend but not take part, and have had to resign after 40 years. I go to the football but can't see the match, so can't discuss the game with friends afterwards.”**

**“When there has been no contact with anyone for over two weeks but you can hear others laughing, having fun outside. Some people don't know how to talk to blind people – so ignore.”**

**“As a family we found that there were not enough places for visually impaired people to get together with others of their own age, we were only able to attend a few through Royal Blind.”**



“Setting up specific blind/deaf centres for focused help... rather than leaving it to social work services general group.”

More specialist support for vision impaired people to help tackle loneliness

New community transport initiatives to support people with sight loss

More provision of vision impairment awareness training in communities and public services

“Funding for local authorities for more sensory impairment specialists.”

“It would be good if the Scottish Government had an understanding of the impact vision impairment can have on mental health. It is also not unusual that young people may also have more than one disability so some form of cross over between charities or better multi-agency working would be really helpful.”

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# MEET MONTY

William Montgomerie, aged 61 of North Ayrshire, served 35 years in the forces, beginning his career aged just 15 at the Scottish Infantry Depot in the Bridge of Don before moving onto the 1st Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.



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# In Scotland...

- **Only 17 per cent of people experiencing sight loss are offered emotional support in relation to their deteriorating vision**
- **Less than one in three registered blind and partially sighted people were offered mobility training**
- **Only one in five received any practical support around the home**
- **Only one in four registered blind or partially sighted people of working age is in employment**

# THANK YOU

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