

THE IMPACT OF THE EYE CLINIC LIAISON OFFICER AT AN NHS FOUNDATION TRUST; A QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RETROSPECTIVE STUDY

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BACKGROUND

- Vision loss has a significant impact on physical, mental and social wellbeing.
- Eye clinic liaison officers (ECLOs) have a crucial role in providing holistic care for patients with visual impairment.

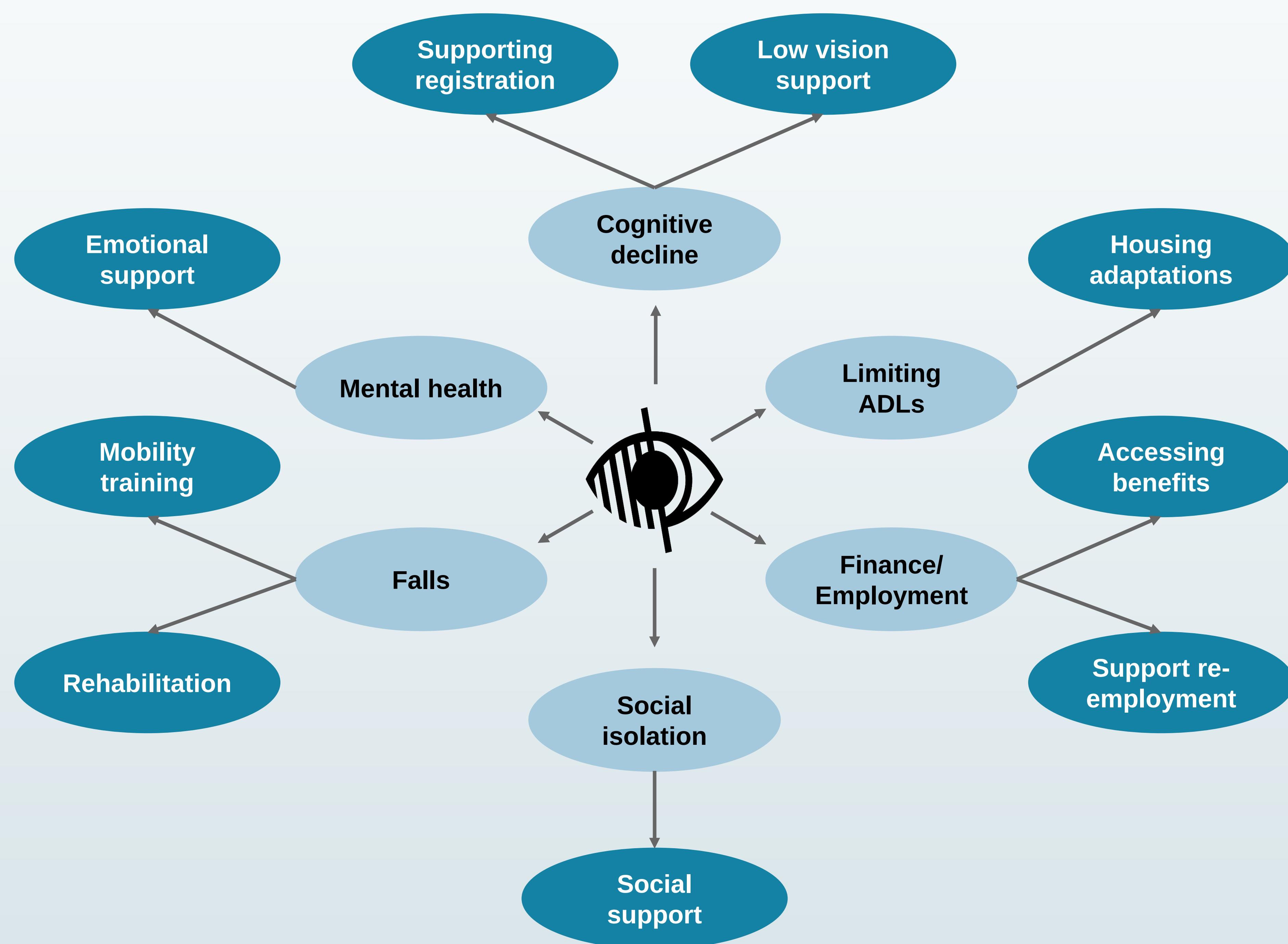


Figure 1: The effects of sight impairment and the ECLO support services available ^{1,2}

AIM & METHODS

- **Aim:** To assess the impact of one ECLO at an NHS Trust.
- Retrospective case note analysis of all patients seen by the ECLO at University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust from January 1 2019 to December 31 2019.
- Main outcome variable collected was Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI) and categories of support provided by the ECLO.

RESULTS

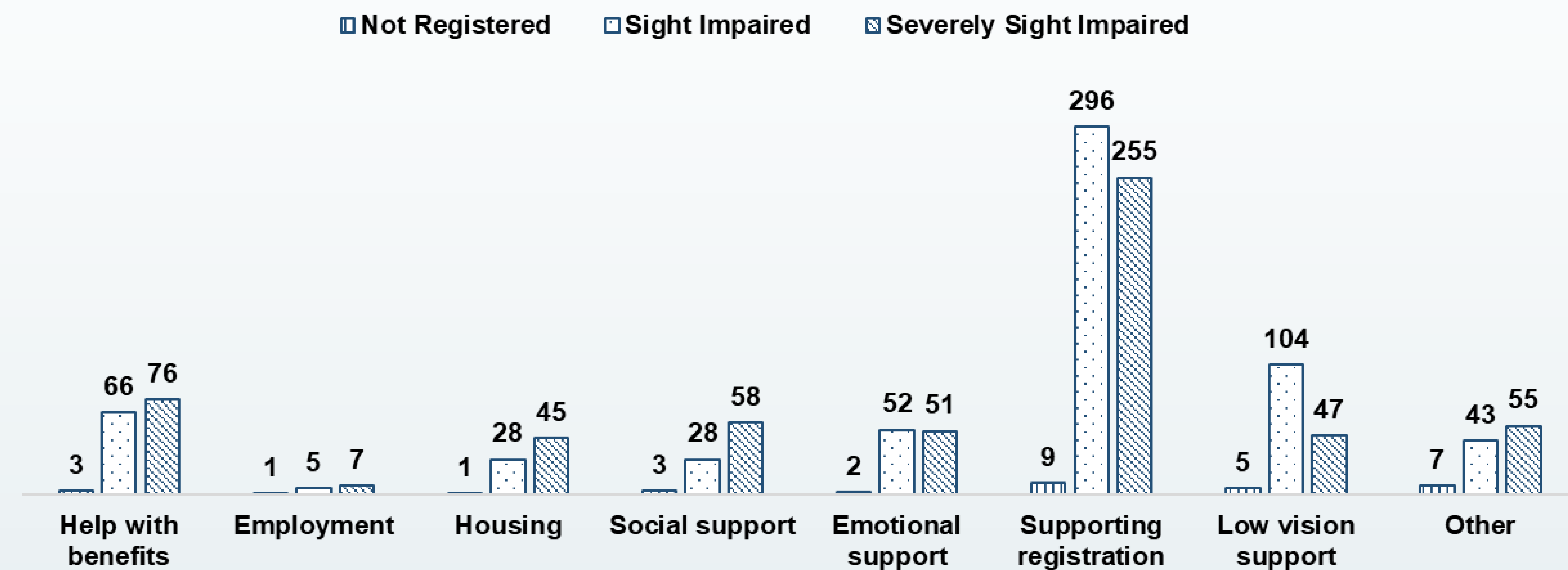


Figure 2: Support distribution based on visual certification status (n = 1,247)

Ms A, registered sight impaired, was living in unsuitable housing, had financial difficulties, struggled to mobilise safely, and was socially isolated. The ECLO successfully made a referral for rehousing, initiated application for a benefit scheme, initiated grant applications for specialist equipment and rehabilitation to ensure safe mobility and enrolled Ms A in a monthly social group.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the ECLO provided telephone consultations, and ongoing support and continuity of care.

Mr C, registered sight impaired, was concerned about deterioration in vision. He was unable to contact the clinical team due to pandemic-related staffing issues. The ECLO promptly arranged a consultation with an appropriate clinician.

CONCLUSIONS

- ECLOs have a crucial role in ensuring vulnerable patients with impaired vision receive holistic care.
- The ECLO's role compliments that of the ophthalmology clinician, improving efficiency within clinics and providing valuable continuity of care in the community.
- Many NHS Trusts do not have an ECLO and furthermore ECLOs rely on external funding from Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and voluntary services.
- The ECLO role should become an integrated part of every NHS ophthalmology service.