



VISIBLE: Vision screening to improve balance and prevent falls

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Speeding
up the best
in health
and care,
together.

Foreword

Falls are the most common cause of hospital admission for the over 65's. One in three adults aged over 65 will fall every year. For adults over age 80, this increases to one in two people falling. NICE Clinical Guideline 161, originally published in 2013, "Falls in older people: assessing risk and prevention" recommends a multifactorial risk factor assessment including a recommendation to check for visual impairment. However, a 2014 College of Optometrists 'Focus on Falls' report found that only half of falls services checked vision as a core part of the service.

A recent falls and vision initiative in Merton, south London found that 48% of patients attending the falls clinic failed a vision screening assessment. These patients were signposted to optometrists, who play an important role in helping to prevent falls by detecting and appropriately managing any vision problems.

Optometrists also have a role in case-finding those adults with poor vision who have fallen or who have a fear of falling and signposting them to crucial strength and balance exercise training to prevent falls. A falls question should form part of the history. Optometrists should be aware of the local falls pathway, and are encouraged to refer those adults in need of support to falls services and strength and balance exercises.

Join us in reducing falls and improving health for older adults by implementing this simple stepped approach of vision screening and falls prevention.



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» This brochure has been produced to compliment web content, which can be found at healthinnovationnetwork.com/VISIBLE.

» Any resources mentioned can be accessed by using your smartphone's QR scanner to scan the codes provided in the resources section.

Visible

A simple stepped approach to implement vision screening in community settings. **VISIBLE** combines resources for opticians and wider community organisations to increase knowledge of the link between vision, balance and falls prevention.

VISIBLE is relevant to all organisations who are in contact with older adults including:

- Falls services;
- Physiotherapists, OTs, Social Workers, Podiatrists, Audiologists;
- Optometrists, Ophthalmologists and Orthoptists;
- Ambulance and Fire Services;
- Social Services and Community Health;
- Acute Hospitals and Mental Health Services;
- Memory Clinics;
- Housing;
- Voluntary organisations, befrienders, handypersons, help at home services, social prescribers;
- Care Homes.

Role of Optometrists

Optometrists have a vital role in falls prevention and promoting strength and balance. NICE Clinical Guidance (CG161) recommends older adults in contact with healthcare professionals should be routinely asked about whether they have experienced a fall in the past year. The steps simple below fulfil the requirement of NICE guidance.

To assist reciprocal referral between falls services and optometrists, the College of Optometrists have developed a member directory that falls services are encouraged to use to find their local practice.

» [Links to the member directory can be found in Resources.](#)

The VISIBLE lead will:

Order free resources

- Staying Steady guide – Age UK
- Vision and Falls leaflet – College of Optometrists

Contact the local falls prevention service to determine existing self-referral pathway (or preferred local method of referral).

Be responsible for embedding the NICE falls questions within their service and if the answer is ‘yes’ to either of the questions, assist self-referral to local falls prevention service.

- Have you fallen in the past year?
- Do you have a fear of falling?

Provide information leaflets

- Staying Steady
- Vision and Falls

In the Community

Everyone over the age of 60 is entitled to a free NHS sight test. NHS domiciliary sight tests are available free of charge to those unable to get to an optometric practice because of disability.

In a group setting you may want to inform the older adults that you will be vision screening on a certain day each month, taking the opportunity to highlight the link between good vision with improved balance and falls prevention.

Step 1: Identify your VISIBLE Lead

Order the most suitable vision screening tool and resources

- 'Eyes Right Toolkit' (ERT) - Thomas Pocklington Trust
- 'Look out! Bedside vision check' - Royal College of Physicians
- Staying Steady guide - Age UK
- Vision and Falls leaflet - College of Optometrists

Contact the local falls prevention service to determine existing self-referral pathway (or preferred local method of referral).

Build up a directory of local strength and balance exercise classes.

Determine who will be responsible for carrying out the vision screening assessment. Introduce the chosen vision screening tool and the NICE falls questions

- Have you fallen in the past year?
- Do you have a fear of falling?

Record which staff have completed the training.

Step 2: Vision screening

Conduct the vision screening with the individual.

Ask NICE falls questions.

- a. Have you fallen in the past year?
- b. Do you have a fear of falling?
If the answer is 'yes' to one or both, guide the person through self-referral to local falls prevention service.

Provide the Thomas Pocklington Trust letter to individuals who have not passed the vision screening test to give to their community optician.

Refer individuals who are housebound/hospital-based to local low vision services for a NHS domiciliary sight test.

Provide Age UK's Staying Steady leaflet and information on strength and balance exercise classes.

Resources

Use these resources to conduct the vision screening. They can be downloaded using a QR scanner or via the links below.

Thomas Pocklington Trust 'Eyes Right Toolkit'

A simple tool designed to screen near and distant vision. It can be used by anybody, but it is particularly useful in community settings. The ERT takes 10 minutes to complete and provides clear guidance on whether a person requires an eye examination with an optometrist.

Thomas Pocklington Trust provides up to 25 Eyes Right Toolkits free of charge. To find out more or to obtain a copy of the Eyes Right Toolkit, please email research@pocklington-trust.org.uk.

» **For more information visit:**

www.pocklington-trust.org.uk/project/eyes-right-toolkit



Royal College of Physicians 'Look Out! Bedside vision check for falls prevention'

An innovatively designed guide which supports clinical staff in assessing visual impairment in older adults. It uses a mixture of questions and visual aids to help doctors, nurses and therapists check eyesight at the patient's bedside. Results give an indication of the extent of any visual problems, known or unknown, that the patient may have.

» **For more information visit:**

www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/bedside-vision-check-falls-prevention-assessment-tool



» **To order a free copy email:**

falls@rcplondon.ac.uk

College of Optometrists Member Directory

Use this to find your local practice.

» **Access the directory at:**

www.college-optometrists.org/membership/member-directory.html



Age UK 'Staying Steady Guide'

A simple resource to give anyone having a vision screening assessment. It details why and how to improve fitness, strength, balance, and the links between these, eyesight and hearing.

» **Find the guide at:**

www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/information-guides/ageukig14_staying_steady_inf.pdf



College of Optometrists 'Vision and Falls' leaflet

The 'falls' webpages have lots of useful information for staff and patients.

» **Find the resources at:**

www.college-optometrists.org/topics.html?topic=falls



Thomas Pocklington Trust letter

Provide this letter to individuals who have not passed the vision screening test. This is in word document format so will download straight into your downloads folder instead of opening on your web browser.

» **Find the letter at:**

<http://bit.ly/TPT-fail-letter>



NHS Eyecare Entitlements

Help individuals find out if they are entitled to free or subsidised eyecare.

» **Find out at:**

<https://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/Eyecarecosts.aspx>



About Health Innovation Network

Health Innovation Network (HIN) is the Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) for south London, one of the 15 AHSNs across England. HIN is a membership organisation connecting academics, NHS commissioners and providers, local authorities, patients and industry in order to accelerate the spread and adoption of evidence based innovations and best practice.

Health Innovation Network has a number of clinical priorities, one of which is Healthy Ageing and falls prevention is an integral part of our programme.

» Find out more about Healthy Ageing at
healthinnovationnetwork.com/healthy-ageing

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- Thomas Pocklington Trust
- London Eye Health Network
- Age UK
- Royal College of Physicians

» References for this toolkit can be accessed via the web version at:
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