

MAY 2023

REGISTRATION OF BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED IN SCOTLAND

AN EVALUATION OF CURRENT PRACTICE
AND AREAS OF REFORM

THE OPEN JUSTICE POLICY TEAM
PART OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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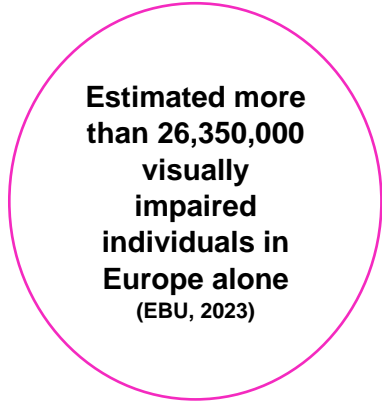
Introduction

The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 gave Local Authorities the power to maintain a register of people who are blind or partially sighted, and the Scottish government collated the figures from local authorities to produce an annual national report up to 2010 (last available report published for 2010 in 2011). The registration process changed in 2018 to exclude those under the age of 16 years.

The project brief was to find out how the registration process for blind and partially sighted individuals is working in practice, how many blind and partially sighted individuals are registered in Scotland and whether there should be changes to the way in which the registration service works.

The research aims were to identify:

- The number of people over 16 years old currently registered as blind or partially sighted in Scotland, and whether the numbers have changed significantly since 2010.
- How easy it is to obtain this information from the Local Authorities.
- The historical context behind the registration service and why the system was set up in this way.
- Comparative research looking at the registration systems of other countries, to determine whether there are any changes which may make it easier to manage the registration service and obtain information about the numbers of blind and partially sighted individuals.



Estimated more than 26,350,000 visually impaired individuals in Europe alone (EBU, 2023)

Exploratory research will be used by RNIB Scotland (RNIB) to consider whether there should be further policy and advocacy work in this area and/or law reform, given the move towards a national care service for Scotland.

Methodology

To meet the varying objects of the project, research was undertaken in several forms:

- Freedom of Information requests were sent to local authorities in Scotland to gather data and opinions on registration numbers and information available on the registration pathway for those diagnosed as blind or visually impaired.
- Sight charities' websites operating in Scotland were reviewed for consistency, accessibility, and availability of information.
- Comparative jurisdictions (chosen by RNIB, i.e., those with national health services and similar population to Scotland) were researched in regard to data accessibility and registration pathways/information for those seeking registration.

This data was collated to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights into the current provisions for blind and visually impaired persons and informed the reflections and recommendations provided at the end of the report.

[...]

Contributors: Benham, Steven; Cadman, Heather; Dashwood, Amy DeCourcy; Fleming, James; Gacis, Hammerkarl; and, Rose, Sarah.

Design: Rose, Sarah. *Editors:* Rose, Sarah and White, Christopher.