

Appendix 1: Vision rehabilitation services in Betsi Cadwaladr UHB area

Vision rehabilitation is an essential service for people who have experienced sight loss, provided or commissioned by local authorities as part of their Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 statutory duties.

Certification of Vision Impairment results, with the patient's consent, in a referral to their local authority for a specialist sensory assessment, separate from the care needs assessment process, to determine the information, advice and support required. The [revised CVI\(W\)](#) states that "You are entitled to an assessment by a vision rehabilitation specialist". This change reinforces the critical role of the Vision Rehabilitation Specialist (VRS).

Vision rehabilitation covers many aspects of day-to-day life, including activities that can present a substantial risk to somebody with a vision impairment. The main goal of a VRS is to assess the risks associated with these activities and to address and mitigate them through training, provision of equipment, or changing the environmental factors relating to the risk identified. This in turn can reduce the need for more costly ongoing care and support, reduce hospital admissions, and help someone experiencing sudden sight loss or a drastic change in circumstances retain their skills, confidence, independence.

According to "[Recognising the role of the Vision Rehabilitation Specialist](#)" (Wales Council of the Blind, 2024), currently, Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd and Denbighshire meet national minimum standards of 1 VRS per 70,000¹ population. However, Conwy, Flintshire and Wrexham do not. We recognise that this ratio could change due rurality, and where there is complementary third sector support. It is important that, in order to keep pace with population need, and deliver timely support, all local authorities must have a workforce plan that allows for retirement and absence.

- [Isle of Anglesey](#), which would need a minimum of 1 FTE VRSs for your population of 69,049, calculated from the national standard, currently has 1 FTE VRS commissioned from the third sector (North Wales Society for the Blind) and 0.8 FTE trainee VRS (this

¹ [Visual Impairment Benchmarking Study Summary Report](#), WCB/WLGA/Welsh Government, 2006.

trainee shall be covering Anglesey and Gwynedd) completing their second year of the [Foundation Degree in Rehabilitation Work](#).

- [Gwynedd](#), which would need a minimum of 1.7 FTE VRSs for your population of 117,591, calculated from the national standard, currently has 1.8 FTE VRS commissioned from the third sector (North Wales Society for the Blind) and 0.8 FTE trainee VRS (this trainee shall be covering Anglesey and Gwynedd) completing their second year of the [Foundation Degree in Rehabilitation Work](#).
- [Conwy](#), which would need a minimum of 1.6 FTE VRSs for your population of 114,290, calculated from the national standard, currently has 1 FTE VRS commissioned from the third sector (Vision Support). Vision Support also employ 0.8 FTE trainee VRS completing their first year of the [Foundation Degree in Rehabilitation Work](#) that will work across the authority.
- [Denbighshire](#), which would need a minimum of 1.4 FTE VRSs for your population of 96,558, calculated from the national standard, currently has 1.6 FTE VRS commissioned from the third sector (Vision Support). Vision Support also employ 1 FTE trainee VRS completing their first year of the [Foundation Degree in Rehabilitation Work](#) that will work across the authority.
- [Flintshire](#), which would need a minimum of 2.2 FTE VRSs for your population of 155,319, calculated from the national standard, currently has 0.8 FTE VRS commissioned from the third sector (Vision Support). Vision Support also employ 1 FTE trainee VRS completing their first year of the [Foundation Degree in Rehabilitation Work](#) that will work across the authority.
- [Wrexham](#), which would need a minimum of 1.92 FTE VRSs for your population of 135,394, calculated from the national standard, currently has 1 FTE VRS commissioned from the third sector (Vision Support). Vision Support also employ 0.2 FTE trainee VRS completing their first year of the [Foundation Degree in Rehabilitation Work](#) that will work across the authority.

The report “[Demonstrating the Impact and Value of Vision Rehabilitation](#)” (Office of Public Management, 2017) evidenced that the financial value resulting from rehabilitation significantly outweighs the financial costs of delivering remedies from the health and social care sector. This equates to an average saving of £4,487 per referral.

It is estimated that the combined incidents of falls amongst older people costs the NHS Wales £2.3 billion per year and given that half of those are directly attributable to sight loss, early rehabilitation interventions, that deal with safe movement around the home and outdoors, will have an enormous impact in reducing this cost. (see "[The Importance of Vision in Preventing Falls](#)", College of Optometrists, 2020)

Appendix 2: Third sector support available in Betsi Cadwaladr UHB area

Third sector organisations are ideally placed to maintain patient wellbeing while the patient is awaiting monitoring, treatment and surgical appointments. They can help maximise independence and confidence to keep people living well at home, reducing the demand on unscheduled care services.

A high volume of secondary eye clinic referrals into the third sector will come via Eye Care Liaison Officers, embedded within clinics. In primary care, WGOS3 low vision optometrists are trained to identify patient needs, and have knowledge of the services available to patients, and WGOS4 and 5 optometrists have guidance to signpost into services depending on answers to a short sequence of questions.

For a list of current services and support in the area, go to <https://wcbccd.org.uk/perspectif/betsi-cadwaladr>.