Following a review of the evidence against strict criteria, the UK NSC does not currently recommend introducing a national screening programme for glaucoma.

Glaucoma is the name given to a group of eye conditions which could lead to blindness if left untreated. In affected people the eye may seem fine and work normally, but vision is being damaged very slowly.

It is not known for certain how common glaucoma is in the UK, but it is estimated that 67% of cases are not detected, and just over two people in every 100 have it. The risk of getting glaucoma increases with age, by being diabetic, of African ethnicity, or having an affected close family member.

This review looks at the most common type, open angle glaucoma, and considers whether a national screening programme would be effective in reducing the burden of the disease by preventing further damage to the eyes, and preserving eyesight.

Key findings supporting the UK NSC recommendation

- there are no tests which can accurately predict who is going to develop the disease
- many people diagnosed with early glaucoma will never suffer visual impairment in their lifetime
- there isn’t any good-quality evidence that demonstrates treatment to be better than no treatment. Additionally, the treatments can cause harm
- the effectiveness of a screening programme has not been studied; therefore there is no evidence to suggest that a programme would reduce the burden of the disease to the UK population

The UK NSC regularly reviews its recommendations on screening for different conditions in the light of new research evidence becoming available.

To find out more about the UK NSC’s glaucoma recommendation, please visit:

legacy.screening.nhs.uk/glaucoma

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises ministers and the NHS in the 4 UK countries about all aspects of screening and supports implementation of screening programmes.

Find out more about the UK National Screening Committee at www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-national-screening-committee-uk-nscc. The UK NSC evidence review process is described at www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nscc-evidence-review-process and a list of all UK NSC recommendations can be found at legacy.screening.nhs.uk/recommendations.

The UK NSC secretariat is hosted by Public Health England (www.gov.uk/phe).