

**Michelle
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Biography

Michelle Lansdowne, is Chair and Trustee of ISEE, a Scottish charity dedicated to raising awareness of visual stress. She holds an MBA in Sustainability, Innovation & Change Management from the University of Stirling, where her research explored the lived experiences of over 500 people with visual stress and compared the effectiveness of different interventions. With more than 25 years' experience in global marketing leadership across SaaS, AI, fintech, and consumer sectors, Michelle brings strong strategic, communications, and advocacy skills. She is passionate about equipping professionals with the knowledge to identify, understand, and support individuals affected by this under-recognised condition

Seeing the light: Lived experiences of people with visual stress and implications for professional practice

Abstract:

Visual stress, also known as scotopic sensitivity syndrome or Irlen Syndrome, is a neurological visual processing disorder affecting an estimated 15–20% of the population. Despite this prevalence, awareness remains low among health, education, and social care professionals, often leading to delayed identification, misdiagnosis, and inadequate support.

This session draws on a UK-based study of over 500 participants, capturing lived experiences of visual stress respondents, who reported symptoms including print and environmental distortions, migraines, sensory overload, and anxiety—frequently compounded by feelings of dismissal when their perspectives were overlooked in assessments. Many described frustration with clinical approaches that focused solely on eyesight, failing to address perceptual distortions.

The presentation will highlight these first-hand accounts, identify gaps in professional practice, and provide evidence-informed recommendations for early screening, empathetic engagement, and effective intervention—empowering professionals to recognise and respond to the full sensory and emotional impact of visual stress, whilst also encouraging the opportunity for further research.