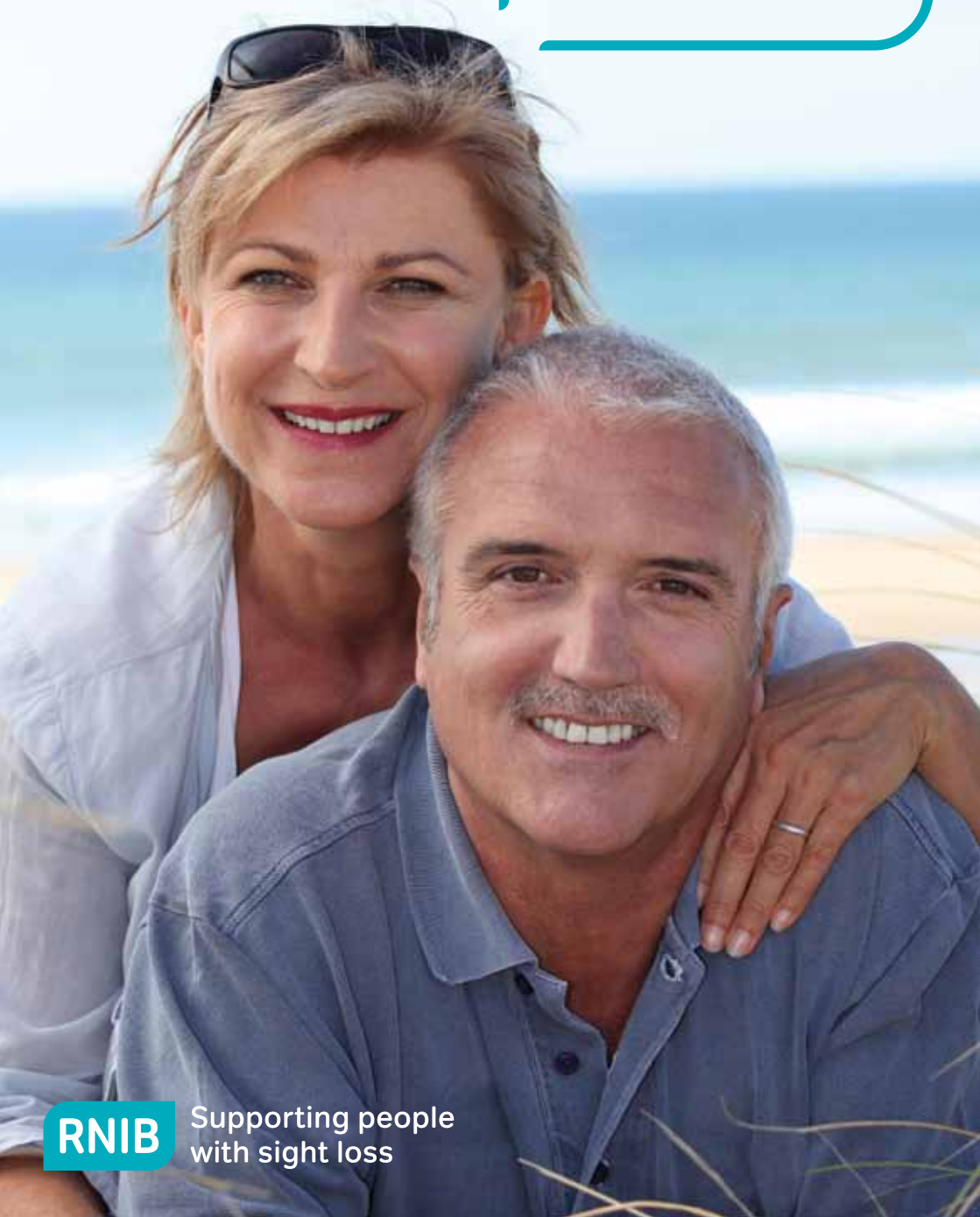


Confident living

Leisure



RNIB

Supporting people
with sight loss

Leisure

Five top tips

- 1 Give audio description a go – at the cinema, theatre or on television – or just try it out on our website.
- 2 If you are not receiving the service you require let the service provider know, and talk to them about your needs.
- 3 Try out a digital radio at your local store.
- 4 Think of something that you would like to do but don't think you can, then give our Helpline a call to find out what is available.
- 5 Talk to other people in a similar situation to yourself about their hobbies and how they cope.

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Introduction

As well as having an impact on your working life, and how you do everyday things such as shopping and travelling, living with sight loss can also make you think again about how you use your leisure time, and the hobbies and activities you pursue to enrich your life.

Our message is don't give up. If you are losing your sight and struggling to continue with the activities and hobbies you have always enjoyed, there may be support to help you to continue to enjoy them. And if you want to try new things, don't let your sight loss limit your horizons. If you want to do it, there is probably someone or something out there to make it possible.

In this leaflet we give you some examples of common pursuits where services, products or support groups exist to enable people with sight problems to be involved. But we can't include everything, there is much much more out there for you to discover. We just hope that these examples give you the confidence to find out what is there to help you, and continue to make the most of your leisure time and have some fun!

Accessing leisure

The level of support available to people with sight problems varies enormously from one leisure provider to another. Many may not have considered how someone with a sight problem would access their service. So it is going to be very important that you talk to people about the support you require, and it is also important that you are aware that leisure providers are obliged by law to make “reasonable adjustments” to enable disabled people (which includes blind and partially sighted people) to use their services. This can include providing assistance, making sure you can access any written information and welcoming guide dogs.

Know your rights

The Equality Act can help to ensure you get the assistance and information you require to make the most of whatever leisure activity you are pursuing. If a venue is not forthcoming in offering you help you may want to ask them if they are aware of their legal obligations under the Act.

David's story

When David, 54, went blind in his left eye and lost most of the vision in his right eye he thought his life was over. He had to retire from work and stop driving. But with the help of Berkshire County Blind Society he was able to discover a wealth of social and sporting activities which transformed his life. He joined a social club for people with sight loss, Active Eyes, and took up playing cricket for the county's visually impaired team – the Berkshire Stags.

“I go twice a month to Active Eyes events, which include walks, pub quizzes, trips to the seaside, go-karting, darts, 10-pin bowling, rowing and archery. I get to meet people and make new friends. It's like a family. A lot of people think if you've got sight loss you can't do anything but some friends of mine were very surprised at a darts match about what we could do. Joining the cricket team was a bit daunting but once I got stuck in my confidence grew and grew. Both men and women play and age is no barrier – some members are over 70. My advice is 'don't just sit, try it!

Getting out and about

Visiting the cinema and theatre

Audio description is an additional commentary that accompanies a film or play and enables you to follow all the action even when what is happening is purely visual.

Most mainstream films now have an audio description track written for them and there are over 250 cinemas in the UK where it is available. You listen to the audio description track using a headset that you request from the box office.

Contact your local cinema to find out if they offer audio description and which films are audio described.

If you are registered as blind, or in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, you are entitled to a Cinema Exhibitors' Association card which, for a one-off annual payment, entitles you to one free ticket for someone accompanying you to the cinema (see [page 20](#))

Audio description in theatres takes the form of live commentary, delivered by trained describers via a headset. The audio description is played through one ear of the headset and the play dialogue through the other. There are over 100 theatres in the UK providing audio described performances, which are usually limited to one or two performances per run. Contact your local theatre to find out what they offer.

Visiting museums and galleries

Most museums and galleries will be happy to offer you assistance, for example by providing a guide around the collections, offering a touch tour and special events, or providing an audio or large print guide. If you are able to plan your visit in advance and contact the museum or gallery to let them know you are coming, this may help them prepare for you.

Watching sport

There are some sporting venues, such as football, rugby and cricket, which provide audio description for people with sight problems. You can find out more by contacting our Helpline or your local sports venue directly.

Playing sport

It is unlikely that there is a sport anywhere that has not been adapted in some way so that people with sight problems can participate. If you are struggling to continue playing the sport you have always loved, or you would like to try something new then contact our Helpline and we can let you know what is available to you.

Keeping fit

It's important for all of us to stay fit and healthy but what you have done before losing your sight might seem even more challenging when you are coming to terms with sight loss. Don't be afraid to ask – if you want to do something talk to the people involved about how they can help you make this happen. For example, if you've always liked going to the gym but now you are finding it more difficult because of your sight then speak to the staff at the gym and find out how they can help you. Many people with sight problems still manage to use their local gym once they have had a little initial support.

Rambling

There are rambling clubs and walking groups set up for town and country routes and you'll be welcome to participate. To find out what is going on in your area contact the "Walking your way to health" initiative or the Ramblers (see [page 21](#)).

Adult learning

It's never too late to learn and investing some time in a course could help you further develop your leisure pursuits and perhaps develop new interests. These days learning is flexible and you will be able to find a course that fits around your other commitments. This might be full-time or part-time, in the day or evening, for a few hours or several years. You can even learn from home.

Holidays

There is lots of information, support and advice available to help you choose and enjoy the holidays that you dream of and deserve.

- Many city guide books are available in alternative formats to print and of course there is loads of information available on the internet.

- If you want a hotel that specialises in catering for people with sight problems contact our Helpline for details.
- If, for whatever reason, you are worried about travelling alone, there are escort, companion and nursing services you can use as well as themed group breaks you could attend.

If you would like to find out more about the information, support and advice available, contact our Helpline.

Jean's story

“I used to run a social club for blind and partially sighted people where we'd play cards and bingo and dance. A new person would come and say they can't see and won't be able to do those things. But I'd show them how. It's about getting to know things and having someone show how to do it. I enjoy visiting museums and find that the people there are excellent and very helpful. Any activities you used to do – crafts, walking, sport – give it a try. Nothing is impossible. No such word as can't as my father used to say and he was right.”

Time at home

Watching television

Audio description is available with a large number of television programmes. You can listen to audio description through digital television either via Freeview, satellite or cable services. To find out more about accessing audio description on TV contact our Helpline. Or you can try out some examples on our website.

There are also quite a few television devices – such as talking televisions and Freeview players – that have been developed to help people with sight problems access digital TV. Contact our Helpline to find out more about what is available.

Try out different lighting and chair positioning options to find the most suitable for you.

If you are registered as blind you are entitled to a 50 per cent reduction in the TV licence fee even if you are not the person named on the licence for the TV that you watch.

Trevor was devastated at the thought he could no longer enjoy TV and films when he lost his sight after having a stroke.

“Mags, my friend and carer, told me that she’d heard about a set top box giving audio description on TV and suggested I give that a go. AD describes all the things that are going on that you can’t see, in between the dialogue – it’s like joining the dots up. It was also amazing to sit in the cinema again enjoying a film and it was so easy too. I’ve got my independence back and my love of movies, theatre and TV – my life is so different now.”

Digital radio

Digital radio offers a wide range of high-quality local and national radio stations for you to listen to. You can listen to radio on your digital television, over the internet or on a digital radio (also known as a DAB radio). Digital radios can present some challenges for people with sight problems, due to the large number of buttons and the reliance on the display screen to know what station you are listening to.

But some digital radios will be easier for you to use than others. The important thing to do is try before you buy.

Find out which radio works best for you by investigating the buttons, display features and your ability to preset radio stations you like to listen to. Many digital radios give you the ability to preset radio stations but some allow you to preset more than others and others don't have this feature at all.

Television and radio listings

Extensive television and radio listings are available in large print as part of the weekly Big Print newspaper. This is just one of the listings options available from RNIB. Contact our Helpline to find out more.

Reading

Learning new ways to read, either by using any sight you still have or exploring new tactile, audio or electronic options is going to be a challenge, but there are many options to investigate and it will be beneficial to you to find the right option for

you. Our “Reading” title in this series of leaflets can help you explore the different options, and once you have decided your preferred way to continue reading you can contact us to find out about the wide range of titles available to support your leisure interests.

John’s advice to others would be don’t let a small setback put you off the first time you try something new.

“I enjoy reading. I’ve just got my first internet radio – everything is there at the touch of a button. I am interested in history so enjoy listening to the National Archive podcasts as well as In touch and music. I use it every day. It’s like a new toy for me, I think it’s fantastic.”

Playing music

We produce a lot of music in large print and braille, which could help you to learn or continue to play music. You could also learn to play by ear so don’t be put off if you are thinking that your sight problem is going to make reading the music impossible.

Gardening

Gardening is an immensely popular pastime for many people with sight problems. Systems and techniques have been developed over many years to help you continue to manage and enjoy your own garden.

RNIB has worked for many years with horticultural charity Thrive to provide information and advice to help you carry on with gardening, or if you have never done it before, begin to enjoy gardening.

Jeremy's story

Jeremy is losing his sight due to diabetic retinopathy and finds that gardening helps to take his mind off his health problems.

“One day, I was remembering how I'd enjoyed growing potatoes and sweet peas with my mum when I was younger and I thought why not have a go at growing some things now? And six months later I'd done an area about the size of a tennis court! I like to have a go at growing things that are a little bit different like rainbow carrots, tiger-striped tomatoes and white aubergines. And I can see bright colours

better too. My best tip is to start plants off in empty toilet rolls rather than planting the seeds directly into the ground. You start off with a toilet roll, fill it with compost, then stand them all together in a seed tray and put the seed in the top of the toilet roll. Then once the plant has started growing you can plant the whole thing straight into the ground. The benefit is that once the plant's got to a decent size you can distinguish it more easily from weeds. Family and friends deliver empty toilet rolls to my house now!"



Painting and the arts

Many artists continue to produce their art, whatever it may be, even after their sight has begun to deteriorate or in some instances gone altogether. Don't be put off by your sight loss. Talk to other local artists and join a local art class or club.

Hyacinth began losing her sight 20 years ago due to age-related macular degeneration. She now has very little central vision left but over the last few years has developed her sewing and embroidery skills to take account of her sight loss.

“Twenty years ago I couldn't have dreamed of making the blankets and toys I make now – even with the sight I had then! The club is great, we all come here two mornings a week and share ideas and tips. I've made some lovely friends and some lovely presents for my family!”

Cooking

When losing your sight the kitchen might seem like a daunting and even dangerous place but don't give up! You are in control of your kitchen

and with some simple adaptations, using a few specialist products and by learning slightly different ways of doing things, you'll be able to continue to enjoy cooking for yourself. Contact our Helpline to find out what is available.

Puzzles and games

There are specially adapted versions of many popular games, which enable people with sight problems to continue to play together with their sighted friends and family. This includes Scrabble, chess, Monopoly, playing cards and many more.

Alan lost much of his sight as a result of diabetes. He really missed playing cards at his local social club until one day a friend gave him a braille alphabet card and a pack of braille playing cards. Alan learnt enough braille to use the playing cards – which are printed as well so everyone can use them – and is now back having a good time with his friends.

“I’m now back at the social club with my mates playing cards and am so much happier.”

Find out what else is available by calling our Helpline.

Further information

RNIB Helpline

For details on all the services available from RNIB. Giving information, support and advice to anyone with a sight problem, their friends and family.

Telephone **0303 123 9999**

Email helpline@rnib.org.uk

Visit rnib.org.uk

Sightline directory

The online directory for people with sight problems. Find out what is available to help you both locally and nationally.

Visit sightlinedirectory.org.uk

Cinema Exhibitors' Association

Issuers of the card that shows someone is entitled to a free ticket for the person accompanying them because they are disabled.

Call **0845 123 1292**, email info@ceacard.co.uk

or visit ceacard.co.uk

Walking for Health initiative

The Ramblers 2nd Floor 89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7TW Call **020 7339 8541**, email
walkingforhealth@ramblers.org.uk or visit
walkingforhealth.org.uk

The Ramblers

2nd Floor 89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7TW Call **020 7339 8500**,
email ramblers@ramblers.org.uk or visit
ramblers.org.uk

Thrive

The Geoffrey Udall Centre Beech Hill
Reading RG7 2AT Call **0118 988 5688**,
email info@thrive.org.uk or visit thrive.org.uk
and carryongardening.org.uk

Action for Blind People

Actionnaires – sport and leisure clubs for blind
and partially sighted children.

Vision Hotels – a chain of hotels specifically
designed to cater for people with sight problems.

Children's activities calendar – details of opportunities available to children, young people and their families.

To find out about these activities or much more besides contact Action for Blind People through the RNIB Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or by email to helpline@rnib.org.uk or visit actionforblindpeople.org.uk

VocalEyes

Charity providing access to the arts to blind and partially sighted people through audio description. Call **020 7375 1043**, email enquiries@vocaleyeyes.co.uk or visit vocaleyeyes.co.uk

British Blind Sport

Charity enabling people with sight problems to have the same opportunities as sighted people to access and enjoy sport and recreational activities in the UK. Call **01926 424247**, email info@britishblindsport.org.uk or visit britishblindsport.org.uk

Traveleyes

Traveleyes is a travel agent that brings together blind or partially sighted people with sighted people so that they can travel together. Visit traveleyes-international.com

National Talking Newspapers and Magazines

Charity producing audio and electronic versions of over 230 magazines and newspapers to help you keep up to date with your leisure interest. To find out what is available call **01435 866 102**, email info@tnauk.org.uk or visit tnauk.org.uk

British Computer Association for the Blind (BCAB)

Charity helping blind and partially sighted people to get up to speed and stay up to date with the latest in technology. Call **0845 643 9811**, email info@bcab.org.uk or visit bcab.org.uk

Visionary

Charity bringing together the local societies for blind and partially sighted people across the UK. To find your local society and discover what leisure opportunities there are, call **020 8417 0942**, email visionary@visionary.org.uk or visit visionary.org.uk

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Technology Support Squad – will visit your home or talk to you over the phone to help you set up and get to know your latest computer, telephone, radio or television.

Talk and Support – social television networks, an opportunity to talk to like minded people about shared interests.

Leisure factsheets – more detailed information on the leisure opportunities available to you.

Products – specially designed to help you continue with your leisure pursuits after losing your sight.

To find out more about these activities call **0303 123 9999**, email helpline@rnib.org.uk or visit rnib.org.uk



We value your feedback

Please help us improve the information we supply by sharing your comments on this publication. Complete the form and return to:

FREEPOST RSCB-GJHJ-HLXG

RNIB Publishing, 105 Judd Street

London WC1H 9NE

(There is no need to use a stamp.)

Alternatively, you can email

publishing@rnib.org.uk

Please include your contact details if you request further information.

1. Where did you receive your copy of this leaflet?

2. Did you find that the information was presented in a way that was easy to read and easy to understand? Please give details of anything you feel could be improved.



3. Is there any information you would have found helpful, or were expecting to find, that was missing?

4. Further comments. Please use the space below for any other comments you have on the information in this leaflet or any aspect of your contact with RNIB.

About the Confident living series

The **Confident living series** is for people who are losing or have recently lost their sight and are trying to build their confidence to continue to lead full and independent lives. Titles in the series are:

- Living safely
- Managing your money
- Reading
- Shopping
- Technology
- Travel

All these leaflets are available in audio, print and braille formats. To order please contact our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** (all calls charged at local rate) or email helpline@rnib.org.uk

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helpline@rnib.org.uk

Ask RNIB is the simple, easy to use way to find the answers to your questions online – try it today at rnib.org.uk/ask

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