# Sharing your journey

A guide for parents of children who are blind or partially sighted

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## Foreword

For many parents, learning that their child has a visual impairment can be a huge shock. It can be a challenging and emotional time, and a common question asked is “what can my child see, and what can I do to help?” It is extremely important for families to know and understand how to effectively support their child at the earliest stage of development to help prepare them for successful adulthood. We hope this useful guide will go some way towards doing this.

RNIB Scotland works to ensure that all blind and partially sighted children and young people have the support - both emotional and practical - that they and their families need to reach their full potential. Uniquely, we provide individualised support from early years right through nursery to school to further and higher education or employment.

Our Education and Family Services team can help parents to develop the strategies and to learn about the resources that can develop their children’s social skills, make sense of their environment, and ensure greater personal independence.

We believe that, with the right help and support, children and young people with sight loss can overcome barriers, deal successfully with challenges and make the transition to adulthood with confidence.

**Dominic Everett, Education and Family Services Manager**

**Sandra Wilson, Chair**

**John Legg, Director**

## Introduction

For many parents learning that your child has a visual impairment can be a huge shock. From the outset you may feel swamped by complex medical information, which can be difficult to understand. Your child may need to undergo tests and assessment procedures. Both of you will find yourselves engaging with a range of professionals, all with their role to play in supporting your child.

This can be especially true if your child has other conditions or needs as well. It can be a difficult time and the most common question that arises is “What can my child see, and what can I do to help?”

As their parent you will know your child best and throughout their life you will be a vital partner in their care and support. As you become involved in your child’s development there are a number of resources and strategies that you may find useful along the way. We hope that this guide will support you through the sight loss journey by helping you know and understand your child’s additional needs better and to help prepare them for independent learning and living.

We have attempted to discuss the issues and strategies families may encounter throughout their own personal journey. While not definitive, it aims to answer some of the questions you may have and signpost you towards statutory and voluntary services within Scotland.

Throughout this document we deliberately use the terms “visual impairment” and “sight loss”. We recognise that some children are born with no or limited vision that may not change throughout their life. However, we also recognise that for some children there may be “sight loss” taking place.

This publication was produced by the Royal National Institute of Blind People Scotland (RNIB Scotland). Special thanks to our colleagues at RNIB Northern Ireland for allowing us to use their publication “Looking ahead: a parent’s guide” to inform ours.

**“When our child was diagnosed as having a lifelong condition which would significantly affect her vision, our world suddenly changed. So many questions needed to be answered but it was difficult to know where to turn, who to turn to and what to ask.”**

Julie, mum from Falkirk.

## Coming to terms with your child’s sight loss

### First steps

Finding out that your child has a sight problem can feel like a ride on an emotional roller coaster. There’s no “normal” response - different people respond in different ways.

If your child has additional or complex needs and you discover he or she also has a sight problem, this can be especially hard to come to terms with.

In addition to the joys and pleasures that your child gives you, at different times following diagnosis, you may feel disbelief, anger, sadness, worry and frustration. Different feelings come and go and sometimes catch up with you when you least expect it. All the while your child’s need for food, love, warmth and security continue to demand your energy, care and attention.

When an older child loses their sight, or if an existing condition deteriorates, it may take a long time to adjust and the impact of sight loss may bring very different challenges. Remember that it’s possible to become independent again - you might like to talk to others about their experiences. While your child may encounter barriers at varies stages of their development, it is important to remember that they can go on to lead full and active lives.

This can be an emotional time and talking to friends or family can sometimes be a useful first step. There may also be a support group in your area. Our website **rnib.org.uk** has a Parents’ Place forum to talk to other parents in a similar situation. You may also wish to contact our Emotional Support Service, which can offer confidential support, information and counselling. Call our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or email [**helpline@rnib.org.uk**](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk) and ask to be referred to our Emotional Support Service. Alternatively you can email the service directly at **ess@rnib.org.uk**

### Get informed

A good first step is to make sure you have access to the information and support that is available. As a parent or carer you need to have an awareness of your child’s visual impairment and how best to support it. It may be up to you to share this information with other members of your family and those who interact with them at home or school.

### Meeting and dealing with eye specialists

Parents have told us that when visiting any specialist or doctor it is helpful to write down your questions before the appointment and to write the answers during the consultation.

It is often difficult to retain everything said within a 10-15 minute appointment. When you attend an appointment do not be afraid to ask questions about your child’s vision. If you find it comforting, take a friend or family member along with you.

#### Possible questions for the doctor, ophthalmologist or paediatrician

* What is the condition called? Can you spell that for me?
* What causes the condition? Please explain as simply as possible.
* How does the condition affect my child’s ability to see?
* Does this condition sometimes run in families? If so, can I speak to a genetic counsellor?
* Can anything be done to cure or help this condition? Is any special treatment necessary? What might help? What can I do to help?
* Is there anything my child mustn’t do (for example, rub their eyes, shake their head or jump on to a hard surface)?
* Even with treatment, is the condition likely to get worse, get better or stay the same?
* When should my child be examined again?
* Where might we go for further advice and help? For example, could you give us the contact details for visual impairment professionals in social services, the education authority and voluntary organisations?
* Is there anything further I can do to help my child?
* Have you got any information on this subject that I can take home and read?
* What can I do to encourage my child to help their vision develop, and to make the best use of their sight?
* Can you refer my child to a Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired? I would like to discuss how my child’s sight might affect him or her at school or nursery, and what sort of support should be put in place.

## What practical advice is available at the eye clinic?

Support at the hospital eye clinic varies depending on which Health Board area you live in. While some children and young people attend child-only clinics others share with adults.

Vision Support Service staff, who may be employed by us or act as a volunteer for a local society for the blind, offer practical support and advice to those newly diagnosed with an eye condition or sight loss.

#### This support can cover:

* emotional support at diagnosis
* support and information for family, friends and carers
* information on eye conditions and good eye health
* advice on what aids and adjustments can make life easier
* advice and help with claiming what financial benefits are available.

For more information about who you can talk to for additional support and advice at the eye hospital in your area speak to your consultant.

## Registering your child as blind or partially sighted

### What does it mean?

Whilst it is not compulsory, you may decide to have your child registered. This may allow your family to benefit from some concessions such as discounts on bus and train travel, reductions to local authority amenities as well as other welfare benefits. It will not affect the level of support your child receives at school but often helps to explain quite clearly that your child has a visual impairment that needs supporting.

#### There are two levels of registration depending on your child’s level of vision. Your child may be registered as:

* severely sight impaired/blind
* sight impaired/partially sighted

Once your child is registered it will be held on record either by your local authority or local society for the blind who should be able to advise on local services. The register is confidential so information about your child cannot be shared without your written permission.

For more information on registration and the benefits available, please visit **rnib.org.uk/eye-health/registering-your-sight-loss**

### Is my child eligible?

In order to be registered, your child needs to visit an eye specialist, called a consultant ophthalmologist. They will conduct an eye test to determine if your child is eligible.

During the test the consultant will measure your child’s ability to see detail (visual acuity) and how much they can see from the side of their eye when looking straight ahead (field of vision).

Following this the consultant will decide if they are eligible to be registered as either blind or partially sighted.

If your child is not eligible to be registered it does not mean that they will be unable to access the support they need. Also, if you do not want to proceed with the registration process at this time, that is your choice. There is no time limit on registration and it can be completed at any time.

## Benefits and concessions

There are a range of benefits that you may be entitled to as parents or guardians of a visually impaired child. We have covered the main benefits available below and where to get more help and advice on how to claim. Information is correct at the time of print.

### Disability Living Allowance

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) aims to help you meet the extra cost of the care that your child may need and the added expense of getting out and about. For this reason, it is made up of two components: a care component and a mobility component. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) administers it.

Lots of blind and partially sighted children receive this benefit, and we would encourage you to apply on behalf of your child. DLA is tax free, is not means-tested and it won’t affect any other benefits you already receive, so there really is nothing to lose by making a claim.

### Finding out if your child is eligible to receive DLA

#### To make a new claim for DLA, your child must:

* be under 16
* need more looking after than a child of the same age who doesn’t have a disability
* be habitually resident in the UK (this is decided by looking at a number of factors including reasons for coming to the UK, the length of your stay, future intentions and previous links with the country)
* satisfy the past presence test. This means that your child must have been present in the UK for 104 out of the previous 156 weeks. If your child is under six months they only need to have been present for 13 weeks up until they are one year old). If your child is aged between six and 36 months old then they only need to have been present for 26 weeks in the last 156 weeks.

Your child will not have to satisfy the past presence test if they have a terminal illness.

### How to claim DLA

Telephone the Disability Living Allowance Unit on **0845 7123456** and request the “DLA1 child” claim pack. If the DWP award your child DLA, it will start from the date you made the call to request a pack, as long as you return the application form within six weeks. You can request a copy of the form in large print if this will help you.

You can also download or complete the claim forms at **gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children/how-to-claim**

Don’t be put off by the length of the form. If you need help completing the form you could contact an experienced worker from an advice centre or local society for blind people.

### Personal Independence Payment

When your child turns 16 they can apply for Personal Independence Payment (PIP), the equivalent of DLA for 16-64 year olds. You apply for PIP through the Department of Work and Pensions by calling **0800 917 22 22**. If your child already receives DLA and is approaching 16, you will automatically receive a letter inviting your child to apply to claim PIP.

### Cinema Exhibitors Association card

With the Cinema Exhibitors Association (CEA) card, your child is able to get a free ticket for anyone accompanying them to the cinema. The card is available to those receiving DLA, PIP or registered blind aged eight and over. For more information and how to apply visit the CEA card website **ceacard.co.uk**

### National Entitlement card

The National Entitlement card gives blind and partially sighted people free bus and train travel all over Scotland. Your child may also be entitled to take a companion with them, giving them free bus travel and discounted train fares. For more information on what you’re entitled to in your area and how you can apply, contact your local authority.

### TV licence discount

If your child is registered blind or severely sight impaired, you are entitled to a 50 per cent discount on the cost of a television licence. You will need to put the licence in your child’s name, but there is no age limit. You will need to show your child’s registration certificate when you renew your licence. For further information, call the TV Licensing Helpline on **0300 790 6071** or visit **tvlicensing.co.uk**

### Where to get help

The benefits system can seem very confusing. There have been and will continue to be changes to the system. It may be helpful to get advice from someone to clarify what benefits you are entitled to.

### RNIB Helpline

We can provide support through our Helpline. We can provide one-off answers but also take time to talk through a wide range of issues including benefits and concessions. You can call us on **0303 123 9999** from Monday to Friday 8.45am to 5.30pm. Outside these times, you can leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as possible. You can also email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**

### Citizens Advice Bureau

Free impartial advice and support is available from the Citizens Advice Bureau. Advice is available in person, over the phone and by email. To find out more visit their website **citizensadvice.org.uk**

## Early years

There are many things parents can do to help their child with sight loss learn more about the world around them. As your child develops they will need support towards personal independence. Your role in this is crucial.

#### Here are some ideas:

* Use a wide range of voice tones, inflections, and volume and talk to your child during feeding, dressing, or changing.
* Be specific and use your child’s name when talking to your child so he or she begins to develop a sense of the variety of words.
* Encourage people to introduce themselves by name. This will help your child recognise different voices.
* Play games that will stimulate your child’s vision, using multi-sensory toys, for example sound, textures and bright lights if appropriate.
* Encourage your child to explore objects with her or his hands and learn the feel of different textures, such as a wet or dry washcloth, different articles of clothing, or food tastes and textures.
* Involve your child, even when very young, in things you do around the house. Describe what you are doing, such as preparing a meal, so he or she begins to make associations. (Pretend play will allow your child to use their imagination and explore. For example, playing with dolls, cars, kitchens and pretend food etc)
* When you want to show your child something, try to relate it to what he or she knows.
* Give your child hands-on experiences.
* Look for places to take your child that have things to touch. If you have other children, make sure they are part of the experience too.

To help your child grow, play and learn, look at the section about early years on our website **rnib.org.uk/early-years**

We, in partnership with Royal Blind School and the Scottish Sensory Centre have also produced a DVD entitled “Let me play”. The DVD demonstrates successful engagement methods and play techniques to assist with the early development of blind and partially sighted children aged 0-5. “Let me play” is available to all families and professionals caring or supporting children aged five or under living with sight loss in Scotland. It can also be accessed electronically by anyone who wishes to view it through the Scottish

Sensory Centre, Royal Blind School and RNIB web portals.

To order a copy of the DVD or for more help and support in this area please contact us on **0131 652 3140** or email [**efs@rnib.org.uk**](mailto:efs@rnib.org.uk)

## Complex needs

If your child has additional complex medical needs or a learning disability this may impact on their visual understanding of the world around them.

Additional or complex needs can make it even more difficult for a child to understand or communicate what is wrong with their vision. However, research tells us these are the children most likely to have sight loss.

Sight loss can affect how a child behaves, responds and interacts with people, objects and their environment. If we don’t know about the sight loss then we may misunderstand or misinterpret what they do, and why they do it.

### What to look for

#### You may notice some of these visual behaviours:

* responding to and reaching for objects to the side but not straight ahead
* looking away from people or objects in order to “see” them
* vision which seems variable and may change on an hourly or day to day basis
* for the mobile child – inaccurate visual guidance of movement and reach for objects
* inability to look at objects for any length of time
* irregular eye movements
* lack of response to objects on a “busy” background that the child would respond to on a plain, contrasting surface
* eye movements not made independently of head movements
* difficulty seeing objects unless they are moving, or in other children, unless they are still
* holding objects very close to the face
* no response or reaction to smiles or familiar people until they speak, touch or come very close to them
* being startled by movement, noise or activity close by but not noticed
* lack of response to faces or facial expression.

If you suspect your child may have a “hidden” sight loss ask for a functional vision assessment to be conducted at eye clinic which will help ensure they are accessing appropriate visual stimulation as effectively as possible. This will help to ensure they use the vision they have in the best way they can to aid learning and understanding as well as to provide enjoyment.

### Important considerations

#### What is the optimum lighting?

This will depend on the cause of the sight loss so ask a vision specialist what lighting will help. Some children are very sensitive to light or glare, while some children with profound complex needs and visual impairment respond better in low lighting conditions. On the other hand, some children may only respond to strong light in a dark environment. Try different lighting situations to see how your child responds best.

### Distractions

Objects in bold plain, preferred colours should always be used initially. Patterns are more difficult to process. Presenting an object against patterned clothing makes it harder to respond to. Put the thing you want your child to pay attention to on a plain background in a contrasting colour. Play in a space that is quiet and uncluttered, as noise may distract your child.

### Comfort

What time of day is it? Is your child feeling tired or unwell? Are they as comfortable as possible and in a position where they can best view what you would like them to respond to. A child who is uncomfortable will not be able to put their efforts into visual attention.

### Make yourself visible

For some children identifying dad in a bright red t-shirt or mum in a yellow dress can act as a good signifier to help them recognise you. They may smell your perfume or hat. Bright lipstick can emphasise the mouth and eye makeup and glasses help some children to see your face more easily.

### Time to respond

When you are playing with your child, focus on one object at a time. It can take longer than you might think for your child to respond, so be patient and give lots of time. This may seem laborious but by allowing processing time you are more likely to get a response, which can be nurtured and built upon.

### Where are you presenting the object?

A child can only react to something if they are aware of it. Consider the implications of visual field impairments especially if you are placing objects on trays attached to chairs. A child with a lower field loss may not see items placed close by them on a tray, but may be able to see them propped up further back on the tray using a wedge, or if the tray is lifted until seen. Interpret responses carefully. Is your child really seeing the object on the tray or responding to someone moving in towards them from the front when they are placing it?

### Apps to encourage or assess visual response

There are wonderful apps and technology to use but don’t be tempted to do too much at once. The best apps allow the speed and colours of any activity to be modified.

Many children need a degree of movement to engage with a stimulus, but on screen it must be slow enough to give time to respond. You can readjust the speed once your child has seen the target or activity frequently and long enough to recognise it and respond more quickly.

### Experiment with toys

Play has a vital role in a child’s development. As well as valuable interactions with others, play provides a child with opportunities to learn, and to develop their understanding of themselves and the world around them.

Try to be inventive when looking at toys for your child to help stimulate and engage their interest. It is relatively simple to create a homemade sensory environment by collecting a range of different items with appealing sensory qualities. You can use colour tents, with large pieces of brightly coloured lining fabric. For young children or babies, a small pop up tent can work just as well, if pattern is eliminated by tacking on plain fabric.

There is a huge range of wonderful sensory toys and equipment available but do not underestimate the value of everyday items - just make sure they are safe for children. Introduce different sounds and smells and try to make toys age appropriate when you can. Think about the size and weight of a toy and consider adding something to hold it in place on a tray for example if that will help for exploration. And don’t forget, for many children the best thing about play is the interaction with you - a toy just adds to the fun!

## Education support

### What help will my child receive?

In Scotland the majority of children with sight loss are able to attend mainstream schools with support. Each local authority has developed a system of support for children with visual impairment. Some authorities have special educational settings such as a mainstream school with a resource centre for visually impaired learners or a school which specialises in catering to the needs of children with additional complex needs, including sensory loss. Whatever the system, you should expect that support is provided by suitably qualified staff who are aware of your child’s particular and evolving needs.

When your child is about to go to school, they may need help beyond what their class teacher will be able to provide.

Under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, any child who needs more or different support to what is normally provided in school or preschool is said to have Additional Support Needs (ASN).

In Scotland a national programme called “Getting it Right for Every Child” (GIRFEC) aims to improve wellbeing and learning outcomes for all children and young people. GIRFEC encourages professionals, from health, social work, education and other areas, to work together to ensure that effective early intervention and appropriate support is delivered. You can find out more at **scotland.gov.uk/gettingitright**

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 takes forward the GIRFEC approach to provide children and young people, from birth to 18 years old, with access to a “Named Person”. This person would act as the key, central point of contact. It also ensures the provision of a single “Child’s Plan”, for those who need one, to ensure services are coordinated where necessary to help and support a child.

The “Child’s Plan” may also incorporate an additional document which sets educational targets for your child. Depending on where you live, these may be referred to as Additional Support Plans (ASP) or Individualised Education Programmes or Plans (IEP). These lay out what targets your child will be working towards over the year and what additional support will be provided to ensure successful achievement of targets. These will be reviewed regularly with your child and with you as parents. Similarly, if your child requires the support of two or more external services in school (for example physiotherapist, speech and language therapist or social worker), it may be necessary to open a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP) which brings these specialists together to organise this extra support.

**“My biggest worry was how James would get on at school. How would he manage? Would he be able to keep up with the pace of work? Would he make friends and fit in? My worries were endless. But, I made a point of gathering as much information as possible from RNIB and have developed a great relationship with the school. We help each other to support James and he is doing great!”**

Elizabeth, mum from Glasgow

## Going to school

### Preparing for change

There are important transition stages where you will have to be actively involved in preparing your child. Effective planning and preparation is the key to success. These key stages are moving from home to pre-school; pre-school to primary school; primary school to secondary and then transition to post-16 provision. It is vital that you and your child are involved in the decision-making process and GIRFEC allows you to have your say alongside professionals.

Local authorities must start to gather information at least twelve months in advance of each transition stage (six months from home to pre-school) so that appropriate support can be put in place. You will be invited to a planning meeting and you have the right to take someone else with you, to help you put your views across. All information shared between professionals must be with your consent. By developing a partnership approach with those supporting your child there is a far greater chance that your child’s additional support needs will be met.

### Who will support my child?

It may be that you and your child will be required to work with a range of professionals depending on the level of additional support needed. These could include an educational psychologist, community paediatrician, speech and language therapist, physiotherapist, habilitation specialist (mobility and independent living), social worker etc. The most important specialist who can ensure effective curriculum support for your child’s sight loss is the Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI).

### Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI)

A QTVI is a specialist teacher who provides advice and support to children and young people who are blind or partially sighted, their families, schools and other relevant professionals. The QTVI assesses each child’s functional vision and provides information and advice about specific eye conditions and the educational implications for learning. Advice and training is given by the QTVI to school staff to ensure children have access to the curriculum, and that they are appropriately supported within the classroom and school environment.

The QTVI works in partnership with schools to ensure that the needs of pupils with sight loss are fully met. The aim of the support provided is to enable pupils to fulfil their potential whilst at the same time developing and fostering independence.

#### The range of support available includes:

* advice on the provision of adapted materials in the appropriate format, as necessary
* advice on curriculum access strategies
* provision of in-service training for school staff
* provision of specialist equipment and training in its use
* teaching in specialist curriculum areas as necessary, for example braille, assistive technology, effective use of Low Vision Aids (LVA’s)
* advice regarding additional examination arrangements
* awareness-raising for peers
* advice regarding transition planning, work experience placements, career options through attendance at regular review and transition planning meetings
* regular liaison with school staff, ASN Coordinators, careers adviser and other external agencies as appropriate.

## Moving towards independence

### What can you do?

As a parent or carer you should work alongside the school to develop a close partnership approach. This will help the school to understand your child’s visual needs. You can also reinforce what your child is learning at school. You should agree with the school on the level of staffing to be provided for your child’s needs, specifying time and purpose. What will be the role of the QTVI, or will an Additional Support Needs (ASN) assistant be provided for particular activities, such as preparing resources or helping at PE.

You need to know about the resources that your child will be using at school. If your child is blind they may have to learn braille and/or the use of speech access technology. If they are partially sighted, then they may require training in the use of LVA’s such as magnifiers, binoculars, electronic magnifiers and other devices.

For many blind and partially sighted children, social inclusion can often be a significant barrier. It can be difficult for them to engage with others around them as they often miss the non-verbal communication that takes place. This can mean they are unable to play or take part in activities alongside their sighted peers. You may need to spend additional time with your child helping to nurture social interaction skills to develop your child’s awareness of non-verbal communication, body language, expressing and managing emotions and developing empathy.

You may want to seek out activities that are more accessible to ensure that your child has the opportunity to have fun, meet other children their own age and to develop the “soft” skills that will help them at school and as they grow older.

### Habilitation programme

A habilitation programme to increase your child’s independent movement, learning and ability to socialise should be established as soon as possible. Habilitation in Scotland can be delivered through your local authority, society for the blind, or in some areas by Blind Children UK.

The purpose of habilitation training is to encourage increased movement and interaction with the world around while considering the developmental needs of your child. For babies, this would be to develop positive play techniques; to extend reach and to safely explore the house as the child learns to crawl, stand and walk.

At pre-school stage this could include the teaching of pre-cane skills and as your child develops there will be emphasis on safe independent travel. These skills are important for increased personal independence.

## Moving on - life after school

Preparing your child for life after school needs considerable long term planning. You should be looking to the future as he or she progresses through secondary school to ensure that they have the skills to succeed in adult life.

You, and they, will have to think about what a happy and successful adult life would look like, and consider what needs to be in place to enable that to happen. For children with complex needs it may be appropriate to involve other professionals in transition planning, for example a social worker or health professional.

At school, review meetings should consider independent learning strategies; assistive technology use; career or course options; work experience placements; visits to education establishments or social care providers and habilitation skills preparation.

Your child should be encouraged to take the lead in this decision making process; it is their future after all. However, for those living with sight loss this transition period can be quite stressful as they are entering a new uncertain phase. Your child will benefit from professional and family support to facilitate any changes that occur.

There are times in your child’s life when they may need more support in order to help them move onto the next stage. Within school, advice will be provided by Skills Development Scotland staff. In addition, we can also deliver guidance and support through our Education and Family Services, Employment and Learning teams, and our Learning Disability and Complex Needs Services.

## Careers advice and finding a job

Our employment hubs offer practical advice and support when looking for work or changing career. This includes helping to complete application forms, CV’s and preparing for an interview. Our specialist employment advisers can talk about the skills employers require and the support available such as the Department for Work and Pensions Access to Work Scheme. We can support your child’s journey to employment through telephone and one to one support and advice.

### Staying in work

Once in work or having secured a job offer, we can advise on adjustments that can be made or support needed to help in the job. We can also provide training to the employer and work colleagues so that they have a better understanding of sight loss.

### Looking to the future transitions pilot projects

From April 2015, we will be piloting a new project helping people aged 15 – 25 make transitions from school to further education, higher education, training and employment. This has been funded by the Big Lottery and will be available to people living in or accessing education and training services in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeenshire.

To get in touch with the Employment and Learning team who cover the whole of Scotland, you can call **0131 657 8200** or email [**elscotland@rnib.org.uk**](mailto:elscotland@rnib.org.uk)

## RNIB Scotland Education and Family Services Team

We support children and young people with sight problems, their families and carers, and the professionals who support them, from the point of diagnosis through to school, college and university education.

### How we can help

#### Our Education and Family Services Team offers help with the following:

* advice to parents, home visits, family group events, and information on local and national support networks
* assisting parents express their views and rights to education, health and social work professionals
* advice and support to post-16 students, including information on courses, colleges and universities and the Disabled Student Allowance
* ensuring the interests of children and young people with sight loss are considered when policy and legislation is being made.

If you would like more detailed information about other services that we offer children and young people, please request a copy of our full services guide from [**efs@rnib.org.uk**](mailto:efs@rnib.org.uk) or download from **rnib.org.uk/scotland/reports-and-publications-rnib-scotland**

**“As a family living in the Highlands, with a daughter with a visual impairment, we do not get the chance very often to meet up with other young people with similar issues. The RNIB have been great in organising family support events and encouraging our daughter, to learn that anything is possible.”**

Keith, dad from Inverness

# Family days and activities

Our family fun days, residential weekends and other events take place throughout the year. For parents, these events provide encouragement and an opportunity to gain information on sight loss, share experiences, provide peer support and swap hints and tips on how to support a child with a visual impairment.

#### Our summer camps promote independent living in a fun environment, offering support with:

* confidence-building
* a range of outdoor activities and disability sports
* use of assistive technology
* communication skills through social interaction
* peer support.

For more information about any of our Education and Family Services events, activities or groups, please contact **0131 652 3194** or email [**efs@rnib.org.uk**](mailto:efs@rnib.org.uk)

## Haggeye

Haggeye is RNIB Scotland’s award-winning forum that gives young people with sight loss aged 12 to 25 a voice.

The forum provides a friendly and supportive platform which helps young people raise awareness of what it is like to be blind or partially sighted. The forum enables its members to:

* campaign for change
* influence the provision of services
* meet new people and make new friends
* take part in social activities
* discuss and share issues of concern to them.

The forum meets four times a year as a national group and at other times for various events and activities. Young people from Haggeye are also involved in various groups and committees to ensure that young peoples’ voices are heard at a number of levels, both within and out with RNIB Scotland.

### Haggazine

A free, quarterly, colour magazine written by and for blind and partially sighted young people, and produced in audio, braille and 24 point size as standard.

Haggazine aims to raise the profile of sight loss in general, combat stigma, provide a voice for young blind and partially sighted people and also offer information, advice and interesting articles.

### Haggeye Facebook page

Haggeye have a Facebook page. Like us to keep up to date with the latest Haggeye news. You can find us at **facebook.com/haggeye**

### Haggeye Jnrs

Haggeye Jnrs is our membership initiative for blind and partially sighted children between five and twelve years old.

By “signing up” to the project, children will receive a certificate, a goody bag and invitations to events and activities. Events and activities will offer the opportunity for children to meet other blind and partially sighted children, try out new things and have fun.

We hope that the Jnrs initiative will encourage children to progress to becoming a Haggeye member when they reach twelve years old.

## Useful contacts

### RNIB

#### RNIB Scotland

t: 0131 652 3140

e: **rnibscotland@rnib.org.uk**

w: **rnib.org.uk/Scotland**

#### RNIB Scotland Education and Family Services

t: 0131 652 3140

e: [**efs@rnib.org.uk**](mailto:efs@rnib.org.uk)

#### RNIB Scotland Employment and Learning Service

t: 0141 276 9800

t: 0131 657 8200

e: [**elscotland@rnib.org.uk**](mailto:elscotland@rnib.org.uk)

#### Haggeye

t: 0131 652 3146

e: **haggeye@rnib.org.uk**

#### RNIB Scotland Visual Impairment and Learning Disability Services

t: 0141 772 5588 (West of Scotland)

t: 01592 646015 (East of Scotland)

e: [**learningdisability@rnib.org.uk**](mailto:learningdisability@rnib.org.uk)

#### RNIB Membership

t: 0303 1234 555

#### Insight Radio

t: 0141 357 3518

w: **insightradio.co.uk**

#### Resource Centres

Our resource centres have a large selection of special equipment and aids to daily living for people with sight problems including; aids to magnification, specialist lighting, talking watches and clocks, and information on different eye conditions to help you understand your child’s diagnosis.

You can find us at:

Greenside House

12-14 Hillside Crescent

Edinburgh EH7 5EA

Forth Valley Sensory Centre

Redbrae Road

Camelon

Falkirk FK1 4DD

Or use our Online shop:

**rnib.org.uk/onlineshop**

#### Café Tiki

Café Tiki is the perfect place to enjoy a quiet cup of tea or coffee and our delicious menu. All of our three Café Tikis are open weekdays from 8.30am to 4pm at the following locations.

Café Tiki

Anderson Street

Partick

Glasgow G11 6AH

Café Tiki

Forth Valley Sensory Centre

Redbrae Road

Camelon

Falkirk FK1 4DD

Café Tiki

12-14 Hillside Crescent

Edinburgh EH7 5EA

### Local societies and centres

#### Centre for Sensory Impaired People (CSIP)

17 Gullane Street

Partick

Glasgow G11 6AH

t: 0141 276 5252

#### Dundee Blind and Partially Sighted Society

Thomas Herd House

10-12 Ward Road

Dundee DD1 1LX

t: 01382 227101

w: **dundeeblindsociety.org.uk**

#### Fife Society for the Blind

13 Wilson Avenue

Kirkcaldy

Fife KY2 5EF

t: 01592 644979

e: **info@fsbinsight.co.uk**

w: **fifeblind.org.uk**

#### Forth Valley Sensory Centre

Forth Valley Sensory Centre

Redbrae Road, Camelon

Falkirk FK1 4DD

t: 01324 590888

e: [**sensory@falkirk.gov.uk**](mailto:sensory@falkirk.gov.uk)

#### North East Sensory Services (NESS)

21 John Street

Aberdeen AB25 1BT

t: 08452 712345

w: **nesensoryservices.org**

#### RNIB Edinburgh and the Lothians

12-14 Hillside Crescent

Edinburgh EH7 5DZ

t: 0131 557 1004

e: **rniblothian@rnib.org.uk**

w: **rnib.org.uk/Scotland**

#### Sight Action

Beechwood House

69-71 Old Perth Road

Inverness IV2 3JH

t: 01463 233663

w: **sightaction.org.uk**

#### Visibility

2 Queens Crescent

Glasgow G4 9BW

t: 0141 332 4632

e: **info@visibility.org.uk**

w: **visibility.org.uk**

#### Vision PK (Perth and Kinross)

St Paul’s Centre

14 New Row

Perth PH1 5QA

t: 01738 626969

e: **info@visionpk.org.uk**

w: **pksb.org.uk**

### Visual impairment organisations

#### Albinism Fellowship

t: 01282 771 900

w: **albinism.org.uk**

#### Aniridia Network UK

t: 07792 867 949

w: **aniridia.org.uk**

#### Birdshot Uveitis Society

w: **birdshot.org.uk**

#### Blind Children UK

t: 0800 781 1444

w: **blindchildrenuk.org**

#### Childhood Eye Cancer Trust

t: 020 7377 5578

w: **chect.org.uk**

#### Guide Dogs for the Blind Association

t: 0845 3727 402

w: **guidedogs.org.uk**

#### i-needs

w: **i-needs.org**

#### International Glaucoma Association

t: 01233 648 170

w: **glaucoma-association.com**

#### Optic Neuropathy (LHON) Society

w: **lhonsociety.org**

#### Macular Society

t: 01264 350 551

w: **macularsociety.org**

#### The Micro and Anophthalmic Children’s Society

t: 0800 169 8088

w: **macs.org.uk/contact.html**

#### Nystagmus Network

t: 0845 634 2630

t: 029 2045 4242

w: **nystagmusnet.org**

#### Royal Blind

t: 0131 229 1456

w: **royalblind.org**

#### RP Fighting Blindness

t: 01280 821 334

w: **rpfightingblindness.org.uk**

#### Scottish Sensory Centre

t: 0131 651 6501

w: **ssc.education.ed.ac.uk**

#### Sense Scotland

t: 0141 429 0294

w: **sensescotland.org.uk**

#### Visual Impairment Network for Children & Young People (VINCYP)

w: **vincyp.scot.nhs.uk**

### Other organisations and contacts

#### Call Scotland

t: 0131 651 6235

w: **callscotland.org.uk**

#### Contact a Family

t: 0131 659 2930

w: **cafamily.org.uk/scotland**

#### Children in Scotland

t: 0131 313 2322

e: **info@childreninscotland.org.uk**

w: **childreninscotland.org.uk**

#### Children’s Parliament

t: 0131 558 9030

e: [**info@childrensparliament.org.uk**](mailto:info@childrensparliament.org.uk)

#### Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People Children’s Parliament

t: 01313465350

w: **sccyp.org.uk**

#### Diabetes UK

t: 0345 123 2399

w: **diabetes.org.uk**

#### Enable

t: 01698 737 000

e: [**enabledirect@enable.org.uk**](mailto:enabledirect@enable.org.uk)

#### Enquire

t: 0845 123 2303

e: [**info@enquire.org.uk**](mailto:info@enquire.org.uk)

#### The National Deaf Children’s Society

t: 0141 354 7850

e: **ndcs.scotland@ndcs.org.uk**

w: **ndcs.org.uk**

#### Scottish Disability Sport

t: 0131 317 1130

w: **scottishdisabilitysport.com**

#### Wonderbaby

Interesting articles written by parents of children with sight loss.

w: **wonderbaby.org**

### RNIB Scotland

Greenside House

12-14 Hillside Crescent

Edinburgh EH7 5EA

t: 0131 652 3140

**rnibscotland@rnib.org.uk**

**rnib.org.uk/scotland**

**facebook.com/RNIBscotland**

**twitter.com/RNIBscotland**

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