

Starting out

# Benefits, concessions and registration



**RNIB**

Supporting people  
with sight loss

# About the Starting out series

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The Starting out series aims to give people who are losing or have recently lost their sight essential information about living with sight loss. Other titles in the series are:

- Education
- Emotional support
- Employment
- Help from social services
- Housing
- Making the most of your sight

All these booklets are available in audio, print and braille formats. To order please contact our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** (all calls charged at local rate), email [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk). If you or someone you know is living with sight loss, we're here to help.

For a full list of the information sources used in any of these titles please contact [publishing@rnib.org.uk](mailto:publishing@rnib.org.uk)

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# Benefits and concessions

This is a summary of the benefits and concessions you may be entitled to if you are registered Severely Sight Impaired (SSI) or Sight Impaired (SI).

## Entitled to

Benefit/concession	SSI	SI	Page
Blind person's tax allowance	yes	no	<a href="#">20</a>
Television licence fee reduction	yes	no	<a href="#">23</a>
Blue Badge Scheme – car parking	yes	no	<a href="#">23</a>
Free postage – “Articles for the blind”	yes	yes	<a href="#">24</a>
Free NHS eye examination	yes	yes	<a href="#">25</a>
Disabled Persons Railcard	yes	yes	<a href="#">27</a>
Free bus travel	yes	yes	<a href="#">27</a>
Free directory enquiries	yes	yes	<a href="#">28</a>
Cinema pass for carer	yes	no	<a href="#">29</a>
Protection under the Equality Act	yes	yes	<a href="#">30</a>
Assessment by social services	yes	yes	<a href="#">32</a>

## May be entitled to

<b>Benefit/concession</b>	<b>SSI</b>	<b>SI</b>	<b>Page</b>
Personal Independence Payment (PIP)	yes	yes	<a href="#"><u>9</u></a>
Attendance Allowance	yes	yes	<a href="#"><u>11</u></a>
Carer's Allowance	yes	yes	<a href="#"><u>12</u></a>
Employment and Support Allowance	yes	yes	<a href="#"><u>13</u></a>
Tax Credits	yes	yes	<a href="#"><u>13</u></a>
Housing Benefit	yes	yes	<a href="#"><u>14</u></a>
Council Tax disability reduction	yes	yes	<a href="#"><u>16</u></a>
Universal Credit	yes	yes	<a href="#"><u>17</u></a>
Pension Credit	yes	yes	<a href="#"><u>19</u></a>
Free ticket for a guide at theatres, galleries or tourist attractions	yes	yes	<a href="#"><u>29</u></a>

Please note that the information in this leaflet is for guidance only and is not an authoritative statement of the law.

# Introduction

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If you are losing or have lost your sight, you might start finding things difficult that you previously took for granted. There is practical and financial support available to help you adapt to living your life with sight loss.

Certification of your sight loss is carried out by an eye specialist. Registration follows on from this and is a way of letting your local authority know you need help and is also useful for you to prove to other organisations that you are blind or partially sighted if you need to.

There are two levels of certification and registration:

- **severely sight impaired** (this used to be registered blind) and
- **sight impaired** (this used to be partially sighted).

The terms changed some time ago as most people who are registered severely sight impaired still have some vision. Being certified and registered as severely sight impaired does

not necessarily mean you are totally without sight or will lose all your sight in the future.

This booklet has two parts: the first explains what welfare benefits and concessions you may be entitled to. The second explains more about certification and registration.



# Welfare benefits

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Although once you are registered as severely sight impaired or sight impaired you are not automatically entitled to any welfare benefits – and there's no special benefit or pension for people who are registered – there are some benefits that you may be entitled to, subject to age and other circumstances.

As we look at those benefits, you will see that the government is undertaking substantial reforms of the welfare benefits system, including replacing various means-tested benefits with Universal Credit and replacing Disability Living Allowance with the Personal Independence Payment (for people aged 16–64).

Some changes were introduced from April 2013 but the timetable for implementing the changes for all claimants extends as far as 2018. Therefore if you are getting any of the older benefits affected by the changes, it could be some time before your existing benefit award is reviewed or changed.



Please call our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** for advice and our detailed factsheets on these benefits. Although we cannot guarantee your entitlement, we recommend that you apply for the appropriate benefit. If you don't claim, you won't get anything!

If you are turned down for any of the benefits you should seek advice about requesting a review of the decision. If you are still not satisfied after the review you can lodge an appeal. Call our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** to speak a member of our Legal Rights Service if you would like help with challenging a benefit decision.

## **Personal Independence Payment**

### **Help for disabled people with the extra costs of a disability**

The Personal Independence Payment (PIP) has replaced Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for people aged 16–64 years old.

PIP is awarded to help with the costs of daily living needs and mobility needs resulting from an illness or a disability, including sight loss. It has a daily living component and a mobility component. You may qualify for either the standard rate or the enhanced rate of one or both components.

A PIP claim involves going through an assessment that uses a points scoring system to determine entitlement. The PIP assessment involves an independent healthcare professional looking at your application, and deciding what information is required from medical and other professionals who know you, or if further information is required from you. You are likely to be asked to attend an assessment with an independent healthcare professional, after which a report will be sent to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) who will then make a decision about your entitlement to one or both components.

### **If you are already receiving DLA**

There is no automatic transfer from DLA to PIP. The DWP will write to you if you were under 65 and receiving DLA when PIP was introduced on 8 April 2013, inviting you to make a claim for PIP. The DWP would then assess your claim under the rules and qualifying conditions of PIP.

If you were aged 65 or over on 8 April 2013, and were getting DLA on that date, you will continue to get DLA and not be re-assessed for PIP. The government has said that child DLA claimants

(aged under 16 years old) may or may not be migrated on to PIP at a future date.

## **Attendance Allowance**

### **Help for disabled people aged 65 or over with the extra costs of a disability**

If you're aged 65 or over (and do not already get DLA or PIP) you can claim Attendance Allowance (AA). It is for people who need personal help during the day or night, or both. If you need supervision or watching over to avoid getting into danger you can also qualify. There is no help with mobility needs in Attendance Allowance.

**Please note:** AA, DLA and PIP are ignored as income for all the benefits listed in this section. An award may make it more likely that you will qualify for other benefits.

For a PIP claim form call **0800 917 2222** (Textphone: **0800 917 7777**); for an AA claim form call **0845 605 6055**. (Textphone: **0845 604 5312**). For a DLA claim form for under 16's call **0345 712 3456**.

If you are turned down for any of the benefits you should seek advice about requesting a review of or an appeal against the decision.

# Carer's Allowance

## Financial help for carers

If someone such as your partner, a relative or friend spends time looking after you, they may be entitled to Carer's Allowance, or an increase in other benefits such as Pension Credit, or both. You can be a carer even if you are blind or partially sighted. To qualify for these benefits the carer must be looking after someone who gets AA, or the daily living component of PIP, or the middle or highest rate of the DLA care component. Call the Carer's Allowance Unit on **0845 608 4321** to make a claim.

**Important:** If you, or a carer who helps you, is considering claiming Carer's Allowance, you should be aware that money you receive through this benefit is classed as income and this could lead to a reduction in the means-tested benefits paid to you or the person you are caring for. Please contact our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** for further advice.

## **Employment and Support Allowance**

### **Help for people with limited ability to work due to disability or illness**

You can claim Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) if you are unemployed and meet the criteria for having “limited capability for work”. There are two types, contributory ESA (if you have paid enough National Insurance contributions while working), and income-related ESA (if you haven’t made enough contributions or no longer qualify for contributory ESA). To claim ESA call Jobcentre Plus on **0800 055 6688**.

Income-related ESA is being replaced by Universal Credit – [see page 17](#).

## **Tax Credits**

### **Help for people in work or with dependent children**

Tax Credits are means-tested benefits that you can receive on top of other income including wages and benefits. Claims are based on gross taxable income for the tax year prior to the year of application. They are administered by Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs.

You may get Working Tax Credit to top-up your wages if you work at least 16 hours a week. It includes a disability element if you are registered severely sight impaired or sight impaired, and if you get DLA or another qualifying benefit.

You can get Child Tax Credit if you or your partner are responsible for a child, or a young person under 20 in full-time non-advanced education, and you have a low income. You do not have to be working to claim Child Tax Credit. If you have a child who is registered blind or gets Disability Living Allowance, your Child Tax Credit will include the disabled child element.

Ring the Tax Credits Helpline on **0345 300 3900** to make a claim.

Tax Credits will be replaced by Universal Credit – [see page 17](#).

## **Housing Benefit**

### **Help with paying your rent**

Housing Benefit is a means-tested benefit to help you with your rent if you have a low income. You may be entitled even if you are in paid work. There are certain restrictions on the level of

housing benefit that can be paid, which may mean that your benefit could be less than your rent bill.

Help with rent will eventually be paid through Universal Credit instead of Housing Benefit – [see page 17](#).

You can contact your local council for more information about Housing Benefit.

## **Local support for Council Tax bills**

### **Help with paying your Council Tax**

Each local authority in England, Wales and Scotland is responsible for providing its own system of financial help to assist people with paying their Council Tax bill. How much support you get towards your Council Tax bill will therefore depend on where you live. Depending on your circumstances, you can receive a reduction of up to 100 per cent.

Please contact your local council to check what financial support with paying Council Tax is available in your area.

# Council Tax disability reduction

## Help with your Council Tax

You may get a reduction to your Council Tax bill if you have a room set aside to meet needs related to your disability. For example, if you need to use and store equipment for your communication needs, such as a CCTV. The reduction is not automatic. Ask your local Council Tax office for details.

[See page 15](#) for information on help with paying your Council Tax bill.





# Universal Credit

## Help for people of working age who are on a low income

Universal Credit has started to replace Tax Credits and five means-tested benefits for people of working age. The national rollout of Universal Credit began in October 2013. It replaces:

- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Support
- Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Social Fund Budgeting Loans.

Universal Credit includes a standard allowance with additional amounts for people with limited capability for work or for work-related activity, or both; caring responsibilities; children; children with disabilities and housing costs.

The amount of Universal Credit is set at a maximum award, to include both daily living costs and housing costs, called the benefit cap. Some people are exempt from the benefits cap,

including if you get DLA or PIP or the support component of ESA.

Claimants of income-related ESA will be transferred to Universal Credit. If you qualify for contributory ESA, Carer's Allowance or contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance, you will still be able to claim these. However you may be able to get Universal Credit in addition to these benefits.

Universal Credit has only been rolled out to a limited number of local authorities, and in these areas, only people with certain circumstances have been transferred over. The DWP is not transferring over claimants with a disability yet, so it is very unlikely you will be transferred over to Universal Credit at the moment. The government hopes to have completed the national rollout of Universal Credit to all claimants by the end of 2017.

If you are at the qualifying age for Pension Credit you can claim this benefit rather than Universal Credit. However if you live with a partner who is below the Pension Credit qualifying age you will have to claim Universal Credit as a couple instead of Pension Credit.

## **Pension Credit**

### **Help for people of pension age on low or modest incomes**

If you have reached the Pension Credit qualifying age you can get Guarantee Pension Credit if your weekly income is low enough. If you are aged 65 or over you may also get Savings Pension Credit if you have modest retirement income or savings.

Between 6 April 2010 and 5 April 2020, the age from which you may get Pension Credit is changing. It is gradually rising in line with the increase in the state pension age for women from 60 to 66 years.

Contact our Helpline to check if you qualify on **0303 123 9999**. To make a claim call the Pension Credit claim line on **0800 99 1234**.

### **Exemption from “non-dependants” deductions**

A non-dependant is another adult living in your home (who is not your partner). Some benefits are reduced if you have a non-dependant.

However no deductions will be applied if you are registered severely sight impaired or if you get AA, or the daily living component of PIP, or the care component of DLA.

# Tax allowances and exemptions

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Tax allowances are the amount of income you can earn before you have to pay tax. There are a number of tax allowances you might be able to claim which can reduce your tax bill, and effectively increase your income.

## **Blind person's personal income tax allowance**

This allowance is in addition to your basic personal tax allowances make up. You can transfer it to your husband, wife or your civil partner, in part or whole, if you do not have enough taxable income to use it.

To claim, contact your local tax office or call Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs' priority telephone line on **0300 200 3301**. Further information is available at their website [hmrc.gov.uk](http://hmrc.gov.uk) or from the office that deals with your tax affairs.

## **Age-related personal tax allowances**

There are higher personal tax-free allowances for people born on or before 5 April 1948, with a slightly higher allowance for people born on or before 5 April 1938.

## **Married couple's Allowance**

The allowance is a reduction in your tax bill available to married couples and civil partners where one of you was born before 6 April 1935.

## **Tax and savings**

If your total taxable income is less than your tax-free allowances you can receive interest on your savings without tax taken off.

## **VAT relief on specialised goods and services**

Goods that have been designed for disabled or blind and partially sighted people are exempt from VAT. Some building work may also be exempt.

## National Insurance

You should no longer pay National Insurance contributions if you carry on working after state pension age.

To find out more about tax allowances call the RNIB Tax Advice Service on **0845 330 4897** or visit [rnib.org.uk/tax](https://www.rnib.org.uk/tax)



# Concessions

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**If you're registered severely sight impaired (blind) you are entitled to the following concessions:**

## **Reduction of 50 per cent on the television licence fee**

This applies if a registered severely sight impaired (blind) adult or child lives in the household. Call the TV licence helpline on **0300 790 6071**. They will ask for proof of registration to be sent to them. They can also backdate the discount to the date you first became registered.

## **Car parking concessions: the Blue Badge Scheme**

The Blue Badge Scheme allows the driver to park in spaces reserved for disabled people. It is administered by local authorities and can be used in any vehicle in which you are travelling. Contact your local authority's social services department.

## **Free postage on items marked or labelled “Articles for the blind”**

These can include books, papers and letters in large print (minimum font size 16pt), braille items and CDs which have been prepared for blind or partially sighted people who require items in one of these communication formats. Call the Royal Mail Customer Service Centre on **03456 07 61 40** or Textphone **03456 00 06 06** for more information.

### **You may also be entitled to:**

- free permanent loan of radios or CD radio cassette players. Contact your local social services department and ask about the British Wireless for the Blind Fund (BWBF) or call BWBF on **01622 75 47 57**
- help with telephone installation charges and line rental. Contact your local social services department to ask if you qualify.



**If you're registered severely sight impaired (blind) or sight impaired (partially sighted) you are entitled to the following:**

### **Free NHS eye examination by an optometrist**

Tell the optometrist (optician) about your registration status before the eye examination. The examination is also free for anyone aged 60 or over. It is a good idea to have an eye examination even if you have poor sight.

The examination can make sure that you have the right pair of glasses or contact lenses and it can help detect if you have developed another eye condition, for example cataracts. If you are unable to leave your home due to illness or disability an eye examination can be carried out at your home. NHS eye examinations are free to everyone in Scotland.

### **Other NHS costs**

You may be able to get a voucher towards the cost of glasses (check with your optometrist whether you qualify for a “voucher for complex lenses”). If you're unable to leave your home

without the help of another person, you may be able to get free medical prescriptions.

If you receive income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Guarantee Pension Credit or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, you can also get help with NHS costs, including vouchers towards the costs of glasses and free NHS eye examinations. The Department of Health and DWP are yet to finalise arrangements for receiving help towards NHS costs if you receive Universal Credit. We expect that claimants who receive Universal Credit, and where their income is below fixed thresholds, will be able to get help with health costs. If you have a low income or modest savings, you may be able to get help with some or all of your NHS health costs. You will need to complete an HC1 application form. Call the NHS health costs advice line on **0300 330 1343**.

## **Travel concessions**

**Please note:** if you are aged 60 or over some of the following concessions will be available to you because of your age and regardless of your disability.

The **Disabled Person's Railcard** gives at least one third off the price of certain rail tickets for the cardholder, and an accompanying adult where applicable, in England, Wales and Scotland.

Even if you do not have the Disabled Person's Railcard, you can get discounted rail travel of 34 per cent or 50 per cent on certain tickets, or free travel for a companion when you travel on your season ticket. To qualify you must be travelling with another person and have a document confirming your registration both when you buy and when travelling on your ticket.

Call **0845 605 0525** or visit [disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk](https://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk) for further details.

You can get sighted assistance at the start and end of your rail journey. Contact the relevant train operating company in advance to arrange this. For more information visit [disability-onboard.co.uk](https://www.disability-onboard.co.uk)

You will be able to get a **bus pass** that gives you free concessionary travel throughout the country. There may also be community transport services such as Shopmobility and taxi discount schemes

available in your area, for example the Taxicard scheme in Greater London.

If you live in Scotland you can get a Scottish Blind Persons Travel Card that entitles you to free standard class travel on all rail, local bus, ferry and long distance services in Scotland, and on the Glasgow underground.

If you live in Northern Ireland, you can get a Smart Pass that entitles you to free or half-price travel on nearly all scheduled bus and rail services. If you live in London the Freedom Pass gives you free travel on almost all public transport in London.

Free or discounted travel on local ferry services is available in some parts of the UK. Contact your local authority or local transport providers for further details of travel concessions in your area.

### **Exemption from BT Directory Enquiry charges**

If you're not able to read or hold a telephone directory, due to your sight loss or other disability, you can get free directory enquiries via the enquiries number 195. Call **0800 587 0195** to request an application form. Your form will need to be countersigned by a professional who knows

you such as your doctor, nurse or other medical practitioner. You can use the free service whether or not BT is your telephone company.

## **Leisure concessions**

Concessions are available to people with disabilities, or people receiving certain benefits, for various leisure and recreational activities. For example, a free ticket for a person accompanying you to participating cinemas if you are registered severely sight impaired or you are getting Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or Attendance Allowance; and reduced price entry to museums and exhibitions as well as theatres and concert halls. You can call the venue for details of available concessions or call our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** for more information.



# The Equality Act

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The Equality Act (2010) is a law that aims to prevent discrimination against various groups of people, such as people with disabilities. This includes people who are registered as sight impaired or severely sight impaired.

The Equality Act means that you cannot be treated unfairly because of your disability. The Act applies in various situations including employment, goods, services and facilities, transport, education and premises.

If you would like information about the Equality Act or need advice because you believe that you have suffered discrimination please visit [rnib.org.uk/equalityact](https://www.rnib.org.uk/equalityact) or call our Helpline on **0303 123 9999**.

# Certification and registration

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If you register your sight loss with your local authority, it will be easier to access some of the help and support that is there. It will also be easier for you to prove to service providers, employers or other people what your level of sight is.

Losing your sight can be a difficult experience and getting to the point where your sight loss can be officially certified as sight impaired or severely sight impaired can be upsetting. Registration may be a reminder of the sight you have lost and the changes that you may have had to make to your life which can be difficult. However registration is often a positive step towards getting help to stay as independent as possible. If you would like to talk to someone about making a decision to register then RNIB can help. Please call us on **0303 123 9999**.

Once you are registered you'll be entitled to the concessions listed on [pages 23–29](#). You may

also be able to claim welfare benefits, including Attendance Allowance or Personal Independence Payment ([see pages 9–11](#)).

Being registered doesn't automatically entitle you to any benefits but it can help to show how serious your sight loss is when you make a claim for certain benefits.

If you do not want to be registered, you can still get help by contacting your social services department directly and asking for an assessment of your care needs. Or you can obtain a Low Vision Leaflet (LVL) from your optometrist or a Referral of Vision Impairment (RVI) from your eye hospital or clinic. They will fill in your details and send them to social services.

## **The steps involved in certification and registration**

1. Your eye specialist determines that you are eligible to be certified as sight impaired or severely sight impaired.
2. Your eye specialist completes the Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI). In Scotland the certification form is called BP1 and in Northern Ireland it's called A655.



3. The eye specialist sends copies of the certificate to you, your GP and your local social services department.
4. Social services contact you to confirm if you agree to be registered with a sight impairment by being placed on their confidential register of blind and partially sighted people.
5. After you are registered social services will contact you to arrange a social care assessment of your needs and services such as rehabilitation.

## **What does certification and registration involve?**

In order to be registered with your local department of social services as severely sight impaired or sight impaired you need to first be certified by an eye specialist, called a consultant ophthalmologist. They are the only professionals who are able to certify that you can be registered. If your sight loss is not permanent, or if you are having treatment that could improve your sight, you may not be certified until the outcome of treatment is certain. Also, loss of sight in one eye does not qualify you certification. The sight loss

in both your eyes needs to meet the certification criteria.

Your ophthalmologist may not realise how important certification and registration can be in getting you the help you need. You may need to bring up registration with them, to make it clear that you would like to be certified and registered, and think that it is a good idea.

If you are having a problem getting certified as sight impaired or severely sight impaired please call us for advice on **0303 123 9999**.

To start the certification and registration process the ophthalmologist will assess your vision and, if you can be certified, will complete the relevant forms.

Your ophthalmologist will measure how good you are at seeing detail at a distance (your visual acuity) and how much you can see from the side of your eye when you're looking straight ahead (your field of vision).

They use a combination of your visual acuity and your field of vision to judge whether you're eligible to be registered, and at which level.

Your visual acuity is measured by reading down an eye chart while wearing any glasses or contact lenses that you may need. The test and letter chart your ophthalmologist uses is called a Snellen chart and your result on this test is called a Snellen score.

Your CVI includes the results from your eye test, as well as information about your circumstances and your preferred format for correspondence.

The certification part of the process is when your ophthalmologist confirms that you are eligible for registration and fills out the details of your test results on your CVI form. The registration part of the process follows if you give permission to be registered as sight impaired or severely sight impaired with your local social services. If you wish to be placed on the register you will be asked to sign your CVI and copies of this form will be sent to you, your GP and your local social services department.

## **Results of your eye test**

The criteria for certification means that if you have good visual acuity then usually you will have had to have lost a large part of your visual field to be certified as severely sight impaired or sight

impaired. If you have all your visual field you will usually have to have a very poor visual acuity to be certified as severely sight impaired or sight impaired. There is more detail on the results of your CVI in the Appendix on [page 43](#).

If your eye specialist tells you that you cannot be certified at present, but you believe that your vision does meet the certification criteria, your GP may be able to refer you to a second specialist. However bear in mind that a specialist can only certify you as sight impaired or severely sight impaired if the level of your sight loss meets the relevant criteria.

If your sight is affecting your ability to drive safely, you need to inform DVLA on **0300 790 6806**. However, if you fail the eyesight requirements to drive, and the DVLA revoke your driving licence, you will not necessarily be able to be certified as either sight impaired or severely sight impaired.

## **What is the register?**

Each local authority keeps a register of severely sight impaired or sight impaired people living in the area. The social services department (social work department in Scotland) or its representatives (such as a local voluntary

organisation for blind and partially sighted people) hold the register. It helps your local council to provide you with the best services it can. The register is confidential so your details cannot be shared.

## **How registration works**

If you choose to be registered straight away, the date of your registration should be the date the consultant signed the certificate. Alternatively you can take more time to think about whether or not you want to be registered, and inform your local social services department once you have made your decision. If you are having problems because of your sight you can ask for help from social services even if you're not yet registered. This is because there can be delays between certification and registration.

A copy of your CVI should be forwarded to your GP and local authority within five working days of its completion at the hospital. Your local social services department should contact you within 14 days of receiving your CVI, to ask if you wish to be included on the register and to discuss carrying out a needs assessment, also known as a Community Care Assessment. This is for the

social services department to find out about your care needs, and to decide which services could help to meet those needs, such as equipment and adaptations, home care and domestic help.

You have to register to be able to get the concessions mentioned in this booklet, and there are advantages in being registered when claiming some welfare benefits. However you don't need to be registered just to get information and support from your local authority.

Most local authorities offer a registration card that can help to prove entitlement to concessions. You might find such a card helpful to back up requests for assistance when you're out, particularly if you do not use a white cane or guide dog and your sight problem may not be obvious to other people.

If you later move to a different area, you should call your new local authority's social services department to let them know that you are registered. If you're unsure of the number, contact our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** for information. Your new local authority will then be able to arrange for your registration details to be transferred.

# Can I get any other help along the way?

## Rehabilitation

Your local authority has specially trained staff, usually called rehabilitation workers or rehabilitation officers, who can support you in a range of activities. They might be able to help you with daily life activities, such as getting about safely, cooking and leisure activities. They can also refer you to other services you might need.

Rehabilitation workers may be part of a special team working with people with a sight or hearing loss or based with a local voluntary society for blind and partially sighted people. Not every local council employs rehabilitation workers but your local authority should be able to “buy in” any service you need, as agreed in your needs assessment.

## Low vision assessment

You may be able to get a “low vision assessment” from a low vision service, whether you are eligible for certification and registration or not. The assessment is used to try to assist you with using your existing vision and to help you to retain your independence. It is likely to involve:

- an assessment with a rehabilitation officer to find out what the problems are and discuss goals;
- an assessment with an optometrist to find solutions and establish which magnifying devices and other equipment will be of most help, such as spectacles and low vision aids (for example a large button telephone and talking watches); and
- training in the use of the equipment, including trying the aids out, and how to maintain the equipment.

Your local low vision service may be based in a hospital, an opticians' practice or at a resource centre run by the local society for people with sight loss. To find out more about low vision services in your area, contact your local hospital eye department, the sensory impairment team in your social services department or your local society for people with sight loss.



# Further information

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## RNIB

RNIB is the UK's leading charity offering information, support and advice to almost two million people living with sight loss. If you, or someone you know, has a sight problem, we can help.

Call the RNIB Helpline on **0303 123 9999**

Email [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

Visit [rnib.org.uk](http://rnib.org.uk)

## Sightline directory

The online directory to help you find the people, organisations and services you need.

Visit [sightlinedirectory.org.uk](http://sightlinedirectory.org.uk)

## Action for Blind People

There are local Action for Blind People teams based around England that can provide advice and information. Call the RNIB Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or visit

[actionforblindpeople.org.uk](http://actionforblindpeople.org.uk)

## Citizens Advice

There are Citizens Advice Bureaux in many cities, towns and villages around the UK that provide face-to-face advice on a range of issues, including on welfare benefits. You can use the link listed below online to find your local bureau:

[citizensadvice.org.uk/index/getadvice.htm](https://citizensadvice.org.uk/index/getadvice.htm)

If you live in Wales you can call Citizens Advice for advice on **08444 77 20 20**.

A telephone advice service is being rolled out across England: call **08444 111 444**. They also provide online advice and information for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland at:

[adviceguide.org.uk](https://adviceguide.org.uk)

## Disability Rights UK

Disability Rights UK is a national organisation that provides online information on welfare benefits and independent living. [disabilityrightsuk.org](https://disabilityrightsuk.org)

## Local societies

Local independent societies for blind and partially sighted people can provide various forms of advice and support. You can find the contact details for your local society via Visionary:

[visionary.org.uk](https://visionary.org.uk)

# Appendix – Understanding the results of your CVI

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Generally, to be registered as severely sight impaired (blind) your sight has to fall into one of the following categories, while wearing any glasses or contact lenses that you may need:

- visual acuity of less than 3/60 with a full visual field
- visual acuity between 3/60 and 6/60 with a severe reduction of field of vision, such as tunnel vision
- visual acuity of 6/60 or above but with a very reduced field of vision, especially if a lot of sight is missing in the lower part of the field.

To be registered as sight impaired/partially sighted your sight has to fall into one of the following categories:

- visual acuity of 3/60 to 6/60 with a full field of vision

- visual acuity of up to 6/24 with a moderate reduction of field of vision, or cloudiness in parts of your eye, or your lens has been removed and not replaced with a lens implant
- visual acuity of up to 6/18 if a large part of your field of vision, for example a whole half of your vision, is missing, or a lot of your peripheral vision is missing.





## We value your feedback

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**FREEPOST RSCB-GJHJ-HLXG**

**RNIB Publishing, 105 Judd Street**

**London WC1H 9NE**

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Alternatively, you can email

[publishing@rnib.org.uk](mailto:publishing@rnib.org.uk)

Please include your contact details if you request further information.

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

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**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.**

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

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**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.**

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# About the Confident living series

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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:

- Leisure
- 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), email [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

If you or someone you know is living with sight loss, we're here to help.

**If you, or someone you know, is living with sight loss, we're here to help.**

**RNIB Helpline**

**0303 123 9999**

**[helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto: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](http://rnib.org.uk/ask)**

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