

# Leisure



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# About this guide

If you have sight loss and are struggling to continue with activities and hobbies you have always enjoyed, or want to try something new, this guide is for you. Read on for tips on how to enjoy days out, holidays, leisure activities and various hobbies such as keeping fit, gardening and reading.

Throughout this guide we mention factsheets that provide further information, which you can easily order through our Helpline. We also mention many products which you can buy from the RNIB Online Shop at **shop.rnib.org.uk**.

We hope that the information in this guide gives you the confidence to make the most of your leisure time.

If you have any questions about the leisure activities covered in this guide or want to find out details of a local organisation, please call our Helpline. We're ready to help in any way we can.

**RNIB Helpline**  
**0303 123 9999**  
**helpline@rnib.org.uk**

# Accessing leisure

The level of support available to people with sight loss can vary from one leisure provider to another. Many may not have considered how someone with sight loss would access their service. You can discuss your individual needs with your local leisure provider so that they can make adjustments in order for you to access their services.

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 in your preferred format and welcoming guide dogs.

## Know your rights

The Equality Act 2010 (or Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in Northern Ireland) is a law that aims to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to use services. This means that service providers have to make reasonable adjustments to their services to ensure you can access them.

A service provider is not allowed to pass on the cost of making a reasonable adjustment, meaning that you should never be asked to pay extra for the adjustments you require. A reasonable adjustment, for example, would be a member of staff to help guide you around the gym.

Reasonable adjustments should already have been considered by the service provider and can often be made easily and quickly. Sometimes it's just a matter of asking for them.

If you've experienced poor customer service and reasonable adjustments have not been made when you've asked for them, there are several steps you can take. The first is to follow the provider's complaints process, which usually involves writing a letter.

This is often a very effective way of challenging poor customer service. If you're not satisfied with the response you receive, you can take other steps, for example, independent mediation, where an independent third party helps both sides in the dispute to find an acceptable agreement. As a last resort, you could take the service provider to court.

There's more information on how to write an effective complaint letter and further advice in our Equality Act toolkit. Visit [rnib.org.uk/equalityact](https://www.rnib.org.uk/equalityact) or order a free copy by calling our Helpline.

# Days out and holidays

## Visiting the cinema and theatre

Audio description is an additional commentary that accompanies a film, play, TV programme or sports game for people with sight loss. Audio description explains what is happening during gaps in the dialogue 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 many 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 when purchasing your ticket. Contact your local cinema to find out if they offer audio description and which films are audio described.

You may want to consider getting a CEA card which entitles you to one free ticket for anyone who accompanies you to the cinema each time you visit. The CEA Card is a national card scheme developed for UK cinemas by the UK Cinema Association, formerly the Cinema Exhibitors' Association (CEA). You can get a CEA card for a one-off payment if you're registered as blind, or in receipt of:

- Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- Attendance Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

Call **01244 526 016** or visit **[ceacard.co.uk](http://ceacard.co.uk)** for more information.

At theatres, audio description 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 many theatres in the UK that provide audio described performances, but the frequency of performances can vary. Contact your local theatre to find out what they have available.

Many theatres also offer audio behind-the-scenes tours. The tours usually include a visit to the backstage area and information on the history of the theatre. You can either contact your local theatre directly or your local society for blind people, who may also organise trips. VocalEyes, a national charity which works to improve access to audio description in theatres, can also provide information on accessible performances near you. Call VocalEyes on **020 7375 1043** or visit **[vocaleyes.co.uk](http://vocaleyes.co.uk)** to find out more.

## Visiting museums and galleries

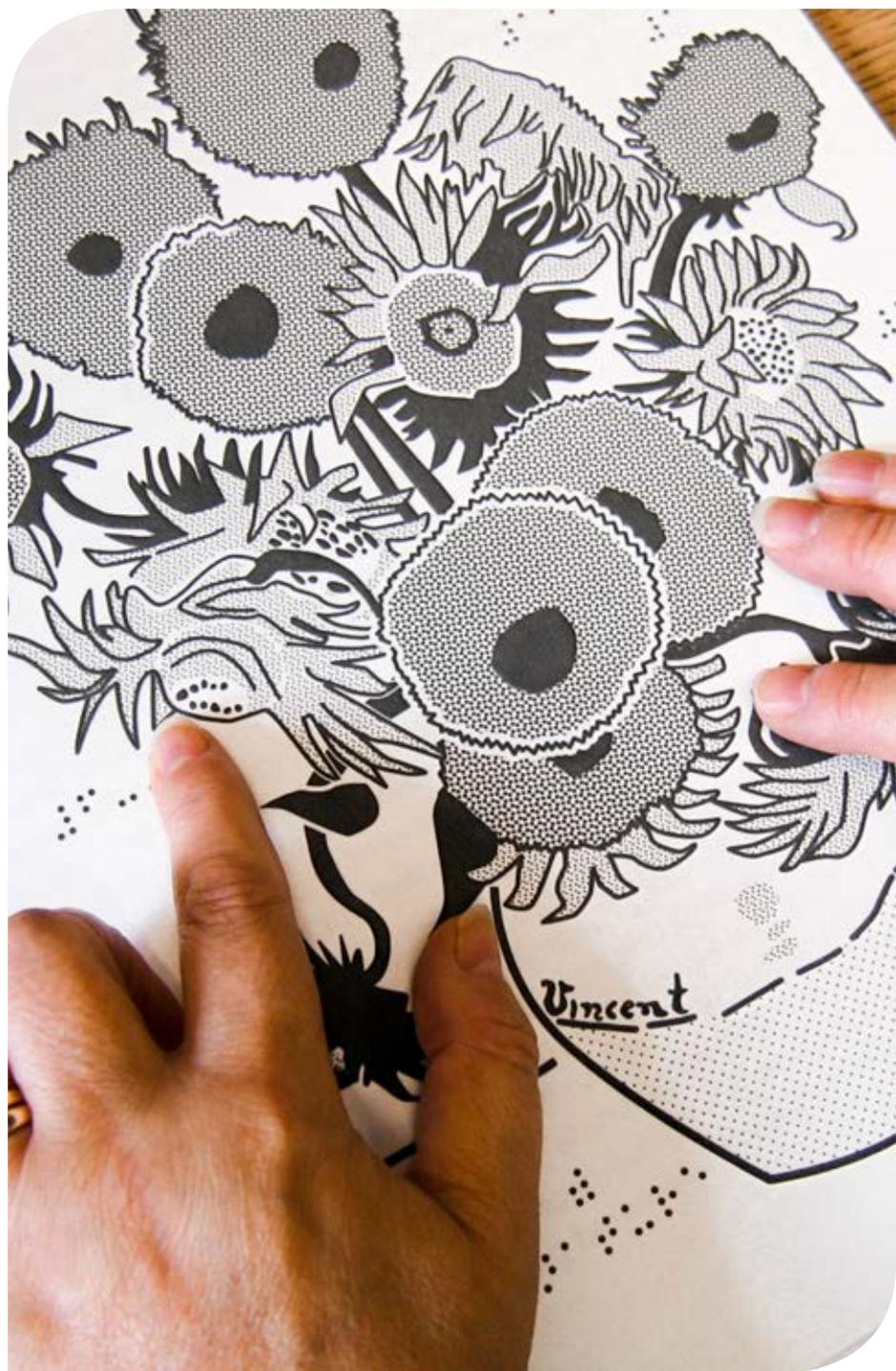
Museums and galleries will usually be happy to offer you assistance, for example by providing a guide around the collections, offering a touch tour and special events. It's best to contact the museum in advance so that they can arrange this for you.

Many museums and heritage venues also provide information in large print, braille or audio. If you need any of these formats, ask if they can be sent to you before you visit or if they will be available when you arrive.

## Holidays

If you're planning a trip, you can get many city guide books in alternative formats. DK Eyewitness Travel Guides are available in eBook format for various countries and cities. Visit [dk.com/uk/travel](https://www.dk.com/uk/travel) for more information.

There are holiday providers and hotels that specialise in catering for people with sight loss, as well as providing a sighted guide or companion, or nursing services if you need extra assistance while on holiday. For information on these services, plus details on themed breaks, call our Helpline for a copy of our "Holiday planning and ideas" factsheet.



# TV and radio

In this section you can read briefly about how to enjoy TV and radio when you have sight loss. If you need more detailed information on how to make your TV or radio accessible, please call our Helpline to request your copy of our guide on Technology (part of our Confident Living series).

## Watching television

Navigating visual menus and programme guides on TVs can be difficult when you have sight loss. A number of manufacturers have made their TVs easier to use with in-built accessibility and companion apps.

If small buttons on standard remote controls make changing the channel difficult for you, we sell simplified versions on our Online Shop. They have large number buttons and function buttons that can be programmed to your TV, receiver or DVD player.

Through RNIB Newsagent, we offer large print television listings as part of the weekly Big Print newspaper. Visit [rnib.org.uk/newsagent](https://www.rnib.org.uk/newsagent) for more information or call our Helpline.

## **Audio description on TVs**

As well as being available at cinemas, theatres and sports matches, audio description is also available for some TV programmes. The method for turning audio description on and off is different for different TVs, but if there is an audio description button on the remote, then it should be labelled “AD”.

## **Radio**

If you like listening to the radio, there are plenty of options available, including analogue radio with tactile dials, talking radios and digital radios.

RNIB Newsagent produces many accessible radio guides in large print, DAISY CD, braille and email formats. These guides cover all of the BBC radio stations, Absolute Radio, TalkSport, Classic FM and more. Call our Helpline to request your copy of RNIB Newsagent or visit **[rnib.org.uk/newsagent](http://rnib.org.uk/newsagent)**.

## Good to know

RNIB Connect Radio broadcasts 24 hours a day, communicating the needs, interests and aspirations of blind and partially sighted people throughout the UK. Listen to RNIB Connect Radio on Freeview channel 730, online at [insightradio.co.uk](http://insightradio.co.uk) or in Glasgow on 101FM.



# Hobbies

## Adult learning

There are many courses available both in a classroom and online. Learning is flexible and you should be able to find a course that fits around your other commitments. Courses could be full time or part-time, in the day or evening, for a few hours or several years.

Colleges, universities and other educational providers can give you support and assistance with helping you learn. This may include providing you with alternative formats such as braille or audio, adapting the classroom or providing software for a computer so that you can access your course.

The Open University encourages people with a disability to study with them and they endeavour to provide support and the facilities to do so. These distance learning courses can be adapted to your needs. Their Students with Disabilities office can arrange for you to have audio materials instead of print, and transcripts of broadcast programmes too. Open University services are also adapted to individuals' needs at residential school, in tutorials and examinations. For further information or to discuss courses, telephone **0300 303 5303** or visit **[open.ac.uk](http://open.ac.uk)**.

The University of the Third Age (U3A) is a learning co-operative of retired people whose members share many educational, creative and leisure activities. People of any age who are no longer in full-time employment can join. There are over 1,000 U3A groups nationwide with approximately 384,000 members. Members organise their own activities by drawing on each other's skills. They share their knowledge and experience and develop their individual capabilities by learning from other members. Telephone **020 8466 6139** or visit **[u3a.org.uk](http://u3a.org.uk)**.

For part-time courses, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is the UK's largest voluntary provider of adult learning opportunities. Many courses are run by one of the organisation's local branches throughout the UK. These courses cover a wide variety of subjects including creative writing, religious studies and basic maths, English and IT skills for employment. Visit **[wea.org.uk](http://wea.org.uk)**.

## Volunteering

Volunteering your time is not only rewarding but it can help you to learn new skills. Your local Volunteer Centre will have information on opportunities to get involved in voluntary work. This could include helping out in local charity shops, countryside conservation tasks and clerical work for local charities. NCVO has details of local Volunteer Centres; visit **[ncvo.org.uk](http://ncvo.org.uk)**.

REACH finds part-time, expenses-only jobs for retired business and professional people who want to offer their professional career experience for the benefit of voluntary organisations. This job placement service is available throughout the UK to both volunteers and charitable organisations needing their expertise, free of charge. Call **020 7582 6543** or visit **[reachskills.org.uk](http://reachskills.org.uk)**.

## Reading

With so many alternative ways to read, you can still keep up to date with the news, your favourite subject, or enjoy the latest best seller.

Our Reading Choices offers a range of services, giving you access to books, newspapers and magazines in a variety of formats.

**RNIB Library** is the largest in the UK for people with sight loss, with digital, audio, braille and giant print books for adults and children. There are also music resources and materials suitable for adult braille learners. It's a free service and you can borrow up to six books at a time. There's also an online library catalogue that you can browse at **[niblibrary.com](http://niblibrary.com)**.

With over 25,000 **Talking Books** on DAISY CD, USB stick or as digital downloads through the RNIB Overdrive app, there's plenty of choice. To view the available downloads visit **[niboverdrive.com](http://niboverdrive.com)**. The RNIB Overdrive app can be downloaded to a smartphone, tablet or computer. Our Talking Books service is free to join for anyone who is unable to read regular print. To join, visit **[nib.org.uk/talking-books](http://nib.org.uk/talking-books)**.



**RNIB Newsagent** offers magazines and newspapers in a variety of formats. You can order magazines such as Reader's Digest, BBC History Magazine, BBC Good Food and New Scientist. Children's magazines such as BBC Horrible Histories are also available. All newspapers and magazines are available in audio CD, USB, online download, DAISY CD, braille and large print.

For children, the Clear Vision Project lends books that are produced with braille, side by side with print and pictures. This helps children learn braille and read along with sighted adults, or blind and partially sighted adults to read along with sighted children. There are over 13,000 books available. Call **020 8789 9575** or visit **[clearvisionproject.org](http://clearvisionproject.org)**.

Our guide on Reading (part of our Confident Living series) has more information on options available; call our Helpline to request your copy.

## Playing music

Our Music Advisory Service provides support for people with sight loss to make music. Information and advice are given on music education at all levels, from the earliest signs of interest to advanced studies. They also run musical events for children, sometimes including their families, often in conjunction with external organisations. For more information on our Music Advisory Service, visit **[rnib.org.uk/music](https://www.rnib.org.uk/music)**.

We also produce a lot of music in large print and braille, which could help you to learn or continue to play music. But it's not always necessary to learn to read music notation in order to play an instrument; you could also learn to play by ear.

## Creative writing

If you enjoy writing, there are a number of practical aids you can use, including writing frames to help write in straight lines and writing paper with lines already marked on. If you use a thick black felt-tip pen it can be easier to read back what you have written.

For our full range of large print stationery, including writing paper, diaries, calendars and voice recorders contact our Helpline for a copy of our Everyday Living Products catalogue or visit our Online Shop.

There are creative writing workshops that are especially designed for people with sight loss and other disabilities. Your local library or local society for blind people should be able to provide you with details of groups in your area. You can also find local writing groups on Sightline Directory, our online directory of local services for blind and partially sighted people. Visit the Sightline Directory at **[sightlinedirectory.org.uk](http://sightlinedirectory.org.uk)**.

Our “Creative Writing” factsheet contains more information to help you start writing; call our Helpline to request your copy.

## Good to know

If you would like to use a computer to write, but want help to get started or learn more about assistive technology software for people with sight loss, RNIB's Technology Volunteers can help.

Our Technology Volunteers provide face-to-face training both at events and at home to help build your confidence and skills with smartphones, tablets and eReaders. To find out more, call our Helpline or visit [rnib.org.uk/online-today](http://rnib.org.uk/online-today).



## Gardening

Gardening is a popular pastime for many people with sight loss. There are many ways for you to manage and enjoy your own garden.

You could, for example, use an RNIB PenFriend audio labeller to help you identify plants or pots in your garden by using labels with names and care instructions. You can then punch a hole in the label and thread through an elastic band to attach to plants or pots. For more information or to buy a PenFriend, visit our Online Shop.

Thrive is a charity that can provide you with useful hints and tips from other gardeners who have sight loss. They have a number of publications available in PDF, large print, braille and audio. Call Thrive on **0118 988 5688** or visit **thrive.org.uk**.

With the help of Thrive, we've produced a detailed factsheet that has plenty of information to help you continue or take up gardening. Call our Helpline to request your copy of our "Gardening information pack".

## Painting and the arts

Perhaps you have never experimented with art but would like to give it a try, or you may already have painted but would like tools and tips to paint after sight loss. A course could be a good way of learning technical skills or how to do tactile art. Local adult education colleges run art courses, and so do some local societies for people with sight loss. Visit the Sightline Directory at **[sightlinedirectory.org.uk](http://sightlinedirectory.org.uk)** for details of a local class near you.

Our factsheet on “Art for blind and partially sighted people” also has further information on organisations that can help. Call our Helpline to request your copy.

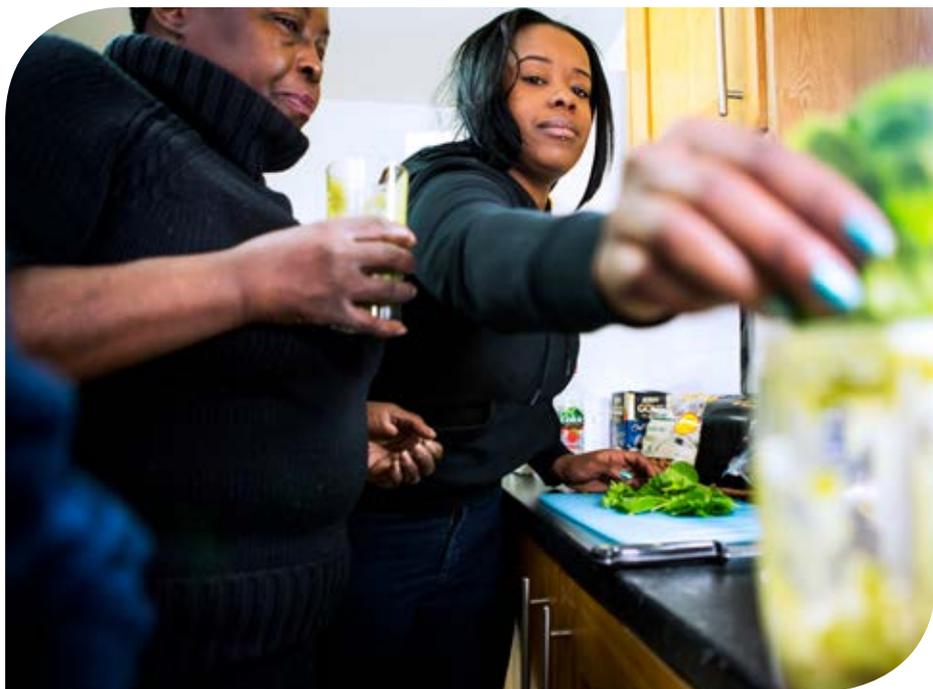
## Cooking

Cooking can seem rather daunting, but by adapting how you work in the kitchen and using special equipment, you can still enjoy preparing food.

There are simple adaptations and equipment you can use, such as lighting, contrasting chopping boards and knives. You could also attach bumpons, which are raised dome-shaped stickers, around the dials on your oven to mark their settings. Talking equipment can help too, such as talking microwaves, scales and the RNIB PenFriend audio labeller.

There are a host of cookbooks available in audio, large print and braille to inspire you including “Cooking for VIPs”. Written from the personal experiences of the author, it contains over 100 tried and tested recipes, with tips for cooking with sight loss.

All the above items are available in our Online Shop. For more information on cooking with sight loss, contact our Helpline to request your copy of our “Cooking tips” factsheet.



## Sewing and knitting

If you feel that your sight loss is making it difficult to sew or knit, there are many things you can do to continue.

There are specially designed sewing aids available, such as needle threaders and darning needles. You could also try using large needles and brightly coloured thread or wool, or cover your lap with a blanket that contrasts well with the material you are using. Knitters may benefit from easy-to-see row counters and tape measures. If you have difficulty reading

sewing instructions or knitting patterns, try enlarging them on a photocopier or use an electronic magnifier.

Using a bright coloured piece of Binca material that has holes already made for your stitches can be helpful when doing cross-stitch.

If you like embroidery, there are companies that supply large holed cross-stitch cushions, including Jacksons of Hebden Bridge. Telephone **01422 88 11 00** or visit **[brigantianeedlework.com](http://brigantianeedlework.com)**.

Depending on your level of sight loss, good lighting and a magnifier can help. Our guide on Making the Most of Your Sight (part of our Starting Out series) provides helpful advice and tips on both of these.

## Puzzles and games

There are specially adapted versions of many popular games, which enable people with sight loss to play together with their sighted friends and family. These include Scrabble, chess, Monopoly, Boggle, playing cards and many more. Our Online Shop has lots of these tactile games available, as well as large print puzzle books and magazines.

For children with sight loss, we sell a number of learning toys and games for all ages and abilities, including tactile games.

**Cathy Harris, who is blind, is a big fan of accessible games:**

**“I have a wooden noughts and crosses game which is simple to feel and use. It’s great for people with sight loss, especially as it can be quite sociable.”**

# Sports and fitness

If you are struggling to continue playing the sport you have always loved, or you would like to try something new, there are plenty of options available.

## Rambling and walking

There are plenty of rambling and walking routes that are specifically designed for people with sight loss, including walks you can do with your guide dog. For longer routes, you may want to have a sighted companion with you.

The Ramblers encourages and supports walkers and ramblers throughout the UK, including those with sight loss.

They have lots of regional groups.

Email [\*\*ramblers@ramblers.org.uk\*\*](mailto:ramblers@ramblers.org.uk) or visit [\*\*ramblers.org.uk\*\*](http://ramblers.org.uk) for more information.

For details of local walking groups, visit our Sightline Directory at [\*\*sightlinedirectory.org.uk\*\*](http://sightlinedirectory.org.uk).

## Watching sport

There are some sporting venues, such as football, rugby and cricket grounds, which provide audio description for people with sight loss. Your local sports venue should be able to help you with this. Alternatively you can contact Level Playing Field at **[levelplayingfield.org.uk](http://levelplayingfield.org.uk)** for details of facilities available at various clubs and venues.

Cricket spectators at Lord's Cricket Ground are able to follow every ball bowled and every boundary scored through the dedicated Ball-by-Ball commentary service at the ground. Lord's provides commentary through a headset on every international match, Middlesex county games, and the majority of minor fixtures at the ground.

For football and cricket fans, cricket fixtures and domestic football fixtures are available in a range of audio and electronic formats as well as in braille. Contact our Helpline to order your copy.

## Playing sport

There are many sports that have been adapted for people with sight loss. For example, in **golf** you can be assisted by sighted partners who line up their golf clubs to face the ball and indicate distances from the ball to the hole. Contact the England and Wales Blind Golf Association on **0247 641 4166** or visit **blindgolf.co.uk**.

**Tandem cycling** is another popular sport, where you ride a tandem with a sighted partner. The Tandem Club is a national organisation with many affiliated local groups. Visit **tandem-club.org.uk**.

**Blind cricket** has been played in some shape or form in the UK since the 1940s. The game is played with a few adaptations where necessary. For example, instead of the standard cricket ball, blind cricket uses a size three football with ball bearings inside to make it rattle so that it can be heard as well as seen.

**Goalball** is played with an audible ball and tactile court markings. This is quite an energetic and physical game and it is played in teams of three.

If you're interested in finding out about cricket, football, goalball, or a whole range of other sports, including archery, athletics, judo, ten pin bowling and many more, you can contact British Blind Sport on **01926 424 247** or visit **[britishblindsport.org.uk](http://britishblindsport.org.uk)**.

The Inclusive Fitness Initiative is a Sport England Lottery-funded project, which works with local authority fitness suites to support them to deliver facilities for both disabled and non-disabled people. Call **01509 227 750** or visit **[efds.co.uk/get-active](http://efds.co.uk/get-active)** for information on what facilities are available near you.

Our "Discovering sports" factsheet has plenty of information on other sports in which you could take part in, including swimming, football, yoga and archery. Call our Helpline to order your copy.

# Further information

## RNIB Helpline

Our Helpline is your direct line to the support, advice and products you need. Whether you want to know more about your eye condition, buy a product from our shop, join our library, find out about possible benefit entitlements, be put in touch with a trained counsellor, or make a general enquiry, we're only a call away.

Get in touch by calling **0303 123 9999**. We're ready to answer your call Monday to Friday 8am-8pm, and Saturday 9am-1pm. You can also email us at **helpline@rnib.org.uk**.

## Sightline Directory

The online directory to help you find the people, organisations and services you need, including leisure activities. Visit **sightlinedirectory.org.uk**.

## RNIB Connect

Join RNIB Connect, a community for everyone affected by sight loss. Membership of this helpful and welcoming community is free, and will give you the chance to meet other people with similar experiences in person, online and by phone. Visit **rnib.org.uk/connect** or call our Helpline.

## RNIB Library

Our free library service offers digital, audio, braille and giant print books for both adults and children. You can borrow up to six books at a time. Browse the online library catalogue at **[rniblibrary.com](http://rniblibrary.com)**.

Our Talking Books service is free to join for anyone who is unable to read regular print. They are available on DAISY CDs, USB sticks or via digital download. To join, visit **[rnib.org.uk/talking-books](http://rnib.org.uk/talking-books)**.

## RNIB Newsagent

RNIB Newsagent offers magazines and newspapers on audio CDs, USB sticks, DAISY CDs, in braille and large print, and via online download. Visit **[rnib.org.uk/newsagent](http://rnib.org.uk/newsagent)**.

## Visionary

Visionary are a 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 8090 9264**, email **[visionary@visionary.org.uk](mailto:visionary@visionary.org.uk)** or visit **[visionary.org.uk](http://visionary.org.uk)**.





# We value your feedback

You can help us improve this publication by letting us know what you think about it. Please complete and return this form to:

**RNIB CKIT**  
London  
WC1H 9NE

You can also email us at [ckit@rnib.org.uk](mailto:ckit@rnib.org.uk)

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2. Did you find the information easy to read and 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, that was missing?**



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# 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:

- Managing Your Money
- Reading
- Shopping
- Technology
- Travel

All these publications 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** or visit **shop.rnib.org.uk**.

For a full list of the information sources used in any of these titles please contact **ckit@rnib.org.uk**.

If you or someone you know is living with sight loss, we're here to help. Call RNIB's Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or email us at **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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