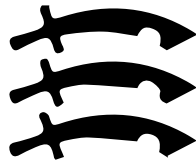


Essex County Council

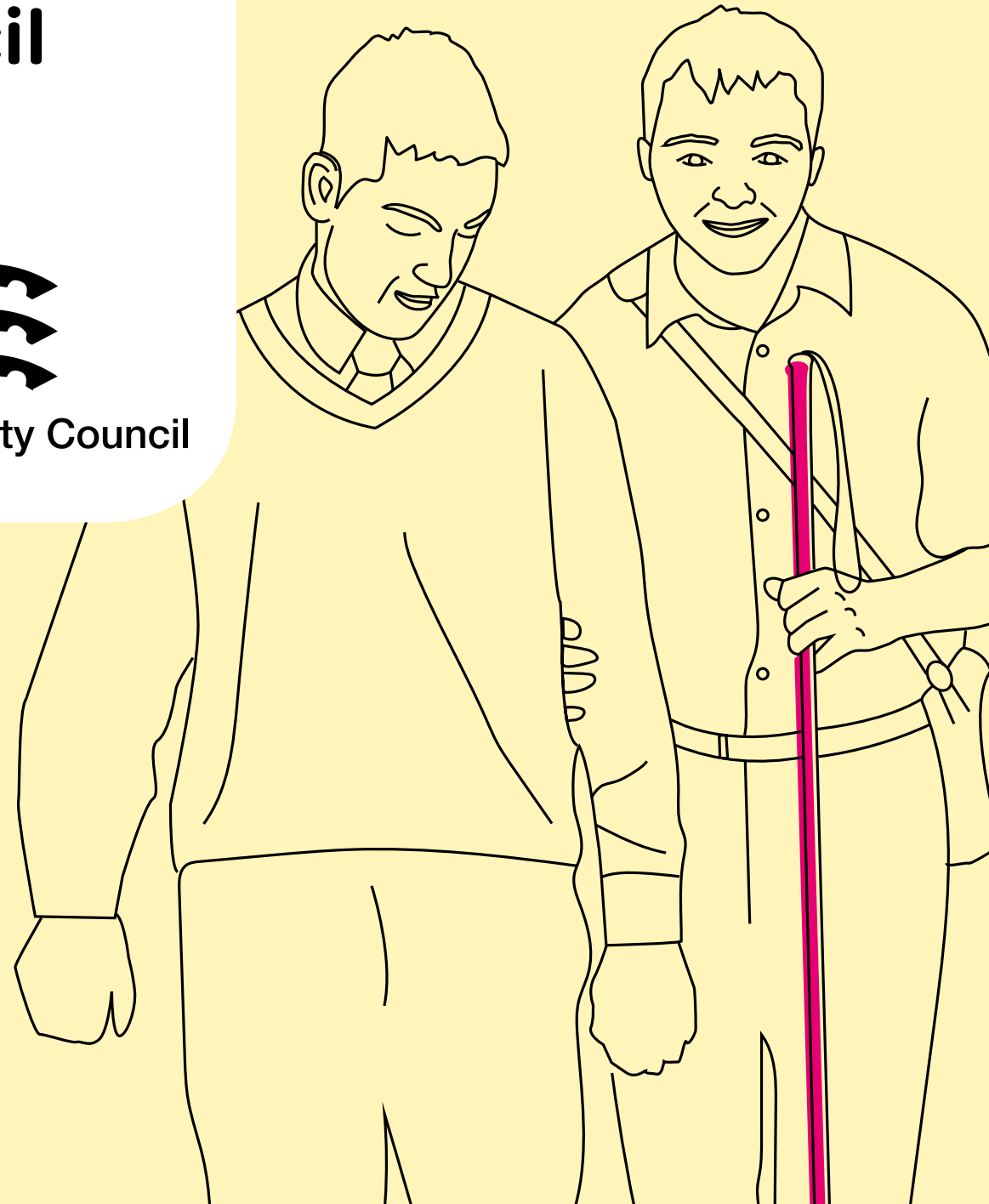
Spotlight on vision rehabilitation



Essex County Council

RNIB

Supporting people
with sight loss



Essex County Council

Faye Gatenby, head of ECL sensory service (The Care and Wellbeing Company), tells us about the vision rehabilitation services provided by her team in Essex. She highlights how they work towards the goals of **See, Plan, Provide**, seeing people for specialist face to face assessments and having plans in place within 28 days; and how they meet several **Good Practice Principles**.



How would you describe your service?

ECL delivers a range of tailored support to meet the needs of people with sight, hearing and dual sensory impairments across the county.

Our specialist high quality assessments take place within 28 days of referral (**Principle 2**) and we ensure that people start receiving rehabilitation support within 12 weeks. This includes delivering face to face assessments, mobility training, training in the home, adaptations and equipment, and eccentric viewing training. We provide peer to peer support courses as well as information, advice and signposting services.

We have developed additional services to meet the needs of the local community. We focus on increasing people's independence, and helping to break down barriers.

Who makes up your team?

We currently have three qualified and experienced rehabilitation workers, one rehabilitation assistant, one sensory assistant, a coordination centre team and a sensory training facilitator. With a quarter of our employees having a

sensory impairment themselves, our services are designed and delivered from a lived experience perspective providing support that is shaped around individuals' needs.

How many clients do you work with?

Our contract covers the whole of Essex, one of the largest local authorities in England with a population of 1.4 million people and a mix of urban and rural areas.

Approximately 7,350 blind and partially sighted people are currently registered with Essex County Council. We received approximately 665 referrals in 2016 / 17 for people with sight and/or hearing impairments and referrals continue to increase month on month as awareness about the service grows.

What's working really well about your service?

We are proud of how we help ensure people have the right information and advice at the right time, delivered in the right place and in the right way. This makes a big difference to improving outcomes and people's quality of life, ensuring the sight loss journey is as seamless as it can be.

Our service was commissioned by Essex County Council to provide a single point of access through our coordination service. This was because a previous review found that some people were potentially missing out on vital support as services weren't always joined up. We worked with service users and carers/families, health and social care professionals and sensory voluntary organisations to design a new and more joined up pathway.

We were then commissioned by Essex County Council in July 2015 to deliver the redesigned sensory service for three years, with the aim of developing services and integrating more with health, children's services and social care.

The all age coordination service is a key part of the new pathway and is managed and run by our qualified staff who understand the needs of people with sensory impairments. They receive ongoing vocational and specialist training to make sure they have the right skills and expertise to support children, young people and adults with a sight or hearing loss (**Principle 10**).

The team deal with all sensory related referrals and can signpost on to other key services and provide information,

advice and guidance (**Principle 3**). This includes dealing with Certificates of Vision Impairment (CVIs) follow-ups and managing the sight loss registers.

What is also working well is our strong relationships with a wide range of partners such as the Essex Fire Service, Essex County Council social care teams, health colleagues and local and national voluntary organisations, who we also commission to deliver some services.

We established an informal partnership with the sensory voluntary organisations who already deliver sensory services on behalf of Essex County Council - Essex sensory community. Together we co-produced an action plan to support closer working and joint development of services. This means people have choice and can engage across a wide range of services and providers in a more seamless way. The person gets the best of everything available and the outcomes are as good as they can be – this also reduces costs to health and social care.

Over the next 12 months, what are the main challenges you are facing and how will you look to address these?

Our main challenge will be continuing to achieve our aim of providing a specialist assessment within 28 days. At the moment, support, particularly vision rehabilitation training, starts within four weeks of referral and there is no upper time limit. However, we know that we may not always be able to sustain this level of service as our referrals increase as we have quite a small team.

The way we manage this at the moment, is with very careful deployment of staff and by making the best use of all early intervention services available, focusing on getting people seen as quickly as possible and reducing the need for more intensive support later on.

Three steps of See, Plan and Provide

- **See:** everyone with a visual impairment must receive a specialist face to face assessment.
- **Plan:** everyone must have a plan in place, identifying the outcome of the assessment. The first two steps must take place within 28 days of first contact with the local authority.
- **Provide:** any agreed vision rehabilitation support must start within 12 weeks of the person's initial contact with the local authority.

10 Principles of Good Practice in Vision Rehabilitation

All blind and partially sighted people...

- 1** receive initial telephone contact within two working days of receipt of a Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI), referral or self referral
- 2** are seen and receive a specialist assessment from someone with appropriate skills, knowledge, training and qualifications, within 28 days of initial contact

- 3** are offered a range of services at the specialist assessment. Services include those that address their eye health, emotional, physical, financial and social needs and those of their carer if appropriate
- 4** are provided with a vision rehabilitation plan within 28 days based on goals agreed in the assessment
- 5** are provided vision rehabilitation services free of charge, to meet agreed assessed needs
- 6** offered a full community care needs assessment when vision rehabilitation does not fully meet their needs
- 7** are provided with equipment, aids or minor adaptations free of charge, when it has been assessed that these help, reduce, prevent or delay the need for more costly care
- 8** receive information about services or support in a timely manner and in their preferred format
- 9** have the ability to access vision rehabilitation services in the future if required
- 10** are provided vision rehabilitation by someone who is trained to understand their sight loss related needs

To download a copy of the 10 principles
rnib.org.uk/rehab-principles



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