

R N I B

See differently

Starting Out

Benefits, concessions and registration



About this guide

If you are losing or have lost your sight, there is practical and financial support available to help you. A lot of this help, such as being able to claim for a wide range of concessions, is available once you register your sight loss. Your sight loss will need to be certified by an ophthalmologist (hospital eye doctor). Registration follows on from this and is a way of letting your local authority know you need help. Certification is also useful for you to prove to other organisations that you're blind or partially sighted.

There are two levels of certification and registration: severely sight impaired (this used to be called "blind"), and sight impaired (this used to be called "partially sighted").

This publication contains information on welfare benefits to which you may be entitled, concessions, certification and registration.

If you have a query about something that hasn't been covered in this publication, please get in touch with us. We're ready to help, just give us a call or drop us an email.

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

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Summary of concessions and benefits

This is a summary of the benefits and concessions available to you if you are registered severely sight impaired (SSI) or sight impaired (SI).

Entitled to

Benefit/concession	SSI	SI
Blind person's tax allowance	✓	✗
Television licence fee reduction	✓	✗
Blue Badge Scheme – car parking	✓	✗
Free postage – "Articles for the blind"	✓	✓
Free NHS eye examination	✓	✓
Disabled Persons Railcard	✓	✓
Free or reduced bus travel fare	✓	✓
Free directory enquiries	✓	✓
Cinema pass for carer	✓	✓
Protection under the Equality Act	✓	✓
Assessment by social services	✓	✓

May be entitled to

Benefit/concession	SSI	SI
Personal Independence Payment (PIP)	✓	✓
Attendance Allowance	✓	✓
Carer's Allowance	✓	✓
Employment and Support Allowance	✓	✓
Tax Credits	✓	✓
Housing Benefit	✓	✓
Council Tax Support (or Housing Benefit rate relief in Northern Ireland)	✓	✓
Council Tax disability reduction (or Disabled Person's Allowance in Northern Ireland)	✓	✓
Universal Credit	✓	✓
Pension Credit	✓	✓
Free ticket for a guide at theatres, galleries or tourist attractions	✓	✓

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

Welfare Benefits: changes due to coronavirus

Due to the outbreak of coronavirus, there have been significant changes to the amounts paid for certain benefits and particularly to the way they are assessed. These changes are intended to be temporary and will be reviewed by the government when the outbreak is under control. If you have any questions relating to these changes and how they may impact you, please call our Helpline.

Welfare benefits

There are some benefits that you may be entitled to, subject to age and other circumstances. Being registered as severely sight impaired or sight impaired does not mean you are automatically entitled to any welfare benefits, and there's no special benefit or pension for people who are registered. You do not have to be registered to receive benefits.

Various means-tested benefits, referred to as 'legacy benefits', are being replaced with Universal Credit for people aged 16 to pension age.

If you are a new claimant to means-tested benefits you will have to make a claim for Universal Credit. The only exception to this at present is if you or your partner is in receipt of a severe disability premium as part of a current benefit claim, or were getting it within the last month and continue to meet the qualifying conditions for the premium.

If you are already receiving any of the affected legacy benefits, you will eventually be moved over to Universal Credit. The government commenced a pilot scheme in 2019 to start this process, which is known as "managed migration". This managed migration scheme may be suspended due to coronavirus, so please call our Helpline for updated information. Eventually all claimants of legacy benefits will be transferred to Universal Credit, though the timetable is not certain.

Call our Helpline if you would like any advice on applying for benefits, or to find out what you might be entitled to. We can provide advice based on your circumstances and carry out a benefits check. We also have detailed factsheets on the different benefits you might be eligible for, and you can call our Helpline to request your copy. 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 your benefit application is turned down

If you have applied for a benefit but are turned down, you should seek advice about requesting a review of the decision. This review is called a mandatory reconsideration and should normally be made within one month of the decision date. If you are still not satisfied after the reconsideration, you can lodge an appeal. Our factsheet on "Benefits Appeals" has information on how to appeal. Call our Helpline to request the factsheet or if you would like to speak to one of our advisers regarding help with challenging a benefit decision.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Help for disabled people with the extra costs of a disability

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 health care 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 undertake a health assessment by an independent health care professional as part of this process. At present, due to the coronavirus outbreak, face to face assessments may not be taking place and decisions may be made by carrying out telephone assessments, and where possible, by using existing medical evidence, please call our Helpline for updated information. Once this assessment has taken place, a report will be sent to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) who will make a decision about your entitlement to one or both components.

If you are already receiving DLA

PIP has replaced DLA for people aged between 16 and pension age.

The majority of DLA claimants have now been transferred to PIP. There is no automatic transfer from DLA to PIP if you are 16-64.

The DWP will write to you if you were under 65 and receiving DLA when PIP was introduced on **8 April 2013**, (20 June 2016 in Northern Ireland), inviting you to make a claim for PIP. The DWP will then assess your claim under the rules and qualifying conditions of PIP.

You will continue to get DLA and not be re-assessed for PIP if:

- you were aged 65 or over on 8 April 2013 in England, Scotland or Wales
- you were aged 65 or over on 20 June 2016 in Northern Ireland
- **and** you were getting DLA on those dates

Child DLA claimants (aged under 16 years old) can continue to receive DLA until they are turning 16 when they will be invited to claim PIP. For more information, please contact our Helpline to get our factsheet on "Benefits for Children".

Attendance Allowance

Help for disabled people of pension age with the extra costs of a disability

If you have reached state pension age (and do not already get DLA or PIP) you can make a claim for Attendance Allowance. It is for people

who need personal help during the day or night, or both. You can also qualify if you need supervision or watching over to avoid getting into danger. There is no help with mobility needs in Attendance Allowance.

If you already receive DLA or PIP when you reach state pension age you can continue to get this benefit for as long as you meet the qualifying conditions.

Please note: Attendance Allowance, DLA and PIP do not count as income for the means-tested benefits listed later in this section. An award may make it more likely that you will qualify for other benefits.

To get a PIP claim form, call 0800 917 2222 or Textphone 0800 917 7777.

For an Attendance Allowance claim form, call 0800 731 0122 or Textphone 0800 731 0317.

For a DLA claim form for under 16s, call 0800 121 4600 or Textphone 0800 121 4523.

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're blind or partially sighted. To qualify for these benefits, the carer must meet certain criteria, including caring for someone for at least 35 hours each week. The care must be provided for someone who gets Attendance Allowance, the daily living component of PIP, or the middle or highest rate of the DLA care component. Call the Carer's Allowance Unit on **0800 731 0297** or Textphone **0800 731 0317**.

Important: If you, or a carer who helps you, is considering claiming Carer's Allowance, you should be aware that the money you or your carer receives through this benefit could lead to a reduction in the means-tested benefits paid to you or the person you are caring for. Please contact our Helpline for further advice.

Universal Credit

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

Universal Credit has been introduced to replace Tax Credits and five means-tested benefits for people of working age. It replaces:

- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income Support
- Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit

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

The full Universal Credit service is now available across the UK. You cannot make a new claim for any of the old means-tested benefits such as income-related ESA or Housing Benefit unless you, or your partner, receive (or received in the previous month) a severe disability premium on a current benefit claim. If you have any questions about this please call our Helpline.

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.

You can start a claim for Universal Credit by visiting **www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit**. You can call the Universal Credit helpline on **0800 328 5644** (textphone **0800 328 1344**) if you have questions about applying, need help finding or using a computer to apply or want information in an alternative format.



Contribution-based (now known as “new-style”) Employment and Support Allowance

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

The full Universal Credit service is now available across the UK. You cannot make a new claim for any of the old means-tested benefits such as income-related ESA or Housing Benefit unless you receive (or received in the previous month) a severe disability premium on a current benefit claim.

Normally, you can claim “new-style” ESA by calling the Universal Credit helpline on **0800 328 5644** or Textphone: **0800 328 1344**.

At present however, due to the coronavirus outbreak, claims can currently be made online by visiting: **<https://www.gov.uk/how-to-claim-new-style-esa>**

Please call our Helpline for updated information.

You can claim “new-style” ESA by calling the Universal Credit full service helpline on **0800 328 5644** or Textphone: **0800 328 1344**.

If you were awarded ESA before Universal Credit was introduced in the area where you live you will be able to continue to get ESA unless:

- You have a change of circumstances that mean you can no longer get ESA, or
- You are moved to Universal Credit under managed migration

Tax Credits

Help for people in work or with dependent children

Universal Credit has now replaced Tax Credits for the majority of new claimants. If you are currently getting Tax Credits, you can continue to receive them and you do not need to do anything unless your circumstances change.

If you have a relevant change in your circumstances you will have to make a claim for Universal Credit unless you, or your partner, are in receipt of a severe disability premium on a current benefit claim.

Your claim for Tax Credits can be renewed up until you are transferred onto Universal Credit. The managed migration process of transferring people from Tax Credits to Universal Credit started in 2019. This scheme has currently been suspended due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The exact timetable for the roll out of Universal Credit is therefore not known at present.

There are two types of Tax Credit; Child Tax Credit (CTC) and Working Tax Credit (WTC). Tax Credits are administered by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

WTC can be paid to top up your wages if you work at least 16 hours per week. It includes a disability element if you are registered as SSI or SI, and if you get PIP or another qualifying benefit.

CTC can be paid if you or your partner have responsibility for a child or qualifying young person and you have a low income.

If you have a child who is registered as SSI or receives Disability Living Allowance, your CTC award will include the disabled child element.

You cannot claim Tax Credits and Universal Credit at the same time.

As this area is subject to change by the Government, please contact our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** for the most up to date advice on your entitlement to welfare benefits.

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 reached state pension age on or before 6 April 2016 you may also get Savings Pension Credit if you have modest retirement income or savings. Savings Pension Credit has been phased out for new claimants and is only available to existing recipients.

The age from which you may get Guarantee Pension Credit is changing and it is gradually rising in line with the increase in the state pension age for women from 60 to 66 years. For example, if you were born between 6 October 1954 and 5 April 1960 your Pension Credit qualifying age is 66 years old.

To find out your exact Pension Credit qualifying age, call the Pension Service on **0800 731 0469** or check the state pension age calculator at **www.gov.uk/state-pension-age**.

You can contact our Helpline to check if you qualify. To make a claim, call the Pension Credit claim line on 0800 99 1234 or Textphone 0800 169 0133.



Housing Benefit

Help with paying your rent

Universal Credit has replaced Housing Benefit for new claimants of working age. If you need help with your housing costs and you are a new benefit claimant, you will be directed to claim Universal Credit.

However, if you, or your partner, are receiving a severe disability premium in a benefit award you can still claim Housing Benefit.

The process of transferring most people from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit, which commenced in 2019, has now been suspended due to the coronavirus outbreak.

As this area is subject to change by the government it is recommended to contact our Helpline for the most up to date advice on your entitlement to welfare benefits. For details about an existing Housing Benefit claim, contact your local council.

Local support for Council Tax bills and rates

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 see what financial support is available for paying Council Tax in your area.

If you live in Northern Ireland there is a different scheme called the Disabled Person's Allowance. For further information contact call LPS on **0300 200 7801** or email **applicationbased.raterelief@finance-ni.gov.uk**

Council Tax disability reduction and Disabled Person's Allowance

You may get a reduction in your Council Tax bill or rates if you have a room set aside to meet needs related to your disability. One example would be if you need to use and store equipment for your communication needs,

such as a CCTV. The reduction is not automatic. This allowance is not means-tested, and you don't need to provide any information about your income or savings to apply. Ask your local Council Tax office for details or the Disabled Person's Allowance scheme in Northern Ireland.



A note on Universal Credit

If you already receive one of the benefits the government is replacing, you will be migrated to Universal Credit at some stage in the future through what is called “managed migration”. The government commenced a pilot scheme in 2019 to begin this migration process, but this may now be suspended due to the coronavirus outbreak. The time-frame for managed migration is subsequently uncertain at the present time. Please call our Helpline for updated information.

Please note: claiming Universal Credit can have a significant effect on the amount of benefits you will receive. Contact our Helpline to check if you will be better or worse off claiming Universal Credit before you are migrated to it.

Exemption from “non-dependants” deductions

A non-dependant is another adult living in your home who is not your partner, for example an adult son or daughter. Some benefits, such as housing benefit, 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 Attendance Allowance, the daily living component of PIP, or the care component of DLA.

Tax allowances and reliefs

Your Personal Allowance is the amount of income you can receive before you have to pay tax. You might also be entitled to extra tax allowances that can reduce your tax bill.

Blind Person's Allowance

The Blind Person's Allowance is an extra amount of tax-free allowance. It means you can earn more before you start paying Income Tax. You can claim if you are registered as severely sight impaired, and you can transfer it to your spouse or civil partner.

Allowances if you're married or in a civil partnership

If you or your partner were born before 6 April 1935, you could claim Married Couple's Allowance to reduce your tax bill.

If you and your partner were born on or after 6 April 1935, you may be able to claim Marriage Allowance instead. This allows a spouse or civil partner who doesn't pay tax to transfer part of their Personal Allowance to their partner. It applies to basic rate taxpayers.

Personal Savings Allowance

Interest on non-ISA savings and current accounts is paid tax-free. The Personal Savings Allowance means most people no longer pay tax on their savings interest.

Personal Tax Account

Your Personal Tax Account allows you to manage your tax affairs online. You can do things like check your tax code, check your State Pension and your National Insurance record and manage your tax credits payments. To access your account, visit [gov.uk/personal-tax-account](https://www.gov.uk/personal-tax-account).



VAT relief on specialised goods and services

Goods that have been designed or adapted for disabled or blind and partially sighted people are exempt from VAT. Some building work may also be charged VAT-free. For more information, call our Helpline to request our factsheet on "VAT Relief on Specialised Goods and Services".

Good to know

Our Tax Advice Service can provide more information and advice on any income tax issue you might have.

Whether its information on how to make a claim for a particular tax relief, or how much you might be entitled to, call our tax team through our Helpline on 0303 123 9999.

You can also call Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on 0300 200 3300 or visit hmrc.gov.uk.

Concessions

If you're registered severely sight impaired, you're entitled to the following concessions:

Reduction of 50% on the television licence fee

This applies if a certified severely sight impaired adult or child lives in the household. Call the TV licence helpline on **0300 555 0286**. They will ask for proof of certification to be sent to them. They can also backdate the discount to the date you first became certified.

Loan of a radio or CD radio cassette player

You may also be entitled to a free permanent loan of a radio or CD radio cassette player. Contact your local social services department and ask about the British Wireless for the Blind Fund (BWBF) or call BWBF on **01622 754 757**.

Car parking concessions: 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 for more information.

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 **0345 774 0740** or Textphone **0345 600 0606** for more information.

If you're registered as severely sight impaired or sight impaired, you're entitled to the following:

Free NHS eye test by an optometrist

Tell the optometrist (also known as an optician) about your registration status before the eye test. The test is also free for anyone aged 60 or over.

It is a good idea to have an eye test even if you're registered as severely sight impaired or sight impaired. A sight test can help detect if you have developed another eye condition, such as cataracts. It can also make sure you have the right pair of glasses or contact lenses so that you can make the most of the vision you have.

If you are unable to leave your home due to illness or disability, an eye test can be carried out at your home. Speak to your local optician to see if they offer this service. NHS eye tests are free to everyone in Scotland.

Other NHS costs

You may be able to get a voucher towards the cost of your 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, Guarantee Pension Credit, income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance or Universal Credit (and your income is below a fixed threshold) you can also get help with NHS costs, including vouchers towards the costs of glasses and free NHS eye examinations. 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're 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 **0345 605 0525**, Textphone **0345 601 0132** or visit **disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk** for further details.

You can get sighted assistance at the start and end of your rail journey. Contact the train operator you're travelling with in advance to arrange this.



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, like 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 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 a doctor, nurse or other

medical practitioner, but not a social worker or key worker. You can use the free service whether or not BT is your telephone provider.

Leisure concessions

Concessions are available to people with disabilities, or people receiving certain benefits, for various leisure and recreational activities.

Examples are:

- a free ticket for a person accompanying you to participating cinemas if you're registered sight impaired or severely sight impaired or you are getting DLA, PIP or Attendance Allowance
- reduced price entry to museums, exhibitions and sporting events. A companion or carer may also be entitled to free or reduced price entry.

Contact the venue for details of available concessions or call our Helpline for more information.

The Equality Act

The Equality Act (2010) aims to prevent discrimination against various groups of people, such as people with disabilities in England, Wales and Scotland. This includes people who are blind or partially sighted.

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 or call our Helpline.

Certification and registration

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

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 please call our Helpline.

Once you are registered, you'll be entitled to the concessions listed earlier in this publication. You may also be able to claim welfare benefits, including Attendance Allowance or PIP.

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.

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). Scotland used to have the BP1 but introduced the CVI system in April 2018.
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 that 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're registered, social services should 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 ophthalmologist (hospital eye doctor). 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're 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 for 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 think that it is a good idea.

If you are having a problem getting certified as sight impaired or severely sight impaired, please call our Helpline for advice.

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

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're 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

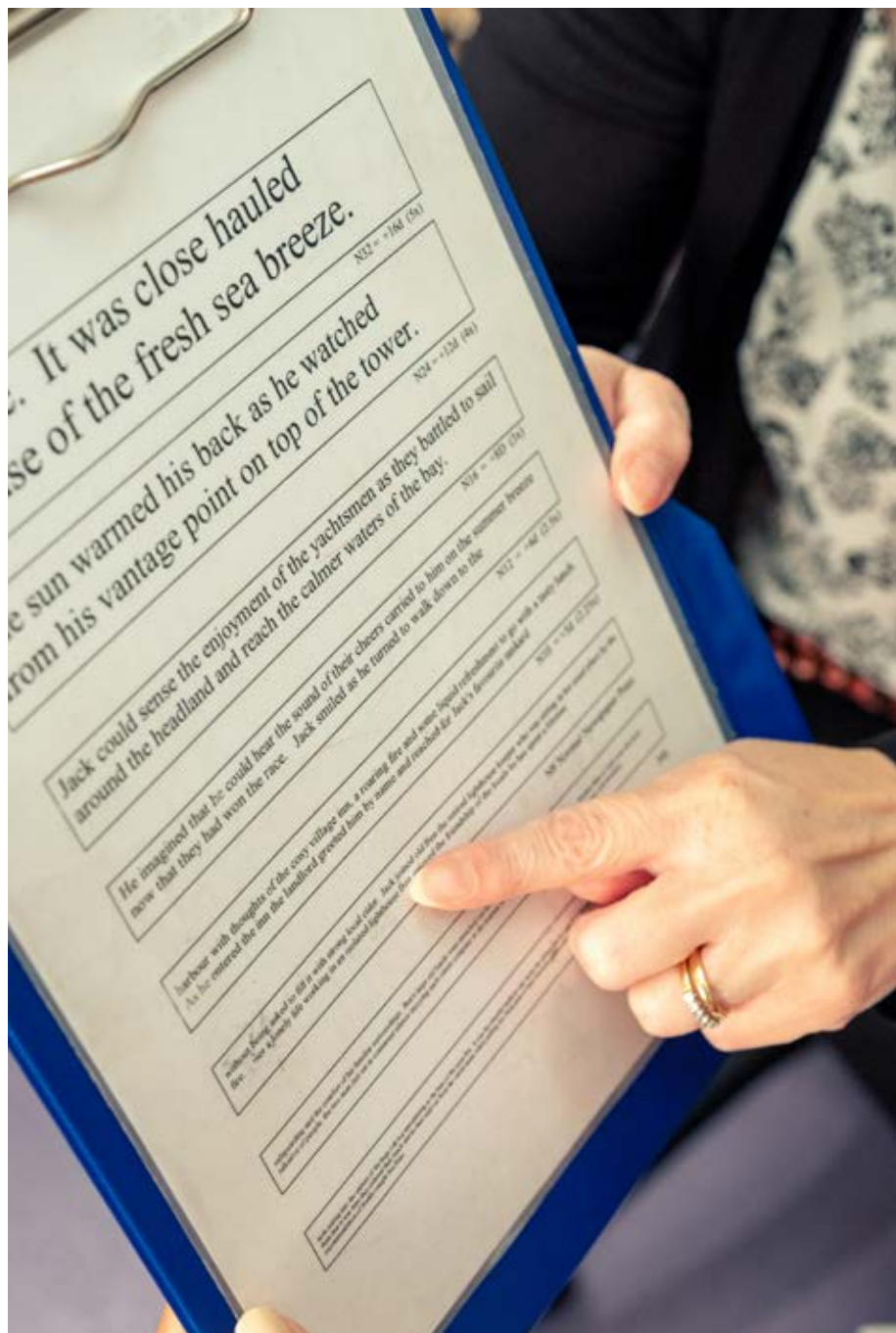
and copies of this form will be sent to you, your GP and your local social services department.

Results of your eye test

The criteria for certification means that if you have good visual acuity then usually you will have 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 need 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 at the end of this publication.

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 the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) on **0300 790 6806**, or if you live in Northern Ireland the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) on **0300 200 7861**.



However, if you fail the eyesight requirements to drive, and the DVLA or DVA revoke your driving licence, it does not mean you will be automatically certified as either sight impaired or severely sight impaired.

What is the register?

Each local authority or local health trust 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 ophthalmologist 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. Needs assessments are designed to look into whether you are eligible to receive care and support, which can include help such as personal care, domestic support, disability equipment and minor adaptations to the home.

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 of the home, particularly if you do not use a white cane or guide dog and your sight loss 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 or visit our Sightline Directory at **sightlinedirectory.org.uk** 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 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 help you receive 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 or not you are eligible for certification and registration. 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 to discuss the next steps
- 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 or talking watch)
- 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. You can find details of these on our Sightline Directory at **sightlinedirectory.org.uk**.



Further information

RNIB Helpline

Our Helpline is your direct line to the information, support, advice and products you need. Our Sight Loss Advice Service can give you guidance on benefits, concessions and registration. Get in touch by calling **0303 123 9999**.

We're ready to answer your call Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm, and Saturday from 9am to 1pm. You can also email us at **helpline@rnib.org.uk**.

Sightline Directory

The online directory run by RNIB to help you find the people, organisations and services you need. Visit **sightlinedirectory.org.uk**.

Citizens Advice

There are Citizens Advice centres 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/getadvice.htm**.

If you live in England you can contact Citizens Advice on **03444 111 444** or if you live in Wales you can call them on **03444 77 20 20**. Citizens Advice also provide online advice and information for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland at **citizensadvice.org.uk**.

Disability Rights UK

Disability Rights UK is a national organisation that provides online information on welfare benefits and independent living. Visit **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 at **visionary.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.

Appendix – Understanding the results of your CVI

Generally, to be registered as severely sight impaired, your sight (while wearing any glasses or contact lenses) must have a:

- visual acuity of less than 3/60 with a full visual field, or
- visual acuity between 3/60 and 6/60 with a severe reduction of field of vision, such as tunnel vision, or
- 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, your sight must have a:

- visual acuity of 3/60 to 6/60 with a full field of vision, or
- visual acuity of up to 6/24 with a moderate reduction of field of vision, cloudiness in parts of your eye, or your lens has been removed and not replaced with a lens implant, or
- 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.

About the Starting Out series

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:

- Emotional Support
- Employment
- Help from Social Services
- Housing
- Making the Most of Your Sight

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:

- Leisure
- 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.

RNIB Helpline

0303 123 9999

helpline@rnib.org.uk

The Sight Advice FAQ answers questions about living with sight loss, eye health or being newly diagnosed with a sight condition. This includes those who are supporting people through their sight loss journey. It is produced by RNIB in partnership with a number of other sight loss organisations.

sightadvicefaq.org.uk

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